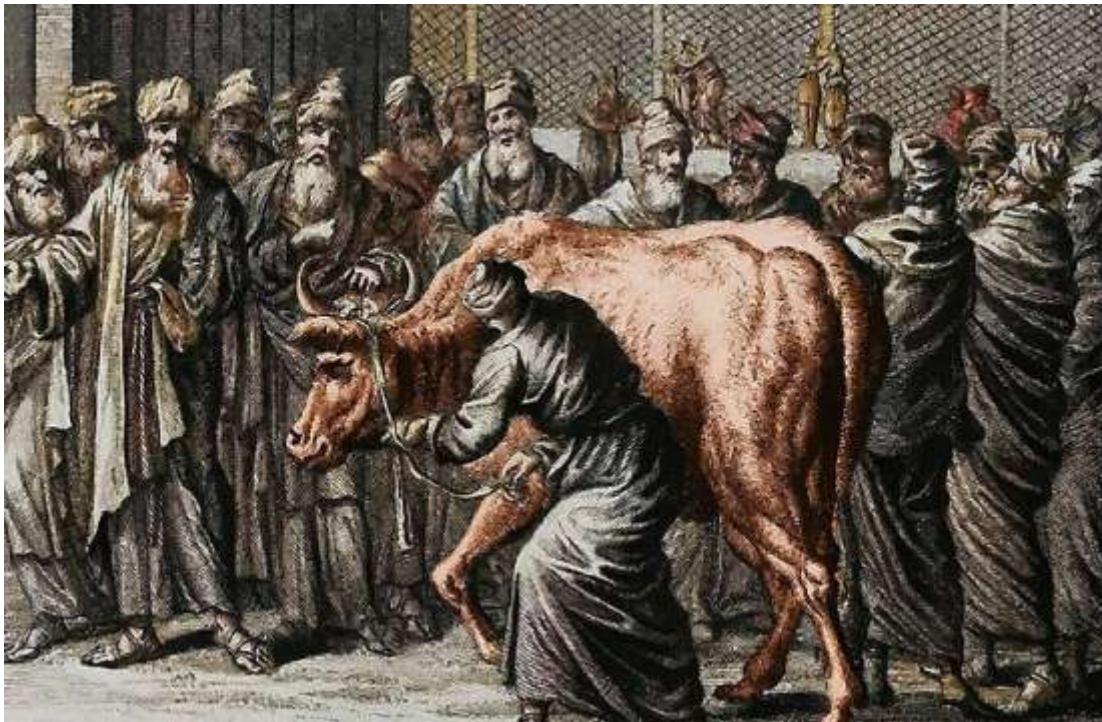




This chapter describes how special holy water was created, that was to be used to purify people who had been made ritually unclean through association of death. Death had become a fixture in the camp. Everyone had seen the way the earth swallowed up the rebels of Korah Dathan and Abiram and all associated with them, and then how fire burnt up 250 men who had stood with them. Then those who complained about this punishments were then plagued, and 14700 people died as a result of that. It had been a dreadful time in the camp. This was on top of the daily death toll of the aged, infirm and those sickly, as it must be recalled that that generation had been informed that they would die in the wilderness. If there were 1.2 million people living between the age of 20 – 80 (see Numbers 2:32) who would not enter the land, then there would have been at least 86-87 people dying every single day for 38 years on average, although most of the deaths would have been towards the end of the 38 years. Death would be very much part of everyday living. Funerals would have been an everyday event, burials in the sandy wilderness

would have been going on all the time. But Israel as a nation had been given a Law which was designed to help them choose Life!

Although death seemed everywhere, and the hope of the entering the land of promise was now over, it did not mean Hope was over. Death could be overcome and Life for evermore, if people learned by their mistakes, and had Faith in the promises of God, and understood what God was teaching in the giving of the law. The Law was a sign of the grace of God, and His provision of a way of forgiveness.

But first people had to understand that it was their nature, that was associated with death. It was unavoidable. They were even later commanded to fight in battle, and again in this they would be defiled by death.

In verse 11,13 of this chapter, the people were told:

He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days... Whosoever touches the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifies not himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: ...

In fact, any association with death, this chapter made clear. – even touching a human bone, or an open pot in a tent where someone died would cause defilement to the people of Israel, under the law that God had implemented.

The law was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ (Galatians 3:24) This provision of ‘water of separation’ made from the ashes of a red heifer, were in fact designed to teach the nation of Israel of the way of salvation through the life and works of Jesus Christ. The separation between God and man which exists because of the defilement of the dying body of sin, can only be ended and reconciliation possible through the cleansing process of forgiveness and new life through the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

The whole nation were to be involved in this process. They were commanded to go and find a red heifer.

There were quite specific instructions given, - each detail of which signified a teaching relating to Jesus Christ, and his work.

- They had to look and search
- For a red heifer – a young female cow not put to the bull
- Had to be free of any blemish
- Could not have been used as a beast of burden
- Eleazar the priest (son of Aaron) had to take it outside the camp
- An unnamed person had to kill it in front of this the high priest's son
- Eleazar had to make a brush of cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet cord and sprinkle her blood before the tabernacle seven times:
- The unnamed person had to completely burn the young cow
- The brush had also to be thrown into the same fire
- Another ritually clean person had to collect the ashes and store them outside the camp,
- The ashes were to be mixed with water to make water of separation
- It was to be a purification for sin.
- The priest had to wash his clothes and body, and could only come into the camp clean in the evening
- So also with the person who burnt the heifer
- So also with the person who collected the ashes

Once the ashes were stored safely, then a second process was to be undertaken to make and use this 'water of separation'

- A defiled person collected some ashes and put them in a jug
- Fresh running water was added to the ashes and mixed
- A 'clean' person to find some hyssop, dip in water
- Flick the water all over the tent, utensils and the defiled person
- To do this on the 3rd day from the defilement and the 7th day
- On this 7th day, the defiled person to wash himself and clothes to be 'clean' in the evening

As it can be seen this was an unusual practice under the law. A lot of ash can be left over from the carcase of a cow, and only a little ash was required to be mixed with the water, and so it was not necessary to keep finding a red heifer. In fact, in the Bible there is no mention of this ever being done again. Also, it is noted that it is very rare for female animals to be offered. Normally it would be male animals. So this was a very special significance. It is the only record of it being done. Once.

The Apostle very quickly gets to the nub of the issue. Hebrews 9:13-14: *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies 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?*

This is the key to understanding the passage. Purifying of the flesh was what was happening under the law, by these ashes of the heifer, but what it was teaching was that through understanding and faith, in the sacrifice which God would provide, then a far greater and effective purifying would take place, and that is the purging of the conscience, from the **dead** works to serve the **living** God.

Israel would know it was about purging – because they were familiar with hyssop as a herb, which they used as a laxative, which purged their bodies, and here this same herb was used as an agent to disperse the special water. Israel not only had to go find the red heifer, to search and look, but also to hunt for the humble hyssop which grew out of the walls and crevices of rock. (1 Kings 4:33) They had to hunt around for a piece of expensive cedar wood as well. There were no mighty cedar trees growing in the wilderness where they were wandering, so they had to rummage through the spoil they took from Egypt, and to look for some scarlet cord. These items were to be taken to the Priest in the centre of the congregation at the tabernacle door. It was the congregation that had to go through their herds and look carefully for the red heifer. She had to be

exactly as described. No blemish. A young cow, not used by man for any work, or put to the bull, not interfered with by the will of man in any way. This would have not been an easy task. They did not keep animals to give them a holiday, but to serve the needs of men. As soon as possible cattle were used to serve men. When this unusual red coloured animal was located it was to be donated without question. So the congregation was involved, a lot of searching and hunting around was required.

This is what is required for every true Israelite after the spirit, to search every nook and cranny of their minds for the evil conscience, for the defilement of sin in their thoughts for the pride, jealousy, anger, covetousness, lust, discontent which lurks, and prepare to purge them. They also on the other hand have to search the scriptures, to seek out and look for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, not to accept any counterfeit with blemishes, no false religion will do.

The Lord Jesus Christ was that special sacrifice, died **once** for all the people (Hebrews 7:27). The female and red aspects are seen in that he was the seed of the woman, and able therefore to be an accurate representative, because he also himself likewise took part of the same (Hebrews 2:14)

The Messiah was of course free from blemish (1 Peter 2:22) and from the earliest age was not influenced by the will of men, refused to be under the yoke, the influence of sin, his service entirely devoted to that of the Father.

He was taken without the camp – outside of the city gate – (Hebrews 13;11-13) to be a reproach, but he was not alone. God was with him. Eleazar means God is my help. But God did not kill him. He was slain by the hands of wicked men. Men with no name, but who represented all those in the natural sinful state who are themselves condemned by their association with death, and sin.

The wood of the cross, the scarlet robe, the hyssop sponge were all there at the death of this unique sacrifice

As the blood of Messiah dropped onto the ground at the foot of the cross, and his blood cried out from the ground, the nation shouted his blood be upon us and upon our children! Truly they were guilty of his blood, and forever associated with his death. Just as the priest dashed the blood seven times before the tabernacle, so also the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from ALL sin. But how was it possible for the people who had killed the Messiah to be purged of their consciences from dead works?

It was not enough just for the blood to be sprinkled seven times, the congregation were still defiled. All who sin are guilty of the blood of Jesus. How is there a possible way to be cleansed? The ashes represented all that was left after the corruptible was consumed by fire. Death completely destroyed the power of sin. Jesus rising from death, was the ashes, made alive by the running water of the Holy Spirit of God's Word. The ashes moving by the water spoke of the New and Living Man, the eternal Christ Jesus. Just as the ashes in the water could be used over and over again, so in a supremely greater way *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God*; Hebrews 10:12

But still, what of the work of the individual defiled by sin, the association of sin, the pattern of the heavenly, shows that it is not true that it is only grace that saves, but works also. When an individual becomes aware his conscience is defiled, he also has to search and look ... *we have found the Messiah* is the cry, the man from Galilee. It is then to submit with humility, to stoop and find the hyssop that purges – though we think we are as mighty as the cedar tree, though our sins are as scarlet, we can become white like wool. (Isaiah 1:18) It is through the waters of baptism that we must wash. But more it is by the reading, keeping and living – making alive the words of the Eternal Spirit, that the resurrected Christ will live in us, the ashes – the evidence of things not seen – made alive by the application of the running water of the Word, only then is our consciences purged from dead works to serve the living God.

Brother Terry