

Perspective

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August 21, 2025

Red Heifers and the Third Temple

While no organized Levitical priesthood has existed in Israel since the Temple's destruction in AD 70, there are plans afoot. Some of the descendants of the tribe of Levi still have certain ritual privileges and roles within Jewish communities. Also, there are serious discussions about rebuilding the Temple, and some groups are exploring the possibility of restoring the Levitical priesthood in the future. The Temple Institute is involved in training Levitical priests and recreating ancient priestly garments and vessels for the Third Temple in Jerusalem. The Neshar HaKodesh Institute for Kohanic Studies has been established to teach Levitical priests the skills associated with serving in the Third Holy Temple. The Jews don't believe Jesus was the prophesied Messiah, so naturally, they yet look for His coming. Interesting, the first part of Malachi 3:1 says, "*Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple...*" It is not surprising that the Jews would be working to build a third Temple to which the Messiah would come! Let us consider what is being done to prepare for it.

Red Heifers

We hear much about red heifers, but why are red heifers so important? Is there a bonafide red heifer in Israel, and if so, how did it happen? Byron Stinson, a Texas Christian rancher and farmer, raised the red heifers for the movement to fulfill biblical requirements related to rituals necessary for any future Third Temple in Jerusalem. His efforts are connected by a greater effort by the Boneh Israel organization. His prized red heifers are required for ritual purification to those who had become unclean through contact with the dead as prescribed in the Torah in the book of Numbers. God commanded Moses in Numbers 19:2: "*This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come.'*"

Britannica.com states, under the title, "red heifer": "In Jewish history, after the blood of the red heifer had been sprinkled by a priest, the carcass was totally immolated with cedarwood, hyssop, and a scarlet thread. The ashes were then carried to a clean spot and mixed with fresh water in an earthen vessel. A sprinkling of the mixture restored purity to all who had taken part in the ritual."

A website, thepeoplesvoice.tv, reported August 15, 2025 in an article titled, "Secret Red Heifer Sacrifice Performed in Israel After Public Was Told It Was Only a 'Practice'": "In a stunning act of secrecy, religious leaders swapped out the stand-in animal for a flawless, biblically pure red heifer named Tikva—and carried out the first real Red Heifer sacrifice in over 2,000 years. The public only learned after the ashes were already hidden across Israel... When the day came, the disqualified animal never appeared. Instead, Tikva, a perfect red heifer with not a single stray hair, was sacrificed in strict accordance with ancient Jewish law. Every step was carried out exactly as prescribed—from the preparation of the ashes to the ritual purity of the priest performing it. The last time the Red Heifer ritual was performed was in the era of the Second Temple. In Jewish law, the ashes are mixed with water and hyssop, then sprinkled to remove the "impurity of death," making it possible to enter holy space. This time, approximately 10.5 gallons of ashes were created—enough to purify tens of thousands. Organizers say the ashes have already been distributed to undisclosed locations, ensuring they cannot be confiscated or destroyed. The priest chosen to perform the sacrifice had been prepared for his role since birth. Born to the required lineage, he lived in an elevated, closed-off home for more than 20 years to avoid any contact with death. He never attended funerals, walked on cemeteries, or touched a grave. He emerged only for this moment. According to tradition, the completion of the Red Heifer sacrifice means the way is now open for the arrival of the Messiah and the construction of the long-anticipated Third Temple in Jerusalem. Organizers say they kept the event under wraps to prevent disruption from hostile actors, claiming that "anti-Semitic media" and foreign governments had sought to block it."

This step is an important one of many that would be necessary for the building of a Temple. There are viable organizations to build the Third Temple in Jerusalem; the Temple Institute and Build the Temple, are two prominent organizations that have been actively involved in this cause. They have raised funds and are working towards fulfilling the biblical mandate to construct a House of Prayer for all nations. Will a temple really be built? Those involved in preparing by raising perfect red heifers, training priests, and drawing up plans for a temple are very sincere because they believe it will prepare the way for the Messiah to come. It is likely to happen!

However, the true Messiah they rejected, Jesus Christ, is coming again, but to a temple different than professing Christians and Jewish people think.

The Messiah comes to what Temple?

When Jesus Christ returns to earth in great power and glory, He is coming to His Temple. Where is the rightful temple? Many who study the Bible have speculated it will be built on the location of the Dome of the Rock, which is a Muslim temple sitting at the original site of Solomon's temple. Malachi 3:1 is a dual prophecy, meaning there will be a former and latter-day fulfillment. It states, *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me..."* John the Baptist, prepared the way before Christ's first coming.

But when we read Malachi 3:2-4, we read about something which did not happen at the first coming of Jesus: *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years."*

Jesus certainly chastened the religious leaders often; He called them hypocrites, and said they were like white tombs full of dead men's bones (Matthew 23:25-28). Did Jesus' corrective words affect the Pharisees, resulting in offerings emanating from the Temple which were pleasant to the Eternal God as Malachi says? Obviously not. They plotted and succeeded in having Jesus crucified, and He became our sacrifice as the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

When Jesus returns a second time, He will not come as a lowly lamb set for the slaughter, but with power and great glory as a conquering King. Will He return to a temple in Jerusalem? The prophet Haggai speaks of the glorious return of Christ: *"Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the Lord of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place, I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."* (Haggai 2:6-9)

The Jews may very well build a temple, but Haggai isn't speaking of that. Jesus Christ will build a vast temple at the outset of the millenium which is described in Ezekiel 40, but Haggai's prophecy isn't referring to that. Haggai is talking about a glorious temple God will have built not made with human hands, a temple that Jesus Christ will return to when He sets up God's kingdom on earth; and, *"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former."*

How will this be so? Ephesians 2:19-22 tells us, *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*

Keep in mind, the Shekinah (meaning divine presence) eventually departed from the temple, as the prophet Ezekiel prophesied it would happen (Ezekiel 10:18-19). God's presence departing the physical temple marked a pivotal time in biblical history. This departure was viewed as a response to the many gross sins and idolatries of the people of Israel. Israel proved to be unfaithful to God, being worse than other nations around them. In Jeremiah 3:8, God states: *"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also."*

It should have not surprised the Jews that God's presence left the temple at Jerusalem. It is generally believed the Shekinah departed the temple in AD 66 prior to being destroyed by Romans armies in AD 70.

When Jesus Christ came the first time, the Jews were not obedient to God. He dealt with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, who were the educators and leaders, but they were all fleshly minded and carnal. At the temple in Jerusalem, what was done wasn't pleasing to Christ, because He said they had turned a house of prayer into a den of thieves (Matthew 21:13).

When Jesus Christ returns with supreme power and glory, He will not return to physical temple, but He will come this time to a glorious temple –the church. It will be a spiritual temple made up of the saints of God in which God's presence dwells by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; I Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:21-22).

The good news also is God hasn't written physical Israel off, because He desires to still work with them. He will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah in the future, as prophesied in Jeremiah 31:33: *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

They will become, as God intended, a model nation to serve as a beacon to all peoples. God wants them to become His special kingdom of priests who will be a light of His way to all nations (Deuteronomy 4:6-8; Exodus 19:5-6)!