

Numbers 5:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water.

Analysis

Taking a handful of the memorial offering and burning it on the altar mirrors the standard grain offering procedure, but in this context, it serves as a memorial before God of the suspected transgression. The burning creates smoke that ascends to God, bringing the matter formally into His presence. Only after this memorial is made does the woman drink the bitter water. This sequence teaches that accusation, memorialization before God, and divine judgment must follow proper order. The Reformed emphasis on God's ordained means applies even to matters of judgment.

Historical Context

The memorial portion (Hebrew 'azkarah') of grain offerings was always burned on the altar while the priests ate the remainder. This portion served as a representative sample that brought the entire offering before God. Here, it memorialized the allegation being tested.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the memorial aspect of this offering teach about bringing our grievances before God?
2. How does the required sequence of events demonstrate the importance of following God's prescribed order?
3. In what ways does the ascending smoke symbolize our prayers and petitions rising to God?

Interlinear Text

וְקַח יָ	וְהָכִהוּ	וּמִן	וְהַמִּנְחָה	אֶת	אֲזַכְרָהּ
shall take an handful	And the priest	H4480	of the offering	H853	even the memorial
H7061	H3548		H4503		H234
וְהִקְטִיר	וְהִמְזִיבָהּ	וְאַחֲרָיִם	וְיִשְׁקָהּ	אֶת	
thereof and burn	it upon the altar	and afterward	to drink	H853	
H6999	H4196	H310	H8248		
וְהָאֵשׁ	אֶת	וְהַמַּיִם			
shall cause the woman	H853	the water			
H802		H4325			

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 2:2 (Sacrifice): And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD:

Leviticus 2:9 (Sacrifice): And the priest shall take from the meat offering a memorial thereof, and shall burn it upon the altar: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

Leviticus 5:12 (Sacrifice): Then shall he bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it, even a memorial thereof, and burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: it is a sin offering.

