

Numbers 8:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them.

Analysis

The Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes—The dual purification (חָטָא chata, ceremonial cleansing) and washing (כָּבַס kabas, laundering garments) symbolizes both inward and outward sanctification. Ancient Near Eastern priestly service universally required ritual purity, but Israel's standards uniquely emphasized moral transformation alongside ceremonial cleanliness.

Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD—The wave offering (תְּנוּפָה tenuphah) of living persons (not animals) dramatically pictures the Levites' total dedication to God's service. Aaron's mediatorial role prefigures Christ's presentation of believers as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), holy and acceptable to God.

Historical Context

Wave offerings typically involved priests moving sacrificial portions in prescribed patterns before the altar. Applying this ritual to human beings (Numbers 8:11-15) was unique to Levitical consecration, emphasizing their sacred status as God's possession rather than common Israelites.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the combination of ceremonial cleansing and clothing washing illustrate the comprehensive nature of sanctification?
2. What does it mean to be 'offered' to God as a living person rather than remaining in self-directed living?
3. How does Aaron's mediatorial presentation of Levites point forward to Christ's high-priestly ministry?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּתְחַטְּאוּ	הַלְוִיִּם	וַיִּכְבְּסוּ	בְּגָדֵיהֶם	וַיִּנָּחֲ	אֶהֱרֹא
were purified	And the Levites	and they washed	their clothes	offered	and Aaron
H2398	H3881	H3526	H899	H5130	H175
אֹתָם	תְּנוֹפֵחַ	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה	וַיַּכֶּר	עֲלֵיהֶם
H853	them as an offering	before	the LORD	made an atonement	H5921
	H8573	H6440	H3068	H3722	
אֶהֱרֹא	לְטַהֲרָם:				
and Aaron	for them to cleanse				
H175	H2891				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 8:7 (Parallel theme): And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

Numbers 19:19 (Parallel theme): And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

Numbers 8:15 (Sacrifice): 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.

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