

Numbers 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of their's, every meat offering of their's, and every sin offering of their's, and every trespass offering of their's, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons.

Analysis

This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. God designates specific sacrificial portions for priestly support. The phrase qodesh haqqodashim (קדש הקודש, "most holy things") indicates supreme consecration—these offerings belonged to the highest category of holiness.

"Reserved from the fire" (min ha-esh, מִן־הָאֵשׁ) means the portions not consumed on the altar. While most sacrifice was burned, specific parts became priestly food. The four categories—minchah (grain offering), chattat (sin offering), and asham (trespass/guilt offering)—represent the primary non-burnt sacrifices whose remains sustained the priesthood. This established the principle that those who serve the altar share in its provisions (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

This divinely-ordained support system prevented priests from needing secular employment, freeing them for full-time ministry. The holy nature of their sustenance reminded them constantly that they lived on grace—their food came from offerings bringing reconciliation between God and His people. Paul later

applied this principle: those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Historical Context

This instruction came after Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16-17) when God reaffirmed Aaron's priesthood and defined priestly prerogatives precisely. In ancient Near Eastern temples, priests typically consumed portions of sacrifices, but Israel's system was unique in tying priestly support directly to atonement offerings. Unlike Egyptian or Mesopotamian priests who often accumulated vast wealth and land, Israel's priests were sustained solely through designated sacrificial portions and tithes, preventing them from becoming a landed aristocracy. This arrangement continued throughout the temple period until AD 70.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the principle of supporting spiritual workers 'from the altar' apply to supporting pastors and missionaries today?
2. What does it mean that those who minister holy things must be sustained by holy provision rather than secular wealth?
3. How does eating from atonement offerings daily remind ministers that they live by grace, not merit?

Interlinear Text

לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה
H2088	H1961	H0	H6944	H6944	H6944
reserved from the fire	reserved from the fire	every oblation	every oblation	of theirs every meat offering	of theirs every meat offering
H4480	H784	H3605	H7133	H3605	H4503
וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל
H3605	H2403	H3605	H3605	H817	H817
of theirs and every sin offering	of theirs and every sin offering	of theirs and every trespass offering	of theirs and every trespass offering		
H834		H7725	H0	H6944	H6944
אֲשֶׁר	אֲשֶׁר	לִ	לִ	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה
רְשָׁוָה	רְשָׁוָה	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	לְבָנָה	לְבָנָה
H834		H7725	H0	H6944	H6944
וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל	וְלְכָל
This shall be thine of the most		H1931		for thee and for thy sons	
H6944				H1121	

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 7:7 (Sin): As the sin offering is, so is the trespass offering: there is one law for them: the priest that maketh atonement therewith shall have it.

Leviticus 4:22 (Sin): When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty;

Leviticus 4:27 (Sin): And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty;

Leviticus 14:13 (Holy): And he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the holy place: for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering: it is most holy:

