

Deuteronomy 21:1-9
And Atonement Shall Be Provided
July 18, 2021

"If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him, ² then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities. ³ And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. ⁴ The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled. ⁶ And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. ⁷ Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. ⁸ Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. ⁹ So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

Types and shadows are often how God reveals future things to us in His word. After a while, I'm sure some get jaded by hearing this. It seems to be the sentiment of a friend of mine who emailed me about a few things and mentioned that as well.

He said, "Ok so your ministry shows Christ throughout the Old Testament. I get that. As a Christian who already believes in Christ as the Messiah your like preaching to the flock....who gets it 1000 times over. Do you preach application as well?"

My answer probably disappointed Him, but it's the only one I feel is faithful to the calling – "No. If people know what the Bible says, they can form their own life applications. Jesus said in John 5 twice that the law spoke of Him. He was implying that we are to look for Him. I despise life application sermons. Line-by-line analysis is what I like. But I toss in life application at times to direct people to want to live their lives in a right manner."

The reason I love to look for Jesus in the Old Testament is because Jesus told us that the writers of the Old Testament wrote about Him. But, for the most part, they didn't say, "Jesus is going to come and do this." Instead, they wrote out words of law, and those words of law anticipate Him.

I can't think of anything more exciting than that. When we see this, over and over and over again as God intended, then the effect is obvious. We will not get pulled astray by people that attempt to misdirect us into every wrong avenue we could be led down.

Text Verse: *"I will wash my hands in innocence;
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,*

*⁷That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all Your wondrous works.” Psalm 26:6, 7*

The Bible is about God’s redemptive narrative, and that redemptive narrative is based wholly and entirely on what God would do in and through Jesus Christ. When we get that, and when we keep getting that, we won’t get sucked in false teachings, we won’t get trapped into odd religious expressions, and we won’t get incorrect ideas about our relationship with God.

How important is this? Well, today we will evaluate the nine verses we just read, and then – as I often do – I will attempt to show you how Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of those things.

But when I do, I will give you an object lesson, right from redemptive history, concerning a group of people who missed this. In their missing, they have gone through many woes. How important is understanding the typology of Christ from the Old Testament? Ask Israel someday when they finally come to Christ.

Someday, they will be able to wash their hands in innocence. That day is probably not far off, but until it comes, many more grievous woes are set to come upon them. This is the sad result of not paying heed to the typology.

It’s not about us. Life application sermons often overemphasize **us**, or they even make it all about us. It’s not. It is about God’s dealings with us in redemptive history. When we know that, we don’t need life application sermons. We will know exactly how to conduct our lives in Christ.

It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Heifer Which Has Not Been Worked (verses 1-9)

The previous chapter dealt with the conduct of warfare. That detailed those rules which governed a public enemy, and one which involved the nation as a whole. This chapter now begins with a private matter, and which results in death. The scope of the matter is less, but the sanctity of life is still being considered. With that in mind, Moses begins with...

¹“If anyone is found slain,

ki yimatse khalal – “Regarding found slain.” The word translated as “slain” is clear. It isn’t just a dead body of someone who might have gotten bitten by bees and died of anaphylactic shock. Rather, it is a person who has clearly been killed.

In this case, the wrong must be righted. Either the killer must be punished, or suitable atonement for the land must be made. This is because, as the Lord has already stated in Numbers 35 –

“So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. ³⁴Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.”

Numbers 35:33, 34

There is a defilement that results from such shedding of blood. The person who shed it must pay for his crime, or another suitable remedy must be found. However, there is more involved in this case, as Moses will explain. For now, he says...

¹ (con't) **lying in the field**

These words, *nophel ba'sadeh*, or “fallen in the field,” actually come later in the verse. The thought as presented is, “in the ground which Yehovah your God is giving you to possess, fallen in the field.” For now, it simply says...

¹ (con't) **in the land**

ba'adamah – “in the ground.” The word is *adamah*. It usually signifies the ground, soil, or earth, rather than the land as territory. It comes from the same root as *adam*, or man. Both come from the verb *adom*, implying redness.

This wording is specific and obviously an important distinction. Instead of using *eretz*, or land – meaning the territory – it says *adamah*. What is also of interest is that the term will not be used again until the final verse of the chapter –

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the **land [adamah]** which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”

Deuteronomy 21:22, 23

The thought of defiling the ground (not the land) with a body curiously brackets the contents of the entire chapter.

¹ (con't) **which the LORD your God is giving you to possess,**

It is the constantly repeated set of words from Moses. He continuously reminds the people that what they will inherit is because the Lord has given it to them. As such, they must comply with what is stated.

Further, the passage is consistently in the singular – “You Israel.” The Lord is giving the land to this people. If the Lord gives them the ground, He can take it from them, cause it to become unproductive, or whatever else He chooses to do with it. In this case, a body has been found slain...

1 (con't) and it is not known who killed him,

lo noda mi hikaku – “no know who struck him.” It is a circumstantial clause with no connecting verb. It describes the conditions under which the situation occurs. A person has been slain, his body is a defiling influence, and the perpetrator is unknown. If such is the case...

2 then your elders and your judges shall go out

In this, the *zaqen*, or elders, are those who represent the citizens. Generally, it is the elders who are responsible for proper conduct within the families, and for maintaining proper standards for all who issue from the tribe to which they belong. The word *zaqen* is from the same root as *zaqan*, a beard. Thus, it signifies someone who has age and experience.

The judges represent the magistrate who makes legal decisions. They are those who would sit in the gates of the city and attend to all legal matters. In this case, these elders and judges are to leave the city in order to conduct the affairs as directed by Moses. They are to go out to where the slain man is...

2 (con't) and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities.

In some cases, this would be obvious. In others, it might not be. The reason for determining this is to find out which city is the closest to the slain, regardless as to whether he lived there. It would also not be an accusation that the murderer must live there. The point has already been made that it is unknown who did it.

Rather, there is another reason entirely for determining the closest city. It is that the resolution of a particular matter must be accomplished by them. This will be seen as Moses continues...

3 And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man

The judges were mentioned in the previous verse. That is certainly because determining the distance between whatever town would be considered a legal matter. If three towns were involved, unless the judges of each participated, the legal distance might somehow be mis-determined.

However, now the issue is no longer just a legal matter. The distance has been determined, and so now the responsibility falls upon the elders of the town. The legal aspect has been resolved, but a moral matter exists that still must be settled. Therefore, the responsibility devolves to the elders who...

3 (con't) will take a heifer

The Hebrew reads *eglat baqar* – “heifer of the herd.” The word *eglah*, or heifer, is derived from *agol*, meaning round or circular. The word herd is *baqar*, coming from the verb *baqar* meaning to inquire or seek. Being a heifer, it is emblematic of the life-bearer. It is to further be one...

3 (con't) which has not been worked

This would obviously be a young heifer, implying innocence. Further, any strength it has developed would be from itself, and not from the hand of man. As man works an animal, it will grow in strength, but this one's strength is its own.

3 (con't) and which has not pulled with a yoke.

There is no connecting conjunction. The second clause, therefore, is in apposition to the first, explaining it. Together, the two clauses read, “which not worked in; which not pulled in yoke.”

The *ol*, or yoke, is from a root meaning, “to affect thoroughly.” This young heifer was not to be worked, meaning it was to have never been yoked. The idea of a yoke on an animal is subjection.

This precept, now being laid forth, is not making the assumption that the murderer is from the city in question. Again, that cannot be assumed. But, as seen earlier, Numbers 35 said that “blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”

Because that is not possible, there must be another source of atonement for the bloodshed, or the land will remain defiled. This would be especially true in the area of the murder. This provision here follows along with that of the cities of refuge, of which Numbers 35 carefully deals.

There, it dealt with *ratsakh*, or the unsanctioned taking of life – either purposefully or by accident. When that occurred, the life of the slayer was forfeit, even when accidental. However, provisions were made to reclaim his life.

There, it noted that the person who purposefully strikes someone and kills him is a murderer, and he – in turn – is to be put to death. His life could not be ransomed. However, provision was made for the person who slayed another unintentionally. He could flee to a city of refuge and be safe from the avenger of blood.

He was obligated to stay within the confines of that city until his death, or until the death of the high priest – whichever occurred first. If he outlived the high priest, his death was considered atoned for, and he could then leave the city of refuge.

Like the intentional murderer, though, no ransom could be paid for the person who accidentally killed another in an unsanctioned manner during the time he was held within a city of refuge. He had to stay there. Only through the death of the high priest could his actions be atoned for.

So, there you have the four provisions thus far for the atonement of the land upon which innocent blood was shed – 1) the murderer’s blood is shed; 2) the accidental killer is kept until his death within the city of refuge; 3) the accidental killer is kept until the death of the high priest in the city of refuge and then is free; 4) the avenger of blood kills the accidental slayer.

In each of these instances, the blood of the innocent slain is considered atoned for. But the circumstance now does not fit into any of these categories. Without a remedy, the death would remain unatoned for, and the land would remain defiled. Thus, a fifth measure is provided. With this understood, Moses next conveys what is to be done once the selected heifer has been obtained...

⁴The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley

Again, it is the elders, those morally responsible for the actions of the younger people in the city, who are to conduct this rite. They are to take the heifer down to a *nakhal*, or valley. The word comes from the verb *nakhal* meaning to inherit or take as a possession. It is a valley...

⁴ (con’t) **with flowing water,**

The Hebrew reads *nakhal ethan* – “valley perennial.” The word *ethan* comes from an unused root meaning “to continue.” Thus, this valley is variously translated as “rough,” “barren,” “stony,” “hard,” or it is described in one way or another to indicate continuously flowing water.

The same words are used in Amos 5:4 and because of the parallelism, it is certainly speaking of flowing water there –

“But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.” Amos 5:4

What is being described is either a continuous valley that will, at times, have water flowing in it, or it is a valley that continuously has water flowing in it. Either way, it is not a stagnant valley. Further, it is a valley...

⁴ (con't) **which is neither plowed nor sown,**

It is an area where no work (the Hebrew word *abad* means to work or serve) has been accomplished. It has not been defiled by common use, and what will occur there is to be the means of atonement. Further, any ground that was cultivated would be defiled by the act. Of this, John Lange seems to be correct when he says, “To this sanctity of the victim corresponds the locality to which it is to be led.”

Some Jewish commentators say that this land was to never be tilled or sown again. That is rather unintelligent. First, it is not to be found in Scripture, and secondly, the purpose of this is atonement. It is as if they cannot understand the meaning of atonement by making such a ridiculous insertion into the text.

The land itself is not at this time being plowed or sown. That is the condition set forth. Once the land is atoned for, it is atoned for. To say that it is never to be plowed or sown again would defeat the entire purpose of atoning for the death. For now, and to effect that atonement, the elders are to bring it to such a valley...

⁴ (con't) **and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.**

This is the same command as was given in Exodus 13:13 and 34:20, both of which speak of breaking the neck of a donkey –

“But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.” Exodus 13:13

The verb for “break its neck” is *araph* which comes from the noun *oreph*, or the “back of the neck.” A donkey, an unclean animal, could be redeemed with a clean animal. In other words, the clean redeeming the unclean. If it was not, it was to have its neck broken.

This heifer is a clean animal. In this case, this clean animal was to die in this unworked valley in order to atone for the sin of murder, thus becoming unclean through the act. It would bear the guilt of the act. It is the clean atoning for the defilement that resulted from the murder.

⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near,

The idea here is that this is a matter of Levitical law, not judicial law. The judges are not who would officiate in this matter. The elders were to perform the ritual, not the priests. This is because it is not a sacrifice for taking away a known sin at the altar. Rather, it is for atonement for the guilt of blood.

Despite it being conducted by the elders, the priests are the mediators of the Levitical law. Therefore, the rite is overseen by them. As Moses next says...

^{5 (con't)} for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him

The Levitical priests were set apart for this very purpose. Anything dealing with matters such as this, then, was to be overseen by them. As it deals with atonement, they are to be the ones to stand and accept it on behalf of the Lord...

^{5 (con't)} and to bless in the name of the LORD;

The thought of both the previous clause, and that of this clause, is found in Deuteronomy 10 –

“At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.” Deuteronomy 10:8

Calling the priests is to acknowledge that this is, in fact, a matter that deals with the Lord directly.

^{5 (con't)} by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled.

v'al pihem yihyeh kal riv v'kal naga – “and upon their mouth shall be every strife and every stroke.” This is referring to what was said in Chapter 17 –

“If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ⁹ And you shall come to the priests, the Levites,

and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment.” Deuteronomy 17:8, 9

As this is a matter of Levitical law, it is right that the priest was to be in attendance. In these verses so far, we have seen the elders and judges included in measuring from any near city – a moral and judicial matter. Then the elders being involved in the moral aspect of choosing the heifer. Now the elders and priests involved in completing the rite of atonement – a moral and Levitical matter.

In this, all classes of the society are involved in the purging away of the bloodguilt which, until it is accomplished, is attached to the entire community. With the slaying of the animal by breaking its neck, another requirement is then set forth...

⁶And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.

The same elders who were measured to be closest, and who then provided the heifer and brought it down to the valley, and who then broke the neck of the heifer, are those who are to wash their hands over the dead heifer there in the valley. The elders stand as the moral representatives of their city, and they are proclaiming their innocence in the matter. Of this, John Lange says –

“a symbolical declaration of innocence (Ps. 26:6; 73:13; Matt. 27:24), is performed, by the elders of the nearest city, with reference to its participation in the guilt, over the heifer, which had been treated like the murdered man, and with direct reference to him.” John Lange

This is the exact opposite of what occurs. They are proclaiming their innocence while standing over the dead heifer which had been treated as the murderer in type, not the murdered man.

Further, this act is not absolving the person who committed the murder. The Lord will avenge that in His own time. This rite is conducted for atoning of the guilt of bloodshed upon the land. They are there stating that they are innocent of the particular crime in any way, shape, or form. As it next says...

⁷Then they shall answer and say, ‘Our hands have not shed this blood,

The words, “have not shed this blood,” are not referring to the heifer. They are referring to the dead man. The heifer is the substitute, sacrificed to atone for the bloodguilt. The elders are stating that they personally, and as far as they know for the entire town, are all innocent of what occurred.

^{7 (con't)} **nor have our eyes seen it.**

In saying this, they are not only claiming innocence, but they are – in essence – stating, “Not only are we innocent, but we have no idea who has done this. Therefore, we cannot punish the guilty. But innocent blood has been shed, and without atonement, the land would continue to be defiled. We are at your mercy and offer this substitute for all of Israel.”

In other words, they are the elders of their city and thus they represent the people of the city. The city is a city of Israel, and their city now stands representative of the cities of Israel. And the cities of Israel stand as representative of all of the people within them. Therefore, the proclamation and petition by these men stand as representative of the nation. Thus, they are next to ask...

⁸ **Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed,**

This is the exact purpose of the ritual. It is to kaphar, or cover over, the act which has been committed. In this, atonement is made, and a propitious relationship is restored. This is the petition instead of the alternative, which is...

^{8 (con't)} **and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.’**

v'al titen dam naqiy b'qerev ammekha Yisrael – “and not give blood innocent in the midst your people Israel.” If a covering is not provided, then the guilt of innocent blood remains. But the Lord is gracious and merciful in abundance, and so Moses promises...

^{8 (con't)} **And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood.**

The law is what makes guilt possible. A violation of the law is what makes guilt occur. The mercy seat, or kapporeth, was placed over the tablets of the law to protect Israel from it.

The sacrifices of the tabernacle were made to kaphar, or cover over, the violations of the law to protect the people from their sins.

And the five means of atonement for the unsanctioned killing of a person were provided to, kaphar, or cover the people in order to protect them from the penalty of defilement caused by the shedding of that innocent blood.

It should be noted that it says, “on their behalf” instead of “on your behalf.” It is third-person plural. The people of the nation are given atonement. This is the purpose of the rite. It does not absolve the guilt of the murderer, but it covers over the guilt for the people which would otherwise remain open and exposed. It is a most important point.

⁹So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you

It is emphatic— *v'atah tebaer ha'dam ha'naqiy miqirbekha* – “And you shall burn away the blood, the innocent from your (singular, Israel) midst.” Moses picks up his words with this firm command. What had brought guilt upon the people is to be removed.

It is not that they wouldn't have been guilty if no one found the body. Rather, the guilt existed because of the murder. But the rite burns the guilt of the shedding of innocent blood away. But it only comes about...

***⁹ (fin) when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.**

Of these words, John Lange says it can mean either, “because it should **do right**, sq. or: when it will **do right**, sq.” In other words, he is saying that Moses might be saying that because the act is done, the blood is forgiven (the example he speaks forth accomplishes it). Or, he might be saying, “when the act is done, the bloodguilt will be forgiven (when the crime is committed, the blood is forgiven upon the accomplishment of the act).”

It's an important distinction. Both are true from the perspective of the reader, but the fact that innocent blood has not yet been atoned for among Israel, the word “when” still applies. That will be explained in our next section.

A place where atonement is made
A spot to go where our sins are covered and taken away
What a glorious, marvelous trade
When through grace we were cleansed. Oh, what a day!

The heifer is given for our atonement
The guilt of the bloodshed is taken away
Down in the valley a marvelous event
We are free from our guilt. Oh, what a day!

Thank You, O God, for Jesus Christ our Lord
Who fulfills what occurred; our guilt is taken away
Thank You for what we have learned from Your word
Thank You, O God, for this marvelous, glorious day!

II. Pictures of Christ and an Object Lesson

The rite and ceremony conveyed here anticipate the work of Jesus Christ, just as does that of the Red Heifer, the Cities of Refuge, the Day of Atonement, and so on. However, like the Day of Atonement, it also conveys a truth that still exists in the nation of Israel today.

And so, I am going to provide both at the same time, hoping you will clearly see the magnificence of what Christ has done, and also the terrible plight that Israel remains in until they come to resolve what this rite pictures among them.

The first thing to consider is the wording of verse 1 where the Hebrew says, *ha'adamah*, "the ground," rather than *ha'erezt*, or "the land." It may be reading too much into this, but the land is Canaan, and the ground is where Israel is.

At the time of Christ's ministry, Israel lived in the land, but they did not possess the land. All they possessed was the ground upon which the Lord placed them. As this is a typological anticipation of Christ, I think the difference is why this is stated.

The words are used interchangeably at times, but this appears to be more than a simple use of synonyms, especially because the last verse of the chapter also uses the word *adamah*, and that is a verse used by Paul when referring to Christ in the New Testament.

At the time of the finding of the body, the elders and the judges are brought forth to conduct an examination of facts. The judges made their determination, and the moral aspect of what is occurring is then handled by the elders.

The guilt of innocent blood rests upon Israel to this day. We know this is so because it is recorded in the gospels –

“So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. ²⁵ And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.” Luke 23:24, 25

This is then reconfirmed in Acts –

“But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” Acts 3:14, 15

For a person who shed blood, there have been four provisions given up until this point. None of them applied. 1) The murderer's blood has not been shed; 2) it was not an accidental killing

and so the accidental killer cannot be kept within the city of refuge until his death; 3) as the killing was not accidental, the killer also cannot be kept within the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; and 4) the avenger of blood has not killed the accidental slayer.

The murderer had not been slain, nor did this meet the requirements of any of the other provisions for unsanctioned killing. In fact, Barabbas was asked for by the people, leaving an innocent to be killed in his place.

This heifer, as a type of Christ, has been provided as a fifth means of covering over innocent blood. As we saw, Numbers 35:33 said that “blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”

Therefore, to atone for the guilt of murder as is prescribed by Moses, an eglat baqar, or “heifer of the herd” is mandated. As we saw, the word eglah, or heifer, is derived from agol, meaning round or circular. In this case, it appears the word was chosen to convey the idea, “What goes around, comes around.”

The word “herd,” as we saw, is baqar. It comes from the verb baqar meaning to inquire or seek. The truth of the matter is to be sought out concerning who Christ is, and what He has done, and to seek the Lord’s favor through Christ. Also, as noted, the heifer being a female is the life-bearer, a term that beautifully reflects Christ.

The next designation was that the heifer was not to have been worked. This means it is young, implying innocence, just as Christ was, in His earthly ministry, innocent concerning sin. Further, any strength it has developed would be from itself, and not from the hand of man.

As man works an animal, it will grow in strength, but this one’s strength is its own. It is reflective of the words of Isaiah concerning the coming Christ –

“He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.” Isaiah 59:16

No man participated in the working of the heifer, and Christ performed His own work. His strength is His own. However, the next clause of that same verse explained exactly what “not worked” meant. The heifer had not pulled a yoke.

The ol, or yoke, comes from a root meaning, “to affect thoroughly.” This young heifer was not to be worked, meaning it was to have never been yoked. The idea of a yoke on an animal is subjection. On a person, it then conveys the idea of degradation.

The people have a yoke upon them because of the precept of the law having been violated. The oxen that had not been yoked is given to take that yoke away. Therefore, it would be unbefitting of the purpose of this rite being described by Moses, and for which this heifer was to be used, for it to have been placed under a yoke.

And so, this heifer looks to Christ who, though born under the yoke of the law was born sinless under that yoke. In other words, the law is a yoke because of sin.

For one who is sinless, and who remains sinless, there is no yoke of bondage; there is no subjugation to sin. Thus, what will happen with this heifer for the people will look to what Christ does for His people –

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

In addition to His state under the law, this not being yoked is certainly explained in Christ’s voluntary service before the Lord. As a yoke implies bondage and forced labor, an animal that has never been yoked has lived free from such constraints. Such was true with Christ, as the author of Hebrews explains it –

“Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:8-10

Christ voluntarily came to do God’s will, and He voluntarily placed himself under the law. His sacrifice replaced these very rites which are mentioned under the law because His covenant replaced the covenant through which they came.

What could never actually bring God pleasure is replaced by that which pleased God the most. This heifer that was never yoked looks to Christ the sinless Man, and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

So, we have the other four provisions already given within the law for the atonement of blood that has been shed. And yet, none of those other provisions will atone for this category. Without a remedy, the land would remain defiled, and the death would remain unatoned for.

Thus, this fifth measure is provided. Together, they sum up the atonement for the guilt of unsanctioned shedding of blood – grace. Five is the number of grace, and God has provided these five ways to accomplish it.

As we noted, it is the elders, those morally responsible for the actions of the younger people in the city, who are expected to conduct this rite.

The rite is to be at a *nakhal*, or valley. As we saw, the word comes from the verb *nakhal* meaning to inherit or take as a possession. It anticipates Christ who will inherit the right to establish a New Covenant through His work.

The *nakhal* is then defined by the word *ethan*, or perennial, it is an unending, or never-ceasing inheritance. In this, the qualities of the sacrificial rite are found both in the nature of the heifer and the surrounding land. It all anticipates Christ and what He is doing.

Once at the location, and with the heifer, the neck of the heifer is to be broken. As we noted, the heifer is a clean animal. In this case, this clean animal was to die in this unworked valley in order to atone for the sin of murder, thus becoming unclean through the act. It would bear the guilt of the unsanctioned killing. The clean atones for the defilement that resulted from the murder.

This is what Christ did, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

It is at this time that the third set of people are introduced into the narrative, the priests. Of them, it said, *v'al pihem yihyeh kal riv v'kal naga* – “and upon their mouth shall be every strife and every stroke.” Theirs is the determination for this matter. What they decide is what the Lord will go with.

And it is the same groups that were present at the trial of Jesus. First, he stood before the Sanhedrin who judged the matter. He stood before the elders who judged the matter. And He stood before the priests who judged the matter.

Murder has been committed, an Innocent stands before them, for their decision to be rendered. In this, the mouths of the priests speak out their decision, along with the elders –

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”

They said, “Barabbas!”

²² Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

They all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!”

²³ Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!” Matthew 27:20-23

At this, the rite takes a perfectly ironic twist when we next read –

“When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.’ Matthew 27:24

Instead of the elders, the moral representatives of the people washing their hands, Pilate is the one who washes his. Israel was to condemn their murderer. They failed to do so. Instead, they condemned the Innocent.

And yet, in condemning the Innocent, they brought about the very means of their ability to receive forgiveness. They sent Christ, who is the fulfillment of this heifer typology, to His death.

To this day, they proclaim their personal innocence while standing over the dead heifer which had been treated as the murderer in type. And who is it that bears the bloodguilt that they claim no knowledge of? It is them.

They failed to have Barabbas executed. Thus, they bear the bloodguilt of the person Barabbas murdered. But they also bear the bloodguilt of the Innocent who was sent to take away their guilt! That is recorded in the next words found in Matthew –

“And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’

²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.” Matthew 27:25, 26

Israel brought on itself its own curse. And that curse continues to this day. Instead of acknowledging their part in the redemptive events they participated in, and which would have provided them atonement, they failed to do so.

The elders represent the people of the city. The city is a city of Israel, and thus their city now stands representative of the cities of Israel. And the cities of Israel stand as representative of all of the people within them. Therefore, the proclamation and petition by these men stand as representative of the entire nation.

Peter and the other apostles explained this to the people, but they rejected what they were told –

“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”
Acts 3:17-21

As we saw, the words, “on their behalf.” are third person plural. The people of the nation are given atonement. Rather than the nation as a whole, each person is forgiven. Thus, typologically, each person must come to Christ. For Israel, when they as a nation come to Him, they will also receive national atonement.

What was accomplished in this passage today is a typological anticipation of Christ. Even if the people conducting the rite were not priests, the animal and the surrounding area both anticipate the person of Christ in His priestly role. Therefore, the Levites were included in the rite as well – thus reflecting Him in that capacity.

As such, Israel as a nation remains unforgiven for their actions in the unsanctioned shedding of innocent blood. The New Covenant has been initiated, and until they come to Christ through His fulfillment of these Old Testament types, they will continue to remain unforgiven.

For us – Jew and Gentile – who have come to Christ, the debts are paid. Those things which separated us from God have been atoned for. Now, full, final, and forever forgiveness has been obtained through His magnificent work.

God has promised to bring Israel into this New Covenant, and that day is probably not far off. They are back in the land, the nations are being aligned according to the prophetic scenario, and the nations will be judged for their actions.

Before that, the rapture of the church will occur. Let us be sure we are ready for that day. It just cannot be far off at this point.

Closing Verse: *“Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!*

Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,

For we have been brought very low.

⁹*Help us, O God of our salvation,*

*For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,
For Your name's sake!" Psalm 79:8, 9*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 21:10-17 A rather important subject for Moses to tell... (The Rights of Wives in Israel) (62nd Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

And Atonement Shall Be Provided

"If anyone is found slain
Lying in the field in the land
Which the LORD your God is giving you to possess
And it is not known who killed him, the killer is not at hand

Then your elders and your judges
Shall go out and measure, whether near or far
The distance from the slain man
To the surrounding cities, to where they are

And it shall be that the elders of the city
Nearest to the slain man, that poor dead folk
Will take a heifer which has not been worked
And which has not pulled with a yoke

The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down
To a valley with flowing water, so shall it be
Which is neither plowed nor sown
And they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley

Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near
For the LORD your God has chosen them
-----to minister to Him accordingly
And to bless in the name of the LORD
By their word every controversy and every assault shall settled be

And all the elders of that city
Nearest to the slain man, as instructed by me

Shall wash their hands over the heifer
Whose neck was broken in the valley

Then they shall answer and say, to this they shall commit
'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it

Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel
Whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood
-----a little or a flood
To the charge of Your people Israel
And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood

So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you
When you do what is right in the sight of the LORD
-----so shall you do

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...