

Numbers 8:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.

Analysis

After that shall the Levites go in to do the service (אַחֲרֵיכֶן יָבֹאוּ כְּלֵיָם, acharei-khen yavo'u)—the temporal marker 'after that' is critical. Service follows consecration; work follows worship; ministry follows cleansing. The sequence is inviolable: **thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them** must precede tabernacle service. The verb טָהַר (taher, 'to cleanse/purify') connects to the water of purification (v.7) and shaving ritual (v.7).

This principle extends beyond Levitical service to all Christian ministry: effective service flows from purified hearts. Jesus insisted his disciples needed washing (John 13:8) before they could serve. The order cannot be reversed—external religious activity without prior inward cleansing produces hypocrisy, not holiness.

Historical Context

The cleansing ritual (described in Numbers 8:5-14) included sprinkling with 'sin water,' full-body shaving, and washing clothes—a thorough purification preparing the Levites for lifelong tabernacle service beginning at age 25 (8:24).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What 'cleansing' must precede your service to God, and how do you maintain spiritual purity?
2. How does the principle 'cleansing before service' expose the danger of religious activity divorced from heart transformation?
3. In what ways does your ministry flow from prior consecration rather than mere duty or obligation?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה	לַעֲבֹד	דְּלֵבָה	מִן	בְּאֹתָהּ	וְאַמְרֵה	וְאַתָּה
And after	go in	that shall the Levites	to do the service			H853
H310	H935	H3881	H5647			
אַתָּה	מִזְבֵּחַ	מִזְבֵּחַ	וְעַמְבֹדָה	וְעַמְבֹדָה	וְעַמְבֹדָה	
of the tabernacle	of the congregation	and thou shalt cleanse				H853
H168	H4150	H2891				
וְעַמְבֹדָה	וְעַמְבֹדָה	וְעַמְבֹדָה				
them and offer	them for an offering					
H5130	H853	H8573				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 8:11 (Sacrifice): And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD.

Numbers 8:13 (Sacrifice): And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD.