

Maranatha Chapel
Red Heifer Project Update
September 15, 2022

As a church we are constantly on the lookout for where God is moving and what He is doing around the world. Recently, we were presented with an opportunity to participate in bringing to Israel several cows that are candidates for the red heifer sacrifice. We see this as a way for us to ‘Step into the Story’ and partner with the Lord in what He is doing among the people of Israel right now. This article was written to address some of the questions you might have about this project.

1. What is the Red Heifer Sacrifice? The red heifer (*parah adumah* in Hebrew) is a unique sacrifice given by God to Moses and Aaron during the journey of the nation of Israel through the wilderness. The requirements for the sacrifice are found in Numbers 19. There, we discover that the sacrifice of a red heifer was a critical part of the worship of God at the Tabernacle. For anyone—Israelite or foreigner—who had become impure by exposure to death, the red heifer cleansing was the only method that would remove their impurity and allow them to approach the Tabernacle. Moreover, if an impure person approached the Tabernacle without being cleansed by the red heifer sacrifice, the Tabernacle itself would be defiled (verse 13). So the red heifer sacrifice

was a critical part of the worship of God at the Tabernacle, and later at the Temple.

- a. Biblical Origins. The instructions for the sacrifice of the red heifer are given in Numbers 19:1-10:

¹ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: ² “This is a requirement of the law that the Lord has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. ³ Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. ⁴ Then Eleazar the priest is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the tent of meeting. ⁵ While he watches, the heifer is to be burned—its hide, flesh, blood and intestines. ⁶ The priest is to take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and throw them onto the burning heifer. ⁷ After that, the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. He may then come into the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean till evening. ⁸ The man who burns it must also wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he too will be unclean till evening.

⁹ “A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They are to be kept by the Israelite community for use in the water of cleansing; it is for purification from sin. ¹⁰ The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he too will be unclean till evening. This will be a lasting ordinance both for the Israelites and for the foreigners residing among them.

- i. In addition to very specific requirements for the red heifer itself (verse 2), the animal was to be sacrificed “outside the camp” (verse 3). During the sacrifice, the priest was to throw

“cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool . . . onto the burning heifer” (verse 6). Once the sacrifice was complete, another priest was to gather up the ashes and store them in “a ceremonially clean place outside the camp” (verse 9).

- ii. Numbers 19 also describes three ways a person can become impure by exposure to death. Anyone who touched a corpse (verse 11), was in a tent or other enclosed structure with a dead body (verse 14), or touched a grave (verse 16) was rendered unclean.
- iii. This was considered the most severe type of impurity, one that could only be removed by sprinkling the water of cleansing on the person. The water of cleansing was made by mixing ashes from the red heifer sacrifice with water from a spring, which was then to be sprinkled on the unclean person with hyssop on the third and seventh days (verses 12, 18-19).
- iv. Any Israelite or foreigner living among them who became impure by exposure to death and approached the Tabernacle without purifying themselves with the water of cleansing from the red heifer sacrifice was to be cut off from Israel because they had “defiled the sanctuary of the Lord” (verse 20). This is

a “statute forever” for Israel and those living among them (verse 10).

b. Jewish Oral Traditions and History. A complete section of the Mishnah—the written collection of Jewish oral traditions—is dedicated to the red heifer sacrifice.

i. According to the *Mishnah Parah*, to qualify for the sacrifice the heifer—which is a young female cow that has never borne a calf:

- Must be perfect and completely red. Two hairs of any other color will disqualify it. Even its hooves must be red.
- Must be, at a minimum, in its third year of life (at least two years plus one month). Although older animals can be used, younger ones cannot.
- Must be free from all physical blemishes, internal or external, that would disqualify any other sacrificial animal.
- Must have not done any work done. Work includes even a person leaning on it or placing a garment or cloth upon it.

- Must have never been placed under a yoke, even if it doesn't do any work.

Only an animal that meets all these requirements may be used to provide the ashes of the purification process to fulfill the commandment. While not impossible, it is difficult to find a cow anywhere in the world that meets every qualification.

ii. The Mishnah also records there have been a total of nine red heifers sacrificed from the time of Moses until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70AD. The first was sacrificed under the supervision of Moses in the wilderness. The second was prepared by Ezra as part of the dedication of the First Temple. An additional seven more heifers were sacrificed during the entire era of the Second Temple. This was enough to provide for the nation's needs throughout all those years.

iii. In recounting the history of the nine red heifer sacrifices, Maimonides—the great Rabbi and Torah scholar of the Middle Ages (1138-1204AD)—wrote in his chief work *Mishna Torah* that the sacrifice of "the tenth red heifer will be accomplished by the king, the Messiah; may he speedily be revealed." With this statement, Maimonides was affirming the ancient belief

among Jewish scholars that the tenth red heifer would be associated with the Messianic Age.

2. Why is the Red Heifer Significant Today?

- a. For Jews. Since the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948, there has been a growing interest among primarily Orthodox Jews in Israel to build a Third Temple. For them, the importance of rebuilding the Temple lies in its role in the redemption of the world, which they believe can only take place once the Temple is rebuilt and sacrifices are reinstated. The Temple Institute, established in 1987 as part of this movement, has recreated all the vessels that were used for services in the First and Second Temples. They are ready to be used in the Third Temple when it is built.
 - i. Before the Third Temple can begin to function, however, the water of cleansing from the red heifer sacrifice must be available to restore the absolute purity required among the Priests and Levites who will serve at the Temple, and among all who desire to worship there. For this reason, the Temple Institute has been attempting to identify red heifer candidates that meet the requirements of Numbers 19 and the Mishnah.

While a number of candidates have been identified, all of them have been disqualified before they could have been used for the red heifer sacrifice.

b. For Christians. For followers of Jesus, we recognize that no further sacrifice is required for salvation.

i. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus is our High Priest who “offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. . . . And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices” (Hebrews 10:12,18, NLT).

ii. Interestingly, Hebrews is the only place the red heifer sacrifice is mentioned in the Bible outside Numbers 19. The author declares that Jesus’ blood is much more powerful than the animal sacrifices under the Tabernacle system. While those sacrifices were able to purify the flesh, Jesus’ sacrifice goes much deeper. His blood fully cleanses those who believe in Him, allowing them to serve God completely.

¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats ***and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean***, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit

offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:13-14 (emphasis added)

iii. Jesus is Our Red Heifer. Like all the other sacrifices under the Tabernacle system, the red heifer sacrifice gives us a detailed picture of Jesus and His sacrifice for us.

- Like the red heifer, Jesus was perfect, without blemish.
- The red heifer had to be sacrificed “outside the camp.” Jesus was crucified outside of Jerusalem.
- The cedar wood used in the sacrifice represents the Cross.
- The hyssop used in the sacrifice speaks of the thirty-nine lashes that ripped Jesus’ back.
- The scarlet wool used in the sacrifice points to Jesus’ blood.
- The fire that burns the heifer pictures the wrath of God that was poured out on Jesus in our place.
- The spring-water in which the ashes of the heifer are mixed points to the water that poured out from Him as His side was pierced on the Cross—John 19:34.

- Even the priest that oversees the sacrifice might be seen as a type of Jesus. In the process of performing the sacrifice, he becomes unclean so the people can be purified. This pictures Jesus, who, being pure and sinless, took upon himself the impurity and the sins of the people, in order for the people to become clean— 2 Corinthians 5:21.

The red heifer sacrifice is a beautiful, heart-wrenching depiction of Jesus and everything He suffered for us.

3. Why is Maranatha Participating in the Red Heifer Project?

- a. The Bible Refers to the Third Temple as God’s Temple. We believe the Third Temple will be rebuilt, as an essential part of the unfolding plan of God, which will culminate with the return of Jesus. Both Old and New Testament Scriptures foretell a Third Temple. Many of these refer to this as the Temple of the Lord.
 - i. “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in ***the temple of my God.***” —Revelation 3:12.
 - ii. “Rise and measure ***the temple of God*** and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the

nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.”—Revelation 11:1-2

iii. “Who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in ***the temple of God***, proclaiming himself to be God.”—2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

iv. “In that day I will restore ***David’s fallen shelter***—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be.” —Amos 9:11

v. “In the last days the mountain of ***the Lord’s temple*** will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.”—Isaiah 2:2-3

b. The Third Temple is Part of God’s Plan to Reestablish the Nation of Israel and Reveal Himself to Them. God’s heart is to regather and reestablish the Jewish people in the land of Israel to prepare for Jesus’ return, and for their salvation. He promised He would do this through the prophet Ezekiel:

²⁴ “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from

all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. *Ezekiel 36:24-28*

Our hearts are aligned with God's heart, so we want to participate in the work He is doing right now.

- c. The Red Heifer Project is Part of Our Calling. We are walking with our Jewish brothers and sisters in the Red Heifer Project because we believe this is part of our calling at Maranatha Chapel.

According to Romans 9:4-5, we are the beneficiaries of Jewish Scripture. God gave them the prophets and the law. Jesus was Jewish! And we are grafted into God's covenant with them through Abraham. So we are indebted to them for our faith.

Participating in the Red Heifer Project is an opportunity to bless our Jewish brothers and sisters to whom we owe so much.

- 4. How is Maranatha Participating in the Red Heifer Project? How are We Stepping into the Story?

- a. Recently, Jewish rabbis announced at our church that they have found several cows in Texas that could qualify for the red heifer sacrifice. If that is true, it could be another step toward the

fulfillment of prophecy—and the second coming of the Messiah. Working with these rabbis and other friends of Israel, we are providing financial support for the transport and care of the red heifer candidates. Several of them are now living in Israel and waiting for the potential sacrifice.

- b. As important as the Red Heifer Project is, we want to state clearly several things we are not saying about the red heifer sacrifice:
 - i. We are not making any statement about when the red heifer sacrifice will take place.
 - ii. We are not making any statement about the timing of the building of the Third Temple.
 - iii. We are not making any statement about the timing of the return of the Messiah.

These are things that only God knows. We are excited to simply walk with Him in the things He puts before us, and to purify ourselves as we look for His soon return. 1 John 3:2-3

- c. The Red Heifer Project is a great way to step into the story of what God is doing in the world right now. It's not simple. It can be messy. We don't agree on everything. But what we do agree on is

our desire to see the Messiah come! Maranatha (come Lord
Jesus)!

You can learn more about the Red Heifer from Pastor Ray's video series, *Step Into the Story: The Red Heifer* and his book, *As the Days of Noah*.

www.maranatha.tv/stepintothestory

https://www.amazon.com/As-Days-Noah-Ray-Bentley/dp/B09L3QZNYT/ref=sr_1_2?crid=236OYMHOCUPW9&keywords=as+the+days+of+noah+ray+bentley&qid=1644629358&srefix=as+the+days+of+Noah%2Caps%2C123&sr=8-2