

Numbers 19:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:

Analysis

And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there—The purification required a ceremonially clean person as mediator, prefiguring Christ's sinless mediation. Hyssop (ezov, עִזּוֹב), a small bushy plant, served as the aspergillum (sprinkling device). Hyssop's use connects to Passover blood-application (Exodus 12:22) and David's plea "purge me with hyssop" (Psalm 51:7), consistently symbolizing cleansing.

The water mixed with red heifer ashes (called "water of separation," v. 9) was sprinkled on tent, vessels, and persons—comprehensive purification of place, possessions, and people. "Sprinkle" (nazah, נָזַח) means to scatter droplets in ritual purification. This anticipates Christ's blood being "sprinkled" on believers (Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 1:2). The clean person mediating purification for the unclean models Christ, the sinless one who cleanses sinners without becoming contaminated Himself.

Historical Context

Hyssop was likely the Syrian marjoram (*Origanum syriacum*), a common plant in the Middle East with small branches ideal for sprinkling. Its humble nature may

symbolize that God uses simple means for profound spiritual realities. The practice of ritual sprinkling with hyssop was common in Israel's purification rites (Leviticus 14:4-7, 49-52). The requirement that a clean person perform the sprinkling created a purification hierarchy—those already pure could restore others, illustrating spiritual restoration through those walking in fellowship with God.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the requirement for a clean mediator prefigure Christ's sinless mediation?
2. What does hyssop's humble nature teach about God's choice of means for spiritual cleansing?
3. In what ways should spiritually clean believers serve as agents of restoration for the defiled?

Interlinear Text

וְלָקַח ח	אֶזְזֹב	וְטָבַל	בַּמַּיִם	אִישׁ	טָהוֹר	וְהִזָּה
shall take	hyssop	and dip	it in the water	person	And a clean	and sprinkle
H3947	H231	H2881	H4325	H376	H2889	H5137
עַל	הָאֹהֶל	וְעַל	כָּל	הַכֵּלִים	וְעַל	
H5921	it upon the tent	H5921	H3605	and upon all the vessels	H5921	
	H168			H3627		
וְעַל	הַנָּפֶשׁ	וְעַל	הַיּוֹשֵׁב	וְעַל	הַיּוֹשֵׁב	וְעַל
	and upon the persons	H834	H1961	H8033	H5921	
	H5315					
הַנֶּגַע	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל
that were there and upon him that touched						
	H5060					
אִישׁ	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל
a bone	H176					
	H6106					
אִישׁ	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל
or one slain	H176					
	H2491					
בְּקִרְיָה	אִישׁ	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל
or one dead	H176					
	H4191					
בְּקִרְיָה	אִישׁ	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל	וְעַל
or a grave	H6913					
	H6913					

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:14 (Parallel theme): How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Numbers 19:9 (Parallel theme): And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.