

Ezekiel 39:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search.

Analysis

They shall sever out men of continual employment—The Hebrew *anshei tamid* (אֲנָשֵׁי תָמִיד) literally means "men of continuity" or "permanent duty," indicating professional burial crews appointed for sustained work. The verb *havdil* (הִבְדִּיל, "sever out") means to separate or set apart, the same term used for Levitical consecration, suggesting this cleansing work carries quasi-sacred status.

Passing through the land with the passengers indicates systematic surveying of the entire territory. **After the end of seven months shall they search** reveals two phases: initial mass burial (seven months), then careful inspection to find overlooked remains. The Hebrew *chaqar* (חָקַר, "search") implies thorough investigation, used elsewhere for mining precious metals (Job 28:3). This meticulous approach demonstrates that covenant holiness requires exhaustive diligence, not casual approximation.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite purity laws required identifying and removing all sources of defilement. The two-phase process (mass burial followed by careful search) reflects practical wisdom: after initial removal of obvious corpses, detailed inspection could locate scattered remains.

Appointing permanent crews (anshei tamid) parallels Levitical duties of maintaining temple purity. This suggests the land's cleansing holds covenantal significance comparable to sanctuary purification. For exilic readers, this promised comprehensive restoration—not partial recovery but thorough renewal fitting for God's renewed presence. The phrase echoes Joshua's conquest instructions to thoroughly dispossess Canaan, suggesting Gog's defeat accomplishes what incomplete earlier obedience had not.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does God require such exhaustive thoroughness rather than declaring the land ceremonially clean by divine fiat?
2. How does the two-phase purification process (initial cleansing plus careful searching) apply to pursuing holiness in the Christian life?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶנֶשׁ י	תָּמִיד	יִבְדּוּ יָלֹו	הָעֹבְרִים		
H376	of continual employment	And they shall sever out	passing through		
	H8548	H914	H5674		
הָאָרֶץ	מִקְבְּרֵי יָם	אֶת הָעֹבְרִים	אֶת הַנּוֹתָרִים	עַל	
of the earth	to bury	H853 passing through	H853 those that remain	H5921	
H776	H6912	H5674	H3498		
פָּנָיו	הָאָרֶץ	לְטַהֲרָהּ	מִקֵּץ הַ	שִׁבְעָה	חֳדָשִׁים
upon the face	of the earth	to cleanse	it after the end	of seven	months
H6440	H776	H2891	H7097	H7651	H2320
יִחְקְרוּ:					
shall they search					
H2713					

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