

Numbers 19:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:

Analysis

The red heifer ordinance presents a unique paradox in Levitical law: the purifying agent itself causes ceremonial uncleanness to those who prepare it (v.7-8). This foreshadows Christ's paradoxical work - He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). The Hebrew 'parah adummah' (red heifer) must be completely red, without blemish, and never yoked - symbolizing the sinless, unblemished Christ who took our yoke upon Himself. The ashes mixed with water created 'waters of separation' (mei niddah), pointing to baptism's cleansing power through Christ's sacrifice.

Historical Context

Given during Israel's wilderness wanderings, this ordinance addressed the frequent occurrence of death in the camp and provided purification for corpse contamination. The red heifer was slaughtered outside the camp (v.3), anticipating Christ's crucifixion outside Jerusalem's walls (Heb 13:11-12). Archaeological evidence suggests red heifers were extremely rare, making this ordinance costly and emphasizing the precious nature of purification.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the paradox of the red heifer (purifying others while defiling the priests) help you understand Christ's substitutionary atonement?
2. In what ways do you need the 'waters of separation' to cleanse you from contact with spiritual death?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| זֶה | הַחֹק | הַתּוֹרָה | אֲשֶׁר | צִוָּה | יְהוָה |
| H2063 | This is the ordinance | of the law | H834 | hath commanded | which the LORD |
| | H2708 | H8451 | | H6680 | H3068 |
| לֵאמֹר | דַּבֵּר | בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל | וַיִּקְחֻ וַיָּבִיאוּ | אֵלָיו | |
| saying | Speak | unto the children | of Israel | that they bring | H413 |
| H559 | H1696 | H1121 | H3478 | H3947 | |
| הַפָּדָה | אֶדְמָה | תְּמִימָה | אֲשֶׁר | אֵין | בָּהּ |
| heifer | thee a red | without spot | H834 | H369 | H0 |
| H6510 | H122 | H8549 | | | wherein is no blemish |
| | | | | | H3971 |
| אֲשֶׁר | לֹא | עָלָה | עַל יָדָהּ | עָלָה | |
| H834 | and upon which never | came | H5921 | yoke | |
| | H3808 | H5927 | | H5923 | |

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 21:3 (Parallel theme): And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke;

1 Samuel 6:7 (Parallel theme): Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

1 Peter 1:19 (Parallel theme): But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org