

# Deuteronomy 21:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley:

## Analysis

**And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley.** The ritual occurs in unproductive land - rough valley that is neither eared nor sown. This desolate location represents the waste and barrenness that violence produces.

Striking off the heifer's neck kills the animal but not through standard sacrificial method. This is not temple offering but ceremonial cleansing addressing blood guilt. The distinction maintains proper categories while still requiring blood to address bloodshed.

The uncultivated valley that will never be farmed preserves the site from common use, marking it as place where innocent blood was addressed. The land bears witness to the ritual cleansing performed there.

This unusual ritual - not quite sacrifice, not common slaughter - demonstrates that extraordinary evils require extraordinary responses that fit the unique circumstances while honoring God's holiness.

## Historical Context

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The rough, uncultivated valley remained permanently unusable for agriculture after this ritual, creating lasting memorial of the unsolved murder and community's innocence declaration.

This differed from standard sacrifices offered at the altar, reflecting its unique purpose as legal-ceremonial cleansing rather than worship offering.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. What does the desolate, unproductive location symbolize about violence's effects?
2. Why is this ritual distinct from temple sacrifices while still requiring blood?
3. How does permanent preservation of the site serve as memorial and witness?
4. What does the unusual nature of this ritual teach about responding appropriately to extraordinary circumstances?
5. Why must blood address bloodshed even when the guilty party cannot be identified?

## Interlinear Text

אֵל	בָּעֵגֶל	הַ	אֶת	הַהָּ	וְאֶת	בְּעֵיר	זֶה	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְהַזְּהָרָה	וְהַזְּהָרָה
shall bring down	And the elders	of that city		H1931		H853		the heifer		H413
H3381	H2205	H5892						H5697		

בְּבֹקֶל:	אִתְּ   רָאשָׁ	לֹא	יְעַבְּדָ	בְּ
<b>there in the valley</b>	<b>unto a rough</b>	H834	H3808	<b>which is neither eared</b>

בְּמִלְּלָה בְּעִגְלָה אֲתָּה שְׁמַע וְעַרְפָּו וְעַרְפָּו שְׁמַע אֲלָא H3808 nor sown and shall strike off H8033 H853 the heifer there in the valley H2232 H6202 H5697 H5158

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