

Numbers 19:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

Analysis

The preservation of the red heifer's ashes for 'water of separation' (Hebrew 'mei niddah') established a permanent purification system for Israel. This represents God's provision for ongoing cleansing from defilement. The phrase 'it is a purification for sin' (Hebrew 'chattat hi') uses the same word for sin offering, connecting ceremonial uncleanness with moral guilt. The ashes' preservation anticipates the eternal efficacy of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 10:10-14) - His blood remains perpetually available for our cleansing (1 John 1:7).

Historical Context

The ashes were stored outside the camp in a ceremonially clean place, accessible yet separate from daily camp life. This ensured availability while maintaining the sacred nature of the purification ritual. Rabbinic tradition indicates only nine red heifers were prepared from Moses to the Temple's destruction in 70 AD, underscoring the rarity and preciousness of this provision.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the preserved efficacy of the red heifer's ashes strengthen your confidence in Christ's eternal sacrifice?
2. What areas of spiritual contamination in your life need the cleansing water of God's Word applied?

Interlinear Text

וְאָסְרָן	אֶת יִשׁ	טָהוֹר	אֶת	אֶת פֶּרֶ	הַפָּרָה
shall gather	And a man	in a clean	H853	up the ashes	of the heifer
H622	H376	H2889		H665	H6510
וְהִנֵּי יֵם	מִחוּץ	לַמַּחֲנֶה	בְּמָקוֹם	טָהוֹר	וְהִיטָה
and lay them up	without	the camp	place	in a clean	H1961
H3240	H2351	H4264	H4725	H2889	
לְעֵד	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	לְמִשְׁכַּת	וְיִשְׁמְרֶתָּ	לְמַי
for the congregation	of the children	of Israel	and it shall be kept		for a water
H5712	H1121	H3478	H4931		H4325
נֶדֶחַ	חֹטֵא	הוּא:			
of separation	it is a purification for sin	H1931			
H5079	H2403				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:13 (Parallel theme): For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Numbers 19:13 (References Israel): Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

