

Red Heifers 101: Responding to FAQs

Throughout the last few years of writing, teaching and conducting interviews about the red heifers, I have received many good questions and think it would be helpful to bring them together in one location. Compiled here are the core topics and related questions to give you a sound foundation of what the red heifers mean in Bible prophecy and the potential timetable for these prophecies to be fulfilled.

– Do you think the red heifer ceremony has already been performed in secret?

I have often considered the possibility of a secret red heifer ceremony and wondered whether it was possible. For two specific reasons, I don't think the ceremony has taken place in secret.

The Temple Institute, along with the Boneh Israel organization, spent considerable time and resources searching for a qualified red heifer. Rabbis from the Temple Institute visited Texas to give a preliminary inspection and then spent \$700,000 to purchase and fly the five cows over to Israel. Why would they do this if they were not prepared to officiate the ceremony? Either they were originally quite zealous to perform the ceremony and have since changed their minds, or else we are missing another piece of information.

The second reason I believe the ceremony could not be done in secret relates to the geography of the precise locations on the Mount of Olives. If you look at that map, you will see that these two locations are within the boundaries of eastern

Jerusalem and hardly in a remote location. We must remember that the red heifer ritual ceremony essentially involves a large bonfire that could not be hidden in such a populated area. A fire of this size would produce major amounts of smoke and attract the attention of the fire department and police. In addition, ever since Hamas brought attention to the red cows in January 2024, the Arab people are also aware of these developments.

– Some people suggest that the red heifers currently in Shiloh are just decoys. Is this true?

Back in the fall of 2023 I had the opportunity to interview Byron Stinson. He was preparing various logistics for the red heifer ceremony, which was potentially planned for April or June of 2024. Obviously when this window passed, they did not suggest another time frame.

During that interview, I asked Byron about the security situation. These are expensive cows, and I assumed they would be kept in a secure environment that cannot be accessed by the public. Why? Well, remember that any small action can disqualify the cows. They do not have to be killed to be disqualified; they just need to be blemished by a small cut or a brand. Even throwing an object like a blanket or a yoke over a cow could disqualify it.

I had a couple of friends visit the Shiloh visitor center in June 2024. They were so close to the five red cows that the animals were licking my friend's hand. Obviously this is not tight security by any stretch of the imagination. For this reason, I am skeptical that the real qualified cows from Texas are accessible to the public at Shiloh. It seems likely that at least a few of them are decoys. I do not know for sure, and this is just my guess, but looking at the situation logically, it makes sense.

– How many red heifers are still qualified?

Based on the latest news from December 2024, only two red heifers of the original five flown to Israel in September 2022 remain preliminarily qualified. Remember that any cow that is preliminarily qualified must be examined and requalified immediately prior to the ceremony.

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– Is there an upper limit on the age of the red heifer?

According to the Temple Institute website, there is no maximum age limit for the red heifer. There are many diverse opinions on this matter among the rabbis, but the following is an official statement from the Temple Institute website.

As for the time the red heifer may be used for this commandment—the Sages state that it is valid when it reaches maturity, i.e. from the beginning of its third year. From this age and onward the red heifer is valid without age limitations. Though, ideally, one should not wait till it passes the age of four, lest it grows hairs of colors that deem it invalid.

– Does the red heifer need to be born in Israel?

No, it does not.

– Can the red heifer be genetically modified?

Opinions among the rabbis vary on this issue, but efforts have been made in the past to import Red Angus cow embryos for the sake of the Israel red heifer breeding program. It also depends on how someone might define “genetically modified” with its various nuances.

– What will be done with the disqualified red heifers?

While the five red heifers flown to Israel in 2022 were quite

costly, we can be assured that any cow that becomes disqualified will not simply become an expensive steak. Those that are disqualified will be used in the Israeli breeding program, as they still maintain superb genetics to pass on to the next generation.

– When is the next window for the red heifers to be used in a ceremony? Is the red heifer ceremony imminent?

The increased interest in the upcoming red heifer ceremony is positive in that it has drawn more people into the understanding that we are living at the end of the age. The negative part is that misinformation seems to be ubiquitous on the internet. I've also observed a great amount of carelessness or even intentional misleading by so-called journalists when covering news about the red heifer.

In March 2024, CBS News went to Israel to report on the red heifers that are now in Shiloh. They interviewed a rabbi affiliated with the Temple Institute who owns a piece of property on the Mount of Olives where the ceremony will likely take place. In the interview, CBS News intimated that the efforts of those involved in bringing the red heifers to Israel had caused the Oct. 7, Hamas attack. CBS also stated in the video that "a massive altar already awaits where the heifers are to be burned" and showed an image of a large white ramp surrounded by an industrial area and green Astroturf.

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At least three things are wrong with this report. First, this altar is in the West Bank and not on the Mount of Olives, which is the required ceremony location according to the rabbinic tradition of the Mishnah. Second, the ceremony does not involve an altar. In the third temple system, the only altar that exists is on the Temple Mount. The red heifer is

not to be sacrificed, as sacrifices only happen on the Temple Mount; it is to be slaughtered and then burned whole on a pyre with other elements as described in Numbers 19. Third, this altar has since been torn down and is no longer used for rehearsals. Yet the CBS report made it look like this altar is currently being built for the very purpose of the red heifer ceremony.

The red heifers showed up in the news again with exaggerated fanfare. This time it involved a rehearsal ceremony with a picture of a cow next to a rabbi and a priest with several other people. While there was nothing wrong with his report, there were several elements in the picture that I found humorous. One, in the background it showed a paper cutout of a red heifer that was not even fully red! Second, the image included a rabbi who was not from the Temple Institute organization. Third, this practice rehearsal was taking place in the Old City, not far from the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. In the picture you could clearly see the Mount of Olives in the background and the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. So, this practice ceremony was clearly not happening at the required location of the Mount of Olives.

I do not fault the sincerity in those involved in this rehearsal, as they were simply practicing with what appeared to be a young priest. However, many people ran to social media and posted that a new red heifer ceremony was taking place right now in Israel! This was a complete lie and pure exaggeration. Nothing of the sort was true. We always need to do our research and vet information before passing it along, recognizing that much of what is being presented these days is completely erroneous.

At the same time, we realize that the delay in performing the ceremony on the Mount of Olives does not mean those involved in the process are standing idly by. They continue to practice the ceremony, and it remains prominent in their current thinking. Numerous groups of rabbis are working out the

details and trying to gain as much consensus as possible among the various religious orthodox groups.

We are living in exciting times, as we haven't seen even a preliminarily qualified red heifer in 1,900 years. Jesus is coming soon, and He will fix the world and all its mess. The world will be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). God's presence will no longer be in the shadows, and the whole world will give Him the rightful glory He deserves.

– Why is the third temple called the “temple of God”?

I often receive an extended version of this question that says, “If God did not want the Jews to build the temple that will be present in the Tribulation, then why are these temples referred to as the ‘temple of God’?”

There are several ways to think through this question. First, we know Jesus is the final sacrifice, and no other physical temple is needed in this current age. Therefore, in an immediate sense, God does not want the Jews to build a temple. For the Jewish people to return to Moses and the Law instead of receiving Jesus as the Messiah and accepting His completed work would be a step backward. Yet, in order to bring them to ultimate salvation (Rom. 11:26), God will providentially ordain them to build this temple so their trust in the Antichrist will be shattered, which is one reason for the Tribulation period (Jer. 30:7, Dan. 12:7). Bible teachers often label this as a distinction between the *prescriptive* will of God and His *providential* or *permissive* will. God will use this false third temple and their agreement with the Antichrist to break the stubborn will of the Jewish people during the seven-year Tribulation as He brings them back to Himself, and they ultimately call upon the name of Jesus (Deut. 9:6, Hos. 5:15, Matt. 23:37-39).

A second consideration about the use of “the temple of God” in

2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 11:1 revolves around the technical use of the Greek noun *theou*, found in the genitive case, which indicates possession or association. The genitive case is the specific form of nouns in the Greek New Testament. In other words, the temple is not actually “of God,” endorsed by God with its false sacrifices, but instead could be translated “the temple *associated with* God,” and this certainly fits the context of both passages.

A third consideration is that God said quite clearly in Old Testament texts that the Temple Mount is where He would put His *name* (2 Kings 21:7). Yahweh owns the Temple Mount. It is where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac in Genesis 22. It is the place where David purchased the threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:18). Though the Jews are currently in a state of unbelief, the very possession of the location itself could lend to the idea that any temple there would be considered sanctified in some sense—not in a salvation sense, as we see in 1 Corinthians 7:14, where an unbelieving spouse and child are sanctified (set apart) by the believing spouse. I prefer the second option above, but as you can see, there are various ways to understand the use of “the temple of God” in the New Testament.

After nearly 2,000 years, we certainly seem to be on the cusp of Bible prophecy in the 70th week of Daniel. We are witnessing the preparations being set in place for the purification of the Temple Mount and construction of a third temple, which thereby sets the stage for events in the seven-year tribulation. We live in exciting times—and heartbreaking times; it is exciting to realize we may be the generation to witness the Lord’s return, while also heartbreaking to consider the deception, persecution and destruction that are coming on the earth.

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