
NUMBERS 19:1 The LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

The ordinance of the red heifer, Num 19:1, Num 19:2. She shall be slain by Eleazar without the camp, and her blood sprinkled before the tabernacle, Num 19:3, Num 19:4. Her whole body and appurtenance shall be reduced to ashes, and while burning, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, shall be thrown into the fire, Num 19:5, Num 19:6. The priest, and he that burns her, to bathe themselves, and be reputed unclean till the evening, Num 19:7, Num 19:8. Her ashes to be laid up for a water of purification, Num 19:9. How, and in what cases it is to be applied, Num 19:10-13. The law concerning him who dies in a tent, or who is killed in the open field, Num 19:14-16. How the persons, tent, and vessels are to be purified by the application of these ashes, Num 19:17-19. The unclean person who does not apply them, to be cut off from the congregation, Num 19:20. This is to be a perpetual statute, Num 19:21, Num 19:22.

NUMBERS 19:2 "This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded. Tell the children of Israel to bring you a red heifer without spot, in which is no defect, and which was never yoked.

Verse 2

Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring thee, etc. - The ordinance of the red heifer was a sacrifice of general application. All the people were to have an interest in it, and therefore the people at large are to provide the sacrifice. This Jewish rite certainly had a reference to things done under the Gospel, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has remarked: "For if," says he, "the blood of bulls and of goats," alluding, probably, to the sin-offerings and the scape-goat, "and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" Heb 9:13, Heb 9:14. As the principal stress of the allusion here is to the ordinance of the red heifer, we may certainly conclude that it was designed to typify the sacrifice of our blessed Lord.

We may remark several curious particulars in this ordinance.

1. A heifer was appointed for a sacrifice, probably, in opposition to the Egyptian superstition which held these sacred, and actually worshipped their great goddess Isis under this form; and this appears the more likely because males in general were preferred for sacrifice, yet here the female is chosen.
2. It was to be a red heifer, because red bulls were sacrificed to appease the evil demon Typhon, worshipped among the Egyptians. See Spencer.
3. The heifer was to be without spot - having no mixture of any other color. Plutarch remarks, *De Iside et de Osiride*, that if there was a single hair in the animal either white or black, it marred the sacrifice. See Calmet, and see the note on Num 8:7.
4. Without blemish - having no kind of imperfection in her body; the other, probably, applying to the hair or color.

5. On which never came yoke, because any animal which had been used for any common purpose was deemed improper to be offered in sacrifice to God. The heathens, who appear to have borrowed much from the Hebrews, were very scrupulous in this particular. Neither the Greeks nor Romans, nor indeed the Egyptians, would offer an animal in sacrifice that had been employed for agricultural purposes. Of this we have the most positive evidence from Homer, Porphyry, Virgil, and Macrobius.

Just such a sacrifice as that prescribed here, does Diomedes vow to offer to Pallas - Iliad, lib. x., ver. 291. Ὡς νυν μοι εθελουσα παριστασο, και με φυλασσε· Σοι δ' αυ εγω ρεξω βουν ηνιν ευρυμετωπον, Αδμητην, ην ουπω υπο ζυγον ηγαγεν ανηρ· Την τοι εγω ρεξω, χρυσον κερασιν περιχευας. "So now be present, O celestial maid;

So still continue to the race thine aid;

A yearling heifer falls beneath the stroke,

Untamed, unconscious of the galling yoke,

With ample forehead and with spreading horns,

Whose tapering tops refulgent gold adorns."

Altered from Pope.

In the very same words Nestor, Odys., lib. iii., ver. 382, promises a similar sacrifice to Pallas.

The Romans had the same religion with the Greeks, and consequently the same kind of sacrifices; so Virgil, Georg. iv., ver. 550.

Quatuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros

Ducit, et intacta totidem cervice juveneas. " - From his herd he culls

For slaughter four the fairest of his bulls;

Four heifers from his female stock he took,

All fair, and all unknowing of the yoke."

Dryden.

It is very likely that the Gentiles learnt their first sacrificial rites from the patriarchs; and on this account we need not wonder to find so many coincidences in the sacrificial system of the patriarchs and Jews, and all the neighboring nations.

NUMBERS 19:3 You shall give her to Eleazar the priest, and he shall bring her outside of the camp, and one shall kill her before his face.

NUMBERS 19:4 Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle her blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.

NUMBERS 19:5 One shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn.

NUMBERS 19:6 The priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

NUMBERS 19:7 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 evening.

NUMBERS 19:8 He who burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the evening.

NUMBERS 19:9 "A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside of the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water for impurity. It is a sin offering.

Verse 9

For a water of separation - That is, the ashes were to be kept, in order to be mixed with water, Num 19:17, and sprinkled on those who had contracted any legal defilement.

NUMBERS 19:10 He who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. It shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them, for a statute forever.

NUMBERS 19:11 "He who touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

Verse 11

He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days - How low does this lay man! He who touched a dead beast was only unclean for one day, Lev 11:24, Lev 11:27, Lev 11:39; but he who touches a dead man is unclean for seven days. This was certainly designed to mark the peculiar impurity of man, and to show his sinfulness - seven times worse than the vilest animal! O thou son of the morning, how art thou fallen!

NUMBERS 19:12 He shall purify himself with water on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he doesn't purify himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

Verse 12

He shall purify himself with it - בּוֹ יַחַטָּא yithchatta bo, literally, he shall sin himself with it. This Hebrew form of speech is common enough among us in other matters. Thus to fleece, to bark, and to skin, do not signify to add a fleece, another bark, or a skin, but to take one away; therefore, to sin himself, in the Hebrew idiom, is not to add sin, but to take it away, to purify. The verb חָטָא chata signifies to miss the mark, to sin, to purify from sin, and to make a sin-offering. See the note on Gen 13:13.

The Hebrews generally sacrificed males, no matter of what color; but here a heifer, and a heifer of a red color, is ordered. The reason of these circumstances is not very well known. "The rabbins, with

all their boldness," says Calmet, "who stick at nothing when it is necessary to explain what they do not understand, declare that the cause of this law is entirely unknown; and that Solomon, with all his wisdom, could not find it out."

Several fathers, as well modern as ancient, profess to understand the whole clearly.

1. The red heifer with them signifies the flesh of our Lord, formed out of an earthly substance.
2. Being without spot, etc., the infinite holiness of Christ.
3. The sex of the animal, the infirmity of our flesh, with which he clothed himself.
4. The red color, his passion.
5. Being unyoked, his being righteous in all his conduct, and never under the yoke of sin.
6. Eleazar's sacrificing the heifer instead of Aaron, Gen 13:3, signifies the change of the priesthood from the family of Aaron, in order that a new and more perfect priesthood might take place.
7. The red heifer being taken without the camp (Gen 13:3) to be slain, points out the crucifixion of our Lord without the city.
8. The complete consuming of the heifer by fire, the complete offering of the whole body and soul of Christ as a sacrifice to God for the sin of man: for as the heifer was without blemish, the whole might be offered to God; and as Christ was immaculate, his whole body and soul were made a sacrifice for sin.
9. As the fire of this sacrifice ascended up to God, so it points out the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord.
10. And as the ashes of this victim communicated a legal purity to those who were defiled, so true repentance, signified by those ashes, is necessary for the expiation of the offenses committed after baptism.

A great part of this is true in itself; but how little evidence is there that all these things were intended in the ordinance of the red heifer? See on Num 8:7 (note).

NUMBERS 19:13 Whoever touches a dead person, the body of a man who has died, and doesn't purify himself, defiles the LORD's tabernacle; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is yet on him.

NUMBERS 19:14 "This is the law when a man dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.

NUMBERS 19:15 Every open vessel, which has no covering bound on it, is unclean.

NUMBERS 19:16 "Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

NUMBERS 19:17 "For the unclean, they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering; and running water shall be poured into a vessel.

NUMBERS 19:18 A clean person shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, and on him who touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave.

NUMBERS 19:19 The clean person shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day. On the seventh day, he shall purify him. He shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening.

NUMBERS 19:20 But the man who shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water for impurity has not been sprinkled on him. He is unclean.

NUMBERS 19:21 It shall be a perpetual statute to them. He who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening.

NUMBERS 19:22 "Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening."
