

Exodus 19:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD,
sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

Analysis

And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

Even priests, though closer to God than laity, must consecrate themselves—proximity intensifies responsibility. 'Which come near' (הַנִּגָּשִׁים, haniggashim) describes priestly function—approaching God on behalf of others. 'Sanctify themselves' (יִתְקַדְּדוּ, yitqaddash) is reflexive—they must actively pursue holiness. 'Lest the LORD break forth' (יִפְרוֹץ, yifrotz) uses the same verb as people 'breaking through' (v. 21)—God may 'break out' in judgment against those who 'break in' presumptuously. This seems to refer to pre-Aaronic priests (perhaps firstborn sons), since the Aaronic priesthood hasn't yet been formally instituted. Privilege demands purity; access requires consecration.

Historical Context

The mention of priests before the Aaronic priesthood's formal institution (Exodus 28-29) suggests an earlier system, possibly firstborn sons serving as family priests. Ancient Near Eastern priests always underwent purification before serving deity.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why do those closer to God (priests, leaders) face stricter judgment for irreverence?
2. How does the requirement for priests to sanctify themselves apply to Christian ministers and leaders?

Interlinear Text

וְגַם	הַכֹּהֲנִים	הַנִּגְשִׁים	אֵל	יְהוָה:
H1571	And let the priests	also which come near	H413	themselves lest the LORD
	H3548	H5066		H3068
יִתְקַדְּשׁוּ	פָּן	יִפְרֹץ	בָּהֶם	יְהוָה:
sanctify	H6435	break forth	H0	themselves lest the LORD
H6942		H6555		H3068

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 24:5 (References Lord): And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.