

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 (אַפְּדָה chata, ceremonial cleansing) and washing (קָבֵד 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 (תְּנֻפָּה tenupah) 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

אָבָר | תִּתְחַטֵּא וְ | בְּגִדִּים מְ | תִּכְבֹּשׁ | מְ | וְ | נָאָרֶב |
and Aaron offered their clothes washed and they Levites And were purified

H2398

H3881

H3526

H899

H5130

H175

עַלְיָה מְ | וְ | יְכֹפֵר | לְפָנֵי | הַ | יְהִי | הַ | תְּנוּפָה | הַ | אֶת |
made an atonement before the LORD before them as an offering

H853

H8573

H6440

H3068

H3722

H5921

אָבָר | לְטַבְּרָם: |
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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