

Exodus 19:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day:
come not at your wives.

Analysis

And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

Sexual abstinence prepares for divine encounter—not because sexuality is evil but because it's consuming and would distract from single-minded focus on God. The command 'come not at your wives' (אל תגשו אל אִשְׁתְּךָ, al tiggeshu el ishah) imposes temporary continence for consecration. Similar restrictions appear before battle (1 Samuel 21:4-5) and priestly service—times requiring undivided attention. Paul echoes this principle in 1 Corinthians 7:5 regarding prayer. The third-day emphasis recurs—preparation has a deadline. God's timing is sovereign; we must be ready when He comes. The principle extends spiritually: we prepare for Christ's return by holiness and watchfulness.

Historical Context

Temporary sexual abstinence for religious purposes appears in various ancient cultures, but Israel's practice is distinct—rooted in covenant preparation, not dualistic rejection of the body. The third day arrives with dramatic divine manifestation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does temporary abstinence teach about preparing to meet with God?
2. How does the principle of consecration before divine encounter apply to Christian worship and prayer?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵל	הָעָם	הֵי וְ	נָכֵן יָם	לְשֵׁל שֵׁת	יָמֵ יָם
And he said	H413	unto the people	Be	ready	against the third	day
H559		H5971	H1961	H3559	H7969	H3117
אֵל	תָּגֵשׁ וְ	אֵל	אִשָּׁה:			
H408	come	H413	not at your wives			
	H5066		H802			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 19:11 (Parallel theme): And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

1 Corinthians 7:5 (Parallel theme): Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.