

Numbers 5:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water:

Analysis

The holy water in an earthen vessel combines the sacred and the common. Holy water from the laver used for priestly consecration is placed in a common clay vessel, then mixed with dust from the tabernacle floor. This mixture of holy, common, and even base elements creates the water of testing. The earthen vessel may represent humanity—containing what is holy yet being common clay. The dust recalls the curse on the serpent and on Adam—'dust you are and to dust you shall return.'

Historical Context

The laver stood in the tabernacle courtyard between the altar and the tent entrance. Priests washed there before entering God's presence or offering sacrifices. The water was thus associated with purification and preparation to approach God. The tabernacle floor's dust came from the very ground made holy by God's presence.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the combination of holy water and common dust teach about God's ability to use all elements for His purposes?
2. How does the earthen vessel symbolize humanity's role as bearers of what is holy?
3. In what ways does the dust element recall the curse and point toward the need for redemption?

Interlinear Text

וְמִן	בְּכָלִ	קְדֻשָּׁה	בְּמִים	הַפֶּה	וְקָרְבָּן	שְׁרָשָׁה	וְמִן
shall take	And the priest	it into the water	holy	vessel	in an earthen		H4480
H3947	H3548	H4325	H6918	H3627	H2789		

וְיָקַר בְּמִשְׁמָךְ | תְּקַנֵּעַ יְהִי אָשָׁר הַעַפְרָה וְיָקַר כִּי תְּקַנֵּעַ יְהִי אָשָׁר הַעַפְרָה

בְּמִים: אֶל יָנָת | בְּכֶה | And the priest and put H3548 H5414 H413 H4325 it into the water

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 30:18 (Temple): Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

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