

Egel Arufah (Decapitated Calf)

Ref: Sefer Nezikin, Hilchot Rotzeach, Chapters 9—10

When a corpse is found outside of a City and it is not known who murdered this person, the city nearest to the corpse is held responsible.

🏠 | *Egel Arufah* (decapitation of the calf).¹⁰

PROCEDURE

- 5 Elders from *Bet Din* in *Yerushalayim* measure and establish which city is closest and responsible.
- Dead person buried where he was found.
- Court of responsible city brings a calf which was paid for by all the inhabitants of that city.
- Calf brought to a strong flowing river (*Etan*).
- Calf decapitated there from behind, and all the elders wash their hands and say a prayer asking *Hashem's* forgiveness for possibly having been indirectly responsible for the murdered person's death.
- The Priests then also ask for atonement.


FACTORS

- *Yerushalayim* never brings a calf.
- Measurement has to be exact and not estimated.
- Cities that can be considered, have to have a court of 23 judges.
- If city nearest to corpse is a gentile one or it is near the border, it is presumed that murderer was a Gentile and no measurements are made.
- Population number carries more weight than distance from corpse. Even if the bigger city is further away than the second city, the more populous one will be held responsible.
- Measurement is from the nose.
- Many corpses also only require 1 *egel arufah*.
- Person must have been slain with a sword and such a person is called a *chalal*.
- Corpse has to be lying on the earth and not say, suspended in a tree etc.
- If murderer was seen, then the city is not held responsible and a calf is not decapitated.

The calf

- Practiced only in *Eretz Yisrael* (and in Trans Jordan).
- Calf has to be 2 years old or younger.
- Not disqualified by blemishes (But cannot be *tref*).
- Not allowed to have been worked (Same as *Parah Adumah* – Red Heifer).
- Not allowed to have worn a yoke.
- Decapitation is only in daytime.
- Forbidden to benefit from the calf (should be buried where it was decapitated).
- If murderer was discovered after decapitation, he should still be executed.

📖 | It is forbidden to sow seeds or till the river bed at which the calf was decapitated.¹¹
Punishment for doing this is *malkot*.

 **Reminder**

Pack on Punishment for *Sefer Nezikin*

