

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 (אַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹאוּ הַלְוִיִּים, 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

וְאַחֲרַיִ	כֵּן	יָבֹאוּ	הַלְוִיִּם	לַעֲבֹד	אֶת
And after	H3651	go in	that shall the Levites	to do the service	H853
H310		H935	H3881	H5647	
אֶת הַל		מִוֶּדֶד	וְטָהַרְתָּ	אֹתָם	
of the tabernacle		of the congregation	and thou shalt cleanse		H853
H168		H4150	H2891		
וְהִנִּפְתָּ	אֹתָם	תְּנוּפָה:			
them and offer	H853	them for an offering			
H5130		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.