

Numbers 19:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.

Analysis

This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days—Death's contaminating power extended to everyone and everything in proximity. The Hebrew torah (תּוֹרָה, law/instruction) indicates this is authoritative divine teaching governing ritual purity. The tent, Israel's basic dwelling unit, became a zone of contamination requiring comprehensive purification.

Seven days of uncleanness emphasizes death's seriousness—the same duration as major ritual impurities (Leviticus 15:19, 28). Death, sin's ultimate consequence (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23), defiled everything it touched. This wasn't superstition but profound theological symbolism: death represents the curse of sin, incompatible with the Holy God's presence. The ritual reminded Israel that they lived in a fallen world under sin's reign until the coming Redeemer would abolish death (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, death produced ritual impurity requiring purification before resuming normal activities, especially worship. Israel's system was more comprehensive than neighboring cultures, emphasizing death's theological significance as sin's consequence. In practical terms, with approximately 2-3 million Israelites and normal mortality rates, thousands died

annually, making corpse contamination a constant concern. This law ensured the community maintained ritual purity necessary for God's presence among them.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does death's contaminating power illustrate sin's pervasive effects on all creation?
2. What does the requirement for purification before worship teach about God's holiness?
3. In what ways does Christ's resurrection defeat death's defiling power permanently?

Interlinear Text

זֶה הַתּוֹרָה	אֲדָם	כִּי יָמוּת	בְּאֵלֵהָ	כָּל
H2063		H3588		H3605
This is the law	when a man	dieth	and all that is in the tent	
H8451	H120	H4191	H168	
וְכָל־הַבָּאִים	אֵלֵהָ	בְּאֵלֵהָ	וְכָל־	אֲשֶׁר־
H935	H413		H3605	H834
all that come	and all that is in the tent			
	H168			
וְכָל־הַבָּאֵלֵהָ	יִטְמָא	שִׁבְעַת	יָמִים:	
and all that is in the tent	shall be unclean	seven	days	
H168	H2930	H7651	H3117	