

Numbers 5:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

Analysis

The jealousy offering's requirement that it contain no oil or frankincense (unlike other grain offerings) symbolized the bitter nature of the investigation. Oil represented joy and frankincense represented prayer; their absence indicated this was not a celebratory offering but a solemn trial before God. The meal of barley (rather than wheat) suggested humility or even poverty. This offering 'bringing iniquity to remembrance' shows that sin cannot remain hidden but must be brought to light before God, the righteous Judge.

Historical Context

This unusual trial by ordeal appears unique in Scripture, divinely instituted to address accusations of adultery when witnesses were unavailable. Ancient Near Eastern laws (like the Code of Hammurabi) included various trial by ordeal procedures, but Israel's was distinctively God-centered—relying on divine judgment rather than superstitious rituals. The bitter water's supernatural operation demonstrated God's active involvement in revealing truth and executing justice.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this trial procedure demonstrate that God sees all secret sins and will bring them to light?
2. What does the absence of oil and frankincense teach about the seriousness of sin before God?

Interlinear Text

וְהֵב יָא	הָאִישׁ	אֶת	אִשְׁתּוֹ	אֶל	הַכֹּהֵן	
and he shall bring	Then shall the man	H853	his wife	H413	unto the priest	
H935	H376		H802		H3548	
וְהֵב יָא	אֶת	קֶרְבְּנָהּ	עַל יְה	עֲשִׂירַת	הָאֵיפָה	
and he shall bring	H853	her offering	H5921	for her the tenth	part of an ephah	
H935		H7133		H6224	H374	
מֶחֱ	שְׂעֹרִים	לֹא	יִצֹק	עַל יו	וְלֹא	יִתֵּן
meal	of barley	H3808	he shall pour	H5921	no oil	H3808
H7058	H8184		H3332		H8081	H5414
עֲלִיו	לְבֹנָה	כִּי	מִנְחָת	קִנְאֹת	הָוָא	מִנְחָת
H5921	frankincense	H3588	an offering	of jealousy	H1931	an offering
	H3828		H4503	H7068		H4503
זָכָר וְ	מִזְבֵּחַ	עֲוֹן:				
of memorial	bringing	iniquity				
H2146	H2142	H5771				

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 29:16 (Sin): And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

1 Kings 17:18 (Sin): And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

Leviticus 5:11 (Sin): But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense thereon: for it is a sin offering.

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