

Hukat “Statute”

Torah Reading: Numbers 19:1 - 22:1

Haftarah Reading: Judges 11:1 -33

Study Notes

Mini-Mysteries

- What is the mystery of the red cow?
- What specifically was the sin of Moshe?
- How did looking at a bronze snake on a pole cure those who had been bitten?

The Red Heifer (19:1-22)

- The text calls the teaching about the red cow a hukat haTorah. A hukah is usually considered a teaching in which there appears to be no rational explanation. It is just to be received and obeyed by faith.
- The ritual itself is clear but the understanding behind it is not so clear.
- The right kind of heifer was so rare that according to the Mishnah only seven existed from Moshe to the end of the second Temple.
- The ashes of the red heifer are mentioned in Hebrews 9:11-13 in connection with the atonement of Yeshua. His cleansing renders the believer totally and forever cleansed within. Our spiritual insides are radically changed to function in another universe where tahor and tam'ei are irrelevant.

Four categories of interpretation

- The Jews had four categories of interpretation:
 - I. Peshat - literal or rational
 - II. Drash - under the surface, deeper
 - III. Remez - symbolic
 - IV. Sode - secretive or mystical
- We'll see how each of these can be applied to the red heifer ritual in more detail during our discussion.

The Sin of Moshe and Aaron

- God told Moshe to speak to the rock before their eyes and it would give water (20:8).
- Instead Moshe struck the rock and God was angry as Moses did not believe in Him (20:12) - “rash words” Psalm 106:33
- Blame has been given to the fact that Moshe said “we” (Moshe and Aaron) will bring froth water instead of God.

- It seems the simplest explanation is that Moshe did not speak to the rock like he was told.
- It must have been serious as his ultimate punishment was not entering the promised land (20:13).

The Healing Snake (21:4-9)

- We find the children of Israel complaining yet again about the food God graciously supplied for them. As usual they asked to go back to Egypt so they didn't have to eat the "worthless" manna.
- God sent snakes among them to punish them for their show of disrespect.
- Here the Israelites genuinely repent and confess their sin against the Lord and turned from it. Reacting to their repentance, God instructs Moshe to make a copy of one of the serpents and put it on a pole. All who look at it are healed.
- It is fascinating that the Hebrew word translated "pole" is also the same word for "miracle". Just as a pole is lifted up and used as a standard bearer for people to see, so is a miracle.
- The Mishnah teaches that it was not the snake that healed but "...what it indicated is that when Israel turned their thoughts above and subjected their hearts to their Father in heaven, they were healed, but otherwise they pined away."

That Other "Pole"

- The snake is a type of Yeshua. John 3:12-15 compares the atonement of Yeshua to the bronze serpent.
- I believe it is the reason why God had the bronze serpent put up on a pole - to provide a picture of the saving work of Messiah.