

The Mystery of the Red Heifer

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There are many mysteries in the Scriptures, but one in particular stands out because of the fact that it was thought by the Sages that it could not be understood. Indeed, they proclaim that even King Shlomo (Solomon), in all his wisdom, could not understand it. They attribute the following remark as a direct reference to that mystery: "I said I would be wise, but it is far from me." Ecclesiastes 7:23. The commandment is the one involving what is commonly called the "red heifer" or the "red cow" sacrifice.

In this article we explore this mystery and submit to you that this is no longer a mystery, rather, we believe that Ruach haQodesh has shown us that this wonderful commandment is all about the plan of restoration envisioned and portrayed through the Covenant process - yet another of our Father YHWH's gracious provisions accomplished through Yahushua HaMashiah".

Here is the Commandment: *"¹ And YHWH spoke unto Mosheh and unto Aharon, saying, ² This is the ordinance of the Torah which YHWH hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Yisrael, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: ³ And you shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: ⁴ And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the Tabernacle of the congregation seven times: ⁵ And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: ⁶ And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. ⁷ Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. ⁸ And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. ⁹ And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Yisrael for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. ¹⁰ And he that gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Yisrael, and unto the stranger that sojourns among them, for a statute forever (olam)."* Bemidbar 19:1-10.

To summarize, this unblemished sacrifice must be led from the Tabernacle to a place outside the camp by Eleazar. Eleazar was the son of Aharon and his name meant "El helps." Interestingly, the command was given to Mosheh and Aharon, who was the High Priest at the time, but the task was specifically for Eleazar "the priest" (cohen). Some connect this with Aharon's involvement with the golden calf at Sinai, which in turn precluded him from participating in this sacrifice. While there is clearly a connection with the incident at Sinai, I doubt that was the reason for Aharon's preclusion because he was, after all, the Cohen Gadol (High Priest), anointed to serve in the Tabernacle, which was the House of YHWH.

It is more likely because Aharon was soon to die. The fact that Eleazar was specifically named, rather than this being a task prescribed to the service of the High Priest could mean that it was only intended to be a one-time event, specifically allocated to Eleazar. In fact, we know from history that there was only one “red heifer” sacrifice up until the time of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians.

Interestingly, Eleazar was not the one who killed the sacrifice, that was left to another “one.” The reason was because Eleazar was to be looking at the face of sacrifice when it was killed. Eleazar then took the blood and sprinkled it 7 times toward the Tabernacle, also known as the Tent of Appointment. Now he was outside the camp designated by the boundary line of Jerusalem’s city limits. He was at the appointed altar, and from that place the blood was sprinkled toward the Tabernacle as if to demonstrate that this was the starting point of a blood trail that would lead to the House of YHWH

The entire sacrifice was then burned by “one” and while it was burning, “the priest” would cast cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop into the fire. Both “the priest” and the other “one” became unclean from their participation in the process. They are required to immerse themselves and their clothes, and they would remain unclean until evening. This required another individual, a clean person, to gather the ashes and place them in a clean place outside the camp. Interestingly, this person also became unclean through participating in the process.

Part of the mystery is that the ashes are obviously clean, yet everyone in the process becomes unclean. They are kept in a clean place and are for “the waters of purification” or literally “water niddah” (שׁוֹמֵר נִדָּה). Interestingly, “niddah” is typically associated with a woman’s monthly menstruation period. It is a time when a man and a woman must separate and not have relations. While the woman is deemed unclean because of her blood flow, this is a vital part of her remaining fertile, or fruitful. In order for a woman to be cleansed from her “niddah” she must immerse in water. So by calling the ashes mixed with water the “niddah waters” an association is being made with the preparation of a woman to restore intimate relations with her husband.¹

At the end of the command we read that it is a command “through the ages” (olam). It is meant for the children of Yisrael and the stranger who dwells among them. So this was for anyone who intended to dwell in the Land – the Kingdom. The commandment is couched between the instructions concerning the tithes to the Levites and the High Priest, and the instructions concerning dead bodies. Again, it was spoken to Mosheh and Aharon the High Priest, but Aharon did not perform the sacrifice. In fact, his death is actually described after this commandment. So the location of the “red heifer” sacrifice in the text is quite unique, and appears to revolve around the firstfruits and offerings belonging to those who served in the House of YHWH. It also is connected with purification and cleansing. The timing of the command is also interesting. This was not a command given at Sinai. Rather it was given in the wilderness, after the Children of Yisrael had rejected the Land and shortly before the death of Aharon. So the Children of Yisrael were wandering in the wilderness, outside the camp, waiting for a generation to die off so the next generation could enter in.

Nowhere in the Scriptures, prior to this point, do we hear of any “red heifer” being sacrificed. It stands out among all others for its uniqueness. There are only a few instances when a “heifer” is specifically referenced in the Scriptures, and only one instance of a “red heifer.” The first instance of a “heifer” is found with the Covenant made with Abram after he left Babylon and “crossed over” into the Land of promise. YHWH gave Abram a great promise of Land and seed. Abram wanted proof of the promise so YHWH confirmed His Word through an ancient blood covenant ritual involving designated sacrifices that would be cut in half. The participants of the blood covenant were each supposed to walk through the channel of blood between the slaughterings. This was symbolic of the penalty for breaking the covenant.

Here is what YHWH prescribed to Abram. “So He said to him, bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Beresheet 15:9. The word generally used to describe a heifer is “eglah” (עִגְלָה) which means: “a female calf, cow or heifer.” Interestingly, the first mention of a heifer is one the age of 3 years old. In fact, the three animals involved in the Covenant with Abram were all to be three years old. That is the subject for another study. For now it is important to recognize that the heifer (eglah) was the first of the slaughterings involved in the Covenant process.

After Abram had prepared everything he was placed in a deep sleep, likened to death. While he was in this death-like state he experienced horror and great darkness. During this time fire and smoke passed through the blood. This was the representation of YHWH that we later see leading and protecting Yisrael. So the representative of YHWH took the penalty for breaking the Covenant – the penalty of death. The blood of a “heifer” was the first blood of that Covenant with Abram. It was essentially the entry point into that path of blood, the Covenant path.

Again, that Covenant involved a promise that Abram would have seed and land. Later, YHWH made a Covenant with Abram and changed his name to Abraham. He commanded Abraham to be circumcised and promised him the following: “And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you.” Beresheet 17:6.

This was not a brand new Covenant, but rather an extension of the previous Covenant. Now Abraham was prepared to further fulfill the Covenant through a new name and the mark of circumcision in his flesh. Through the cutting of his flesh and shedding of his blood he would bear a sign. It was literally through that sign that the promised seed would pass into the womb of Sarah. From Sarah would come the Promised Son that Abraham would later be told to slaughter. The text states that Abraham would be “exceedingly fruitful.” The Hebrew word for “fruitful” is “parah” (פָּרָה). So Abraham was promised that he would be an incredibly fruitful man. This will prove to be important as we look further at the “red heifer.”

Now let us continue our examination of the heifer in the Scriptures. It is interesting to note that every instance involving a heifer uses the term “eglah,” except for the passage in Bemidbar 19, which refers to the “red heifer.” In that particular passage we read in the Hebrew, about a “parah adamah” (פָּרָה אֲדָמָה). We do not read about an “eglah” (עִגְלָה). This should be our first clue that there is something deep and mysterious concerning the unique sacrifice. Instead of “eglah” (עִגְלָה)

being translated as “heifer” we read the word “parah” (פָּרָה), which is the same word used to describe Abraham

The word “parah,” (פָּרָה) which is translated as “heifer,” clearly means: “fruitful” according to all Hebrew lexicons. We also saw this to be the case regarding the blessing promised to Abraham. There are actually variations of the word that are used to refer to cows, such as the “parote” (פָּרוֹת) in Pharaoh’s dream that Joseph interpreted. (Beresheet 41). The word “parote” (פָּרוֹת) is actually the plural form of the word “parah” (פָּרָה), since there were seven cows in the dream. So the word “parah” (פָּרָה) can mean “cow.” Is not a term exclusively used to refer to a female cow, although it is clearly defined as being “fruitful.”

How interesting that the word “parah” is associated with Egypt and Joseph. It was in Egypt that Joseph flourished. Prior to his death Yisrael spoke prophetic words and blessings over all of his sons. The first words spoken over Joseph were: “*Joseph is a fruitful bough (son), even a fruitful bough (son) by a well.*” Beresheet 49:22. While many English translations describe Joseph as a “fruitful bough” in the Hebrew we read “parote ben” (פָּרוֹת בֶּן). The word “ben” (בֶּן) is literally “son.” So Joseph is emphatically described as a “fruitful son.” That would make him a very fruitful man like Abraham.

With that information before us, let us continue to look at the mysterious “red heifer,” known as a “parah adamah” (פָּרָה אֲדָמָה). The word “adamah” (אֲדָמָה) means: “ground.” We can easily see the connection with the first man “adam” who was specifically named after the origin of his being – the ground. Adam was literally formed from “*the dust of the ground.*” (see Beresheet 2:7). Interestingly, the word for “dust” is “aphar” (אֶפֶר) which also means: “ashes.” So adam was actually taken from the “ashes (אֶפֶר) of the ground (אֲדָמָה).” Clearly we have a connection with man and the “red heifer” sacrifice. The word “adam” (אָדָם) means: “man,” and if we look closer we see that the word “dam” (דָּם) means “blood.” Therefore, the emphasis of this sacrifice is clearly on the blood, not the color. And it is the blood contained within “adam” (man), not the blood of an animal, that is being emphasized.

As a result of this emphasis on the blood, the word “adamah” used in describing the “red heifer” has often been translated as “red.” That is a problematic translation because the color associated with “adamah” is more likely “brown.”² The word is also the root in the word translated as “ruddy.” Interestingly, David was specifically described as “ruddy” (אֲדָמָה) in 1 Samuel 16:12 and 1 Samuel 17:42. We also see this word associated with the Beloved Groom in Song of Solomon. “¹⁰ My beloved is white and ruddy, Chief among ten thousand. ” His head is like the finest gold . . .” (Song 5:10-11). It is also associated with Nazirite Sons of Zion described as “ . . . whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, like sapphire in their appearance.” Lamentations 4:7.

So the phrase “parah adamah” (פָּרָה אֲדָמָה) literally means: “fruitful ground” which can also be “a fruitful ruddy man.” It is directly linked with the fruitful individuals such as Adam, Joseph and David. It is also associated with the “Beloved Bridegroom” and “Nazirites.” After examining these relationships, one cannot ignore the connection with the Messiah Who is ascribed such titles as the Second Adam, the Son of Joseph, the Son of David and the Bridegroom. So this sacrifice is pointing to the Messiah.

This is made even clearer when we examine the Hebrew text and the existence of the Aleph Taw (XU) – the mysterious un-translated Word found throughout the Scriptures that points to the Messiah. We know this connection to be true because Yahushua the Messiah specifically identified Himself with the Aleph Taw (XU).³ We see the aleph (U) in ancient Hebrew actually representing the head of a cow. The taw (X) in ancient Hebrew represents a mark or a covenant. So simply looking at the ancient language we can see a connection between the Aleph Taw (XU) and the “red heifer” sacrifice. Examining the Scriptural text only strengthens the point.

If we look at the text describing the burning of the “red heifer” at Bemidbar 19:5 in modern Hebrew we read:

וְשָׂרַף אֶת-הַפָּרָה לְעֵינָיו אֶת-עֲרָה וְאֶת-בְּשָׂרָהּ וְאֶת-דָּמָהּ עַל-פְּרֹשֶׁה יִשְׂרָף

In modern Hebrew the Aleph Taw (XU) appears as אַ. In the text we see the Aleph Taw (XU) directly connected to “the parah” (פָּרָה), the “arah” (אֶרָה), the “besar” (בְּשָׂרָהּ) and the “dam” (דָּמָהּ) – the “fruitful,” the “skin,” the “flesh” and the “blood.” So every part of the being of this sacrifice is connected with the Aleph Taw (XU). When we understand that the Aleph Taw (XU) represents the Messiah, this seems to be indicating that the Messiah would come as a sacrifice in the form of “flesh and blood.” This one passage is a small example of the presence of the Aleph Taw (XU) that is found throughout the commandment and the entire Torah, although you will only see it in the Hebrew.

So why would a sacrifice be associated with the Messiah? To understand that question we must go back to the Garden. You see, there was a sacrifice at the door of the Garden as Adam and Hawah were covered with skins. They were banished “east of Eden” and sent outside the “camp” which represented the place that YHWH had dwelled with man. If we understand that the Tabernacle, the Tent of YHWH, represented the Garden, and Jerusalem represented Eden, we can easily see the pattern.

The solution was to cleanse man outside of the camp where he had been banished, to the east. Just as the sun rises in the east, so YHWH would bring His deliverance from the east. It is at that place, the place of the Mikhpad (Appointed) Altar on the Mount of Olives that the cleansing sacrifice would take place. (see Ezekiel 43:21).

This truth is reinforced through the various articles included while the cow was being burned. We read that along with the “holocaust” – the whole burnt offering, there was cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. The articles were burned with the “red heifer” and became part of the ashes.

The first ingredient of the sacrifice is “cedar wood” known as “etz araz” (אֶרָז). In the Scriptures, the cedar was one of the greatest and most noble trees. We know that King David dwelled in a house of cedar. (2 Samuel 7:2). When King Solomon built the Temple, cedar was the prevalent wood in the Temple. “The inside of the Temple was cedar, carved with ornamental buds and open flowers. All was cedar; there was no stone to be seen.” 1 Kings 6:18. So you could not see any stones inside, only wood. Cedar beautified the interior but not the floor that was walked upon, the floors were made from cypress. (1 Kings 6:15). So cedar was quite special and again, associated

with the House of YHWH. What makes this ingredient particularly interesting is the fact that it was an “etz” (עֵץ), which can mean “wood” “tree” “stick” “branch” or “rod.” There are many prophecies referring to the Messiah as a “branch,” a “rod” and a “shoot.”

The cedar is also connected with the hyssop, which is the next ingredient in the sacrifice ritual. Of all the things that Shlomo spoke of in his wisdom we read that “. . . he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall.” 1 Kings 4:33. So while the cedar was great, the hyssop was small. Even so, this lowly shrub has a vital role in the Scriptures. Hyssop is often associated with cleansing. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalms 51:7.

The hyssop is combined with the other ingredients of scarlet and cedar wood at the very beginning stages of the elaborate ritual involved for cleansing leprous individuals, as well as homes. (Vayiqra 14). So the cleansing aspect of these ingredients cannot be ignored. Nor can the connection between the “red heifer” and the other cleansing rituals. While the blood of the “red heifer” is sprinkled seven times toward the House of YHWH, the leper and the leprous house are sprinkled seven times. This represents the divided Kingdom of Yisrael, the House of Yisrael and the House of Yahudah, like leprous houses filled with lepers, exiled outside the camp. They need to be healed and sprinkled with cleansing waters.

The first time we read of hyssop in the Scriptures it is involved in the Passover ritual. The hyssop is dipped in the shed blood of the Passover lamb. The lintel and the doorposts of the house are then struck with the hyssop, thus placing the blood on the doorframe. So the hyssop is used in the Passover that involves the redemption and protection of the firstborn.

The hyssop is also used to apply the waters of purification that are made from the ashes of the sacrifice. The mixture of the ashes and the water is to make a person clean. In fact, it is for purification from sin. (Bemidbar 19:9). It cleanses a person from the taint of death. A clean person must hold the hyssop and sprinkle the unclean person. So the hyssop is a conduit for transferring the protective and cleansing blood as well as the water. This establishes a clear connection between the cleansing power of water and the blood. It also connects the “red heifer” sacrifice with the Passover sacrifice.

The final ingredient is scarlet, presumably scarlet thread. Scarlet is a very special color. It is one of the predominate colors in the Tabernacle tapestries, along with blue and purple. It is found all throughout the interior of the Tent of YHWH, as well as the doors, veils, screens and gates. It was also found in the garments of the High Priest.

The Hebrew word for “scarlet” is “shaniy” (שָׁנִי). Since every Hebrew letter has a numeric equivalent, every word also has a numeric value. There is no separate number system in Hebrew. So we can also find meaning by examining the numerical values of the words. This study is commonly known as gematria. The word “shaniy” (שָׁנִי) has the numeric value of 360, which gives the sense of completion or a cycle. This is quite profound since YHWH clearly operates in cycles, and this sacrifice was pointing to a future fulfillment.

Interestingly, the first time this word is used in the Scriptures is Beresheet 1:8 as the word “second” for the second day. The first time that the word is used as “scarlet” is in Beresheet 38 when it refers to a scarlet thread that was tied to the wrist of Zerah, one of the twins of Judah and Tamar. Zerah thrust his fist out of Tamar first and a scarlet thread was tied to his wrist. He then withdrew his hand and his brother Perez came out. The child that came out second was actually the first to be completely revealed, and the one that the Messiah would come through. (Beresheet 38:30, Matthew 1).

This theme continues with the scarlet cord that was placed in the window of Rahab. This scarlet cord was a sign of her faith, and of her salvation as she and her family were spared the judgment rendered upon Jericho by YHWH and the Children of Yisrael under the command of Joshua (Yahushua). Joshua 2:17. In fact, Rahab ended up being an ancestress of Yahushua the Messiah because of that scarlet cord. (Matthew 1:5,6).

There was also a tradition involving the goat sacrifice on Yom Kippur. The tradition holds that a scarlet thread or ribbon would turn white signifying that the sins of Yisrael had been forgiven. This is not a provision in the Torah and is only a tradition, but it surely adds to the mystery surrounding the scarlet thread. So clearly, the scarlet thread has great Messianic significance, as do all of the ingredients. The scarlet thread coupled with the great cedar wood and the lowly hyssop the picture becomes clear.

This was, after all, a sacrifice intended for the entire congregation. It was provided in order to allow people to be clean and dwell within the Assembly. If a person was not made clean by the waters of purification that resulted from this sacrifice, then they would remain outside the Assembly. Without it, there would be no Assembly in the camp. So this sacrifice made outside the camp was intended to bring those outside the Assembly into the Assembly and ultimately into the House.

This was something done for Yisrael with a particular emphasis on Joseph because it is a “fruitful” (parah) sacrifice. The tribal emblem for Joseph, particularly Ephraim, was a cow, and we know that the House of Yisrael under the leadership of Ephraim suffered from a special problem stemming from their worship of a cow. The Children of Yisrael had whored after the cow god of Egypt at Sinai. This separated them from YHWH, and excluded them from entering the House. After the Kingdom of Yisrael was divided after the death of Shlomo, the House of Yisrael again whored after the cow god of Egypt, by setting up two golden calves and offering sacrifices to that god. The House of Yisrael, led by Ephraim, whored after other gods and was an unfaithful wife. As a result, the House of Yisrael was exiled, sent out of the camp and actually given a certificate of divorce by YHWH. (Isaiah 50:1, Jeremiah 3:8).

This posed a problem for the House of Yisrael, because the Torah forbids remarriage to an adulterous wife. *“¹ When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³ if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for*

that is an abomination before YHWH, and you shall not bring sin on the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.” Debarim 24:1-4.

So Joseph the fruitful son was outside the camp, but it was prophesied that he would return. This is a reason why Yahushua the Messiah came as the suffering servant, known as the Messiah ben Joseph. One of the reasons for His death was to provide for the return of Joseph. He specifically said that He came for the lost sheep of the House of Yisrael. (Matthew 15:24). He came to prepare the way for the unfaithful bride through His blood.

Of course, this was part of the mystery hidden in the “red heifer” sacrifice. While the bitter waters bring a curse and destroy the fruitfulness of a woman that has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully (Bemidbar 5), the waters of purification mixed with the ashes of the “red heifer” make one clean. Again, the fact that those waters are called “niddah waters” unmistakably reveals their purpose – to make the unclean, leprous and dead House of Yisrael alive and clean. This is how the dry bones of the House of Yisrael will come back to life, and it has everything to do with resurrection. (Ezekiel 37).

Joseph was the favored son of Yisrael and Rachel. His two children Ephraim and Manasseh were actually adopted by their grandfather Yisrael. They both became sons of Yisrael and the youngest Ephraim was elevated to firstborn status. Thus Ephraim is often referenced as the representative of the Tribe of Joseph and the entire House of Yisrael. With that understanding read the promise of hope given by the prophet Jeremiah.

“¹⁵ Thus says YHWH: A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. ¹⁶ Thus says YHWH: Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says YHWH, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ There is hope in your future, says YHWH, that your children shall come back to their own border. ¹⁸ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a calf (𐤀𐤂𐤁) unaccustomed to the yoke. Restore me, and I will return, for You are YHWH Elohi. ¹⁹ Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth.’ ²⁰ Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says YHWH. ²¹ Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Yisrael, turn back to these your cities. ²² How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For YHWH has created a renewal in the earth - A woman shall encompass a man.” Jeremiah 31:15-22.

So Ephraim the son repents, “*he was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.*” Ephraim is likened to an unyoked calf – “egal” (𐤀𐤂𐤁). This reveals the connection with the “red heifer.” A sacrifice was needed to restore the relationship between YHWH and Ephraim. Indeed the House of Yisrael will then be deemed “a virgin” when she repents. She returns to a clean state when she has been cleansed from her condition of “niddah.” It is then that she can become the Bride. YHWH

would do this through a renewed thing. This is exactly what Joseph needed. Because of the calf of the House of Yisrael, Joseph was outside of the camp. He needed purification and restoration with YHWH. He needed to be cleansed from the taint of death sprinkled with the waters of purification from the sacrifice of the “fruitful man” – the Messiah

Read what the prophet Ezekiel proclaims to the House of Yisrael – Joseph (Ephraim). *“²² Therefore say unto the House of Yisrael, Thus saith YHWH Elohim; I do not do this for your sakes, O House of Yisrael, but for My set apart Name’s sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, whither you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great Name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am YHWH, says Master YHWH, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ A renewed heart also will I give you, and a renewed spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. ²⁸ And you shall dwell in the Land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your Elohim. ²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. ³¹ Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. ³² Not for your sakes do I this, saith Master YHWH, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O House of Yisrael. ³³ Thus saith Master YHWH, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built.”* Ezekiel 36:22-33.

As we understand the need for this cleansing sacrifice, many of the mysteries surrounding the process become clear. The House of Yisrael needed this cleansing provision outside the camp, because this is where Joseph is located. The only way to be restored is to be cleansed. So the House of Yisrael will some day be regathered, cleansed and restored back to the Land. The blood of this needed sacrifice was sprinkled toward the door so that, once purified, he can enter the Land and approach the House.

The “red heifer” sacrifice was not presented in the House, because it was not meant for YHWH. It already belonged to YHWH because it originated in His House. It left the House and went outside the camp because it was intended for those who found themselves outside the camp, unable to approach His House.

Any offering for YHWH was made on His Altar. The person offering the sacrifice must be clean, and no one was made unclean by offering the sacrifice. The “red heifer” was unique. It was a perfect, unblemished offering. Everything about the process reveals that the sacrifice itself was clean. It was originally in the House, it was inspected and found to be clean - unblemished. It must have been clean because it could not defile the Tabernacle that was “qadosh” – set apart.

Remember that it is the blood of this sacrifice that is the emphasis – not the color of the animal. By constantly referring to this sacrifice by color (ie. the red cow

or the red heifer) the focus is misplaced. Man was called “adam” because of the blood (dam) that flowed through his veins. Despite the fact that he was blood colored, he was made in the image of YHWH. Some ascribe the color red to sin, and thus imply something negative to the sacrifice. Man was not created as something evil, and the sacrifice was clearly without blemish.

It is the blood that is important. The blood alone leads to the House. The blood burned and mixed with the flesh and other ingredients is what then became the ashes. It is the ashes that then provide the cleansing when mixed with water. The ashes of the sacrifices burned in the Temple service were removed from the altar and kept in a clean place. The ashes of the “red heifer” removed from the Miphkad Altar were collected, stored and mixed with water. The word for ashes is “epher” (עֶפֶר). Those ashes were kept in a clean place outside the camp. Only when mixed with water could a person be purified by the water. Interestingly, in both instances where the ashes are mentioned in the sacrificial process, the word “epher” is preceded by the Aleph Taw (אֶפֶר) – a clear Messianic reference. So the Messiah is connected with those ashes, just as the first Adam came from ashes.

The persons involved in this sacrifice became unclean, which is different from any other sacrifice. Normally, slaughtering an animal would not render a person unclean. The person involved in the “red heifer” sacrifice became unclean. The “red heifer” was to look directly at the High Priest while it was being slaughtered. This was different from other sacrifices where the person making the offering would lay their hands upon the sacrifice, essentially placing their sins upon the animal as a representative of their “nefesh” (soul). The blood and the dead animal would then be processed on the altar. No sins were imparted upon this sacrifice, it died looking at the High Priest and toward the Tabernacle.

It was the blood, after all, that paved the way to the Tabernacle, the House, while the ashes remained outside the camp. That was where the unclean were located. This is a vivid example of the work of the Messiah. He was outside the camp healing the unclean and raising the dead. In one instance of healing we read how He sent the healed leper to the Priests to undergo the ritual set forth in the Torah. This was a rare event and surely should have notified them that the Messiah had come. In those days, many anticipated a Messiah Who would cleanse them from their sins.

The Book of Daniel includes a reference to the “red heifer” sacrifice. In Daniel 12:10, we read that in the last days, *“many shall be purified and made white.”* Of course this is reflected in Revelation which states that Yahushua *“washed us from our sins in His own blood.”* Revelation 1:5. It also described the elect as *“. . . the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* Revelation 7:14. According to 1 John 1:7 *“the blood of Yahushua HaMoshiach His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

So the fruitful Son of YHWH, the firstborn, was made to cleanse from sin. This was specifically the purpose of the waters mixed with the ashes. (Bemidbar 19:9). We know that Yahushua came and died almost 2,000 years ago. He was slaughtered outside the camp, like the “red heifer” in order to purify the people. (Hebrews 13:12). He was rejected by most of the Yahudim and like a lamb led to the slaughter He did not open His mouth, but let them kill Him in accordance to the Prophecies. (Isaiah 53:7).

Interestingly, this sacrifice only cleanses people in order to get them inside the camp, which represented the Kingdom. There was still the issue of getting into the House. Because of the sin involving another “cow,” the golden calf of Sinai, only the Levites were permitted to serve in the House. Only the sons of Aharon were permitted to enter into the Most Holy Place, the Throne Room of YHWH. And that privilege was only on a very limited basis – one time per year on Yom Kippur. The Levites represented the firstborn of Yisrael. The goal was for the firstborn to be in the House, but things were not as YHWH desired.

Adam and Hawah originally dwelled in the Garden of Eden – paradise. Paradise represents living in the House of YHWH. Even during the best of times the Yisraelites could only visit the Courts of the House of YHWH. They were never allowed inside the House. Only the priests were allowed in, but not as inhabitants or guests, only as servants. (see Bemidbar 3, 8 and 18).

So imagine being invited to your father’s house for a party – a feast. When you arrive you bring a gift, but you are only permitted to stand in the front yard. The host, your father, will not permit you into his house. This is a bit awkward and is not the sign of a close intimate relationship. In fact, many gauge the depth of a friendship on how often you have been inside the person’s house.

This was all Yisrael’s doing. They created the rift through their actions. They profaned their vows and caused the separation. YHWH still let them visit with Him but He could not and would not let them into His House in their condition. Again, the High Priest could only enter into the Most Holy Place once a year, and only in a thick cloud of incense to cover him. In other words, Yisrael could not be in the presence of a perfect set apart Elohim and live. They had to be separated for their own good. Thankfully, Yahushua, the firstborn of YHWH and the High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek, has unfettered access to the House. He willingly came out of the House, like the “red heifer,” to make a way for us to enter into an intimate relationship with YHWH. Therefore, we should desire to join with the Messiah and make Him our High Priest.

As we walk the Covenant path demonstrated through Abram we begin to see the path of Yahushua the High Priest. It was the path of blood that Messiah, as the smoke and fire, traversed. This was also the path that the blood of the Messiah would provide as we find our way back to the House. The types of animals included in the Covenant made with Abram reveal the steps in the path, and they are mirrored in the patterns provided in the Temple service. (Beresheet 15).

The path begins with an uncircumcised individual outside of the Covenant. We then begin the bloody path with the blood of the heifer, the “eglah” (עֵגְלָה), the first of the cuttings of the Covenant. The blood of the “red heifer” permits us into the camp, and the seven sprinklings lead us to the house. The next slaughtering in the path of the blood Covenant was the goat described as an “az” (אֵז). We saw the goat at Yom Kippur that provides atonement for sin. (Vayiqra 16). So once we are made clean and allowed to enter the camp, we receive atonement by the blood of the goat.

Next is the blood of a ram, described as an “ayil” (אֵיִל). The ram (אֵיִל) was later provided to Abraham, during the “Akeda” in the mountains of MoriYah, revealing that the only Son of YHWH would be offered up as the sacrifice of the Covenant. (Beresheet 22). This was the Lamb of Elohim, the “seh” (שֶׁה), offered at

Passover to redeem the firstborn so that they could live in the House. When the firstborn are finally redeemed by the blood of the Lamb they are adopted into the family of YHWH.

At that point, once in the House, we approach the final slaughterings - the two birds which totaled 4 wings, representing the cherubim that cover the mercy seat in the Most Set Apart Place. (Shemot 25:18).

So the Covenant made with Abram vividly reveals the path to the throne. The heifer cleanses allowing entrance into the Kingdom, the goat atones allowing us to stay in the Kingdom and the ram represents the Lamb of Elohim redeeming the firstborn, adopting them into His family so that they can dwell in His House. Those who follow the path of blood, following the fire and the smoke, may enter the Throne Room. The blood of Yahushua fulfilled the patterns provided through all of these slaughterings, and it was His blood that leads us back to Eden, to His Throne in the New Jerusalem.

According to Jewish tradition, around the time that Yahushua began teaching the scarlet thread tied to the door of the Temple on Yom Kippur failed to turn white. The scarlet thread turning white was thought to be a good sign according to Isaiah 1:18: *“Come now, and let us reason together says YHWH, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* For forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the scarlet thread did not turn white. This was seen as a sign that the sins of Yisrael were not forgiven.⁴

It was indeed an ominous sign, among many others, pointing to the fact that the Yahudim needed to repent. Likely the most profound sign of all involved the attempted “red heifer” sacrifice immediately prior to the destruction of the Temple. Prior to that time, there had been 9 recorded “red heifer” sacrifices. There was only one up until the time of the Babylonian exile. There were 8 others from the time that Zerrubabel’s Temple was dedicated until the destruction of the Herodian Temple by the Romans in 70 CE.⁵

According to the ancient historian Josephus, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, knowing that they were doomed and with a desire to obtain ashes for the cleansing of a future temple, the High Priest began preparations for the slaughter of the 10th Red Heifer. “[A]s she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, [she] brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.”⁶ Imagine that! After being inspected, and on the way to the slaughter, the “red heifer” gave birth to a lamb. The point was clear – they already had the 10th Red Heifer. Yahushua The Messiah - The Lamb of Elohim. Jews today are looking for a red heifer when they should be looking at the Lamb.

We have examined the Hebrew words and found deep meaning from those words. We have briefly mentioned the numeric value of Hebrew words. There is incredible value in exploring the numeric value of words, because we can find deeper meaning and relationships behind those words. This is especially important when we are looking at mysteries in the Scriptures.

The numeric value of the word “parah” is 285. The first word in the Scriptures that has the value 285 is “the city” - ha’iyr (עִיר) found in Beresheet 4:17. So when we look at this number we have a “fruitful city” or a “city of firstfruits.” We saw this represented by the fact that the Levites belonged to YHWH. They were given to YHWH in place of all of the firstborn of Yisrael. So it was the firstfruits of Yisrael

that filled the House of YHWH. Interestingly, a Levite would cease his work in the Tabernacle at the age of 50. (Bemidbar 8).

By no coincidence both “adamah,” (ground) and “ha’adam” (the man) share the same value of 50. This number is unmistakably connected with the Jubilee, a time when Land and people are restored. The number 50 is also connected with the harvest season. The Torah provides for a 50 day count known as the counting of the Omer. The Omer count encompasses the annual grain harvest. It connects the barley and the wheat harvest. It begins at the House of YHWH with the resheet – the first barley offering, and it concludes at the House of YHWH with the offering of the bikkurim – the firstfruits from all throughout Land. This entire 50 day period is about the harvest and firstfruits.

So this gematria study of the “parah adamah” tells a story that: “The Land and man restored through the blood of Messiah to a fruitful city filled with the firstfruits of the harvest at the Jubilee.”

We know that Yahushua the Messiah was hung on a tree outside the gate – outside the camp. (Hebrews 13:12). There is a strong indication that He was hung on the Mount of Olives at the same site as the Miphkad Altar.⁷ He would have been facing the Temple looking to the west, just as was done by the “red heifer.” We can surmise this due to the account in the Gospel of Mark that provides: *“³⁷ And Yahushua cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. ³⁸ Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of Elohim!’”* Mark 15:37-39. (see also Luke 23:47 and Matthew 27:54). There is an implication that the centurion saw all of these events occurring at the same time which led him to conclude that Yahushua was the Son of Elohim. The only place this would be possible, outside the camp, would be directly across from the Temple on the Mount of Olives near the Miphkad Altar.

As a result of all of this we see that the “red heifer” sacrifice is about the restoration of Creation. The “red heifer” points us to Joseph and represents the Messiah Who came out of the House and outside the camp to shed His blood. That blood was sprinkled toward the door of the House. It points to the Covenant path that connects the sacrifice with the House. This is the Covenant journey represented through the life of Abraham. Further, this very sacrifice is critical to cleansing people so that they can enter the Kingdom and proceed to the House. It cleanses from death, disease, sickness and sin. Indeed, without this sacrifice the House cannot be filled. The function of this sacrifice, and the deep meaning hidden within the commandment, clearly point to the Messiah as the means to purification and entrance into the House.

It is possible that King Shlomo did not perceive the purpose of the “red heifer,” because he died before the Kingdom of Yisrael was divided and Joseph fell into idolatry. Interestingly, that division was directly related to his own idolatry. (1 Kings 11:11). That idolatry continued to infect the House of Yahudah until the Temple was first destroyed by the Babylonians, and finally by the Romans in 70 AD. Both the House of Yisrael and the House of Yahudah were guilty of idolatry, and both were exiled from the Land. So what appeared to be a sacrifice uniquely related to Joseph ultimately revealed a needed Messianic sacrifice for all of Yisrael.

Endnotes

- ¹ The first recorded miracle of Yahushua the Messiah occurred at a wedding feast in Cana. Obviously one might expect that it would be significant, and it truly was. Most believe that He simply turned water into wine because they ran out of wine. This was, indeed a miracle, and there are numerous teachings surrounding this event. What I find significant is that it occurred “on the third day” at a wedding feast. He instructed the attendants to fill 6 stone water pots with water. Those stone water pots were designated for waters of purification. One of the uses would be for a woman to cleanse from her niddah. The stone pots were empty, likely because the bride had just prepared herself for the wedding. So Yahushua used those vessels designated for waters of purification to turn water into wine. At the last Passover, before His death, He indicated that the wine was His blood. So the message was clear that the Bride would be made pure through His blood. This directly relates to the “red heifer” sacrifice.
- ² The convention of translating the Hebrew word “red” “is not without problems, since color-categories differ from culture to culture. The term seems to comprehend the color range from brown, through red-brown, to red, and we should probably envisage a “brown” cow.” William K. Gilders *Why Does Eleazar Sprinkle the Red Cow Blood? Making Sense of a Biblical Ritual*, JOURNAL OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES referencing Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982) 58-80, esp. 62-65.
- ³ While most English Bibles describe Yahushua as “the Alpha and the Omega” (ΑΩ) this is not the case. Alpha (Α) is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega (Ω) is the last letter in the Greek alphabet. Defining Himself as two Greek letters is meaningless, although since the text was translated from Greek it is understandable why the translators would unwittingly keep the Greek. Yahushua was a Hebrew and certainly would have used the Hebrew language when speaking to His Hebrew disciple John. The first letter in the Hebrew alphabet is Aleph (א) and the last letter is Taw (ט). Therefore, He would have stated that He is the Aleph Taw (אט). This makes absolute sense because it was revealing a mystery that had been hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures for centuries. Contained throughout the Hebrew Scriptures are hundreds of un-translated Aleph Taws (אט) that are linked with mysterious passages. By revealing that He was the Aleph Taw (אט), Yahushua was solving many mysteries concerning the Messiah in the Tanak. (see Revelation 1:8, 11 and 22:13).
- ⁴ Talmud, Tractate Yoma 39b, see also Jacob Neusner, *The Yerushalmi*, p.156-157.
- ⁵ *The Copper Scroll, the Anointing Oil, the Temple Incense and the Ashes of the Red Heifer – Jeremiah and the Five Guardians of Solomon’s Temple Treasures*, Part 3 by Robert Mock, M.D. www.biblesearchers.com
- ⁶ Josephus War 6.5.3.
- ⁷ See the Walk in the Light series book entitled *The Messiah*.