

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

וְכָל	בְּגָד	וְכָל	כָּלִי	עֹר	וְכָל	מַעֲשֵׂה
H3605	all your raiment	H3605	and all that is made	of skins	H3605	and all work
	H899		H3627	H5785		H4639
וְזֵי	וְכָל	כָּלִי	עֵץ	תְּתַהַרְטֵאוּ:		
of goats	H3605	and all that is made	of wood	And purify		
H5795		H3627	H6086	H2398		