

Numbers 19:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

Analysis

And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until the even—The contagious nature of ritual uncleanness (תְּמֵהָה tame) is emphasized by the double use of **unclean**—both the object touched and the person touching become defiled. The phrase **until the even** (עַד־הַעֲרֵב ad-ha'arev) establishes temporal limitation—uncleanness wasn't permanent but required purification before nightfall.

This verse concludes the red heifer regulations (Numbers 19), which provided purification for corpse contamination—the most severe form of ritual uncleanness. The elaborate cleansing ritual (ashes of red heifer mixed with water, sprinkled on the defiled) foreshadows Christ's blood that 'purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God' (Hebrews 9:13-14), providing cleansing unavailable through mere ceremonial washings.

Historical Context

The red heifer ritual (Numbers 19) addressed Israel's frequent exposure to death during wilderness wandering and ongoing life in Canaan. Unlike other offerings performed at the tabernacle, red heifer ashes were prepared outside the camp and stored for ongoing purification needs, making cleansing available continuously.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the contagious nature of uncleanness (spreading by mere touch) illustrate sin's corrupting influence?
2. What does the temporal limitation ('until evening') teach about the availability of cleansing versus permanent defilement?
3. How does the red heifer's cleansing from death-contamination point forward to Christ's purging of the conscience from 'dead works'?

Interlinear Text

וְכֹל	אֲשֶׁר	תְּкַנֵּת	בְּ	וְ	אַטְמָתָה
H3605	H834	person toucheth	H0	And whatsoever	the unclean
		H5060		H2931	
אַטְמָתָה	וְ	נֶפֶשׁ	תְּקַנֵּת	אַטְמָתָה	תְּ
it shall be unclean	and the soul	person toucheth	it shall be unclean		H5704
H2930	H5315	H5060	H2930		
בְּעָרְבָּה:					
until even					
H6153					

Additional Cross-References

Haggai 2:13 (Parallel theme): Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

Leviticus 7:19 (Parallel theme): And the flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire: and as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.

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