

Numbers 31:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And purify all your raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood.

Analysis

Purify all your raiment...all that is made of skins...goats' hair...and...wood—this verse expands purification from persons (v.19) to possessions. The Hebrew chata (purify) required treating all plundered items that contacted corpses or battlefield death. Different materials required different methods (v.23): fire-resistant metals went through fire, while organic materials (cloth, leather, hair, wood) underwent water purification to avoid destruction.

This comprehensive cleansing taught that defilement spreads beyond persons to possessions—sin's contamination affects everything it touches. Israel couldn't bring death's taint into the camp even through inanimate objects. The principle: holiness requires attention to details; partial obedience preserves corrupting influences. New Testament believers are called to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit' (2 Corinthians 7:1), examining not just actions but possessions, entertainments, and influences that defile.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare plunder included clothing, leather goods (tents, water skins, armor), woven items (goat hair tents were common), and wooden implements (bows, tools, household items). Bringing these into camp without purification would ritually defile the entire community, making corporate worship impossible. The law anticipated problems: soldiers couldn't simply abandon valuable spoils, so God provided cleansing methods preserving material value while removing

spiritual defilement. This demonstrated that holiness concerns extend to economic and material dimensions, not just personal morality—a distinction often lost in modern individualistic spirituality.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What possessions or media in your life carry spiritual 'contamination' requiring removal or cleansing?
2. How does God's concern for purifying even material goods challenge contemporary separation of 'sacred' and 'secular' spheres?

Interlinear Text

מְעַשֵּׂה	הָ	אֶכֶל	עַ	וּרְ	אֶכֶל	כָּלִ	בְּ גַד	אֶכֶל	מְעַשֵּׂה	הָ	אֶכֶל
all	your	raiment			and	all	that	is	made	of	skins
H3605		H899	H3605			H3627		H3605	H5785	H3605	H4639
עַזְבָּן	עַזְבָּן	אֶכֶל	כָּלִ	עַ	וּרְ	אֶכֶל	תְּתַחַטְאֹו:	עַ	וּרְ	אֶכֶל	מְעַשֵּׂה
of	goats	H3605	and	all	that	is	made	of	wood	And	purify
H5795			H3627		H6086		H2398				

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