

Exodus 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Analysis

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground ויאמר אל-תקרב בלם (של-געליב) (vayomer al-tikrav halom shal-ne'alekha me'al raglekha ki hamakom asher atah omed alav admat-kodesh hu)—**Draw not nigh** (אל-תקרב, al-tikrav) establishes distance—God's holiness demands reverent approach. **Put off thy shoes** (של-געליב) was customary when entering sacred space; bare feet signified humility and respect (cf. Joshua 5:15). **Holy ground** (אדמת-קדש, admat-kodesh)—holiness derives not from the place but from God's presence. This command teaches that encountering God requires appropriate reverence, humility, and separation from the common. Moses learns here what Israel will learn at Sinai: approach to holy God demands preparation and respect (Exodus 19:10-13).

Historical Context

Removing footwear before entering holy space was practiced in ancient Near Eastern cultures when approaching temples or sacred sites. The principle of sacred space consecrated by divine presence becomes foundational in Israel's tabernacle/temple theology (Exodus 25-31, 1 Kings 8:10-11). This moment at Horeb establishes the pattern: God's manifest presence creates holy space demanding reverent response.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the command to remove shoes challenge modern casual approaches to God's presence?
2. What does this verse teach about the relationship between God's holiness and our posture when encountering Him?

Interlinear Text

מַעַל לְנַעַל יְבָשָׁא אֶל תְּקַבֵּב אֶל שָׁלֵשׁ
And he said H408 Draw not nigh H7126 hither H1988 put off H5394 thy shoes H5921
H559 H5275

עַל יְדֵךְ עַזְתָּה אָשָׁר בְּמָקֹם וּמְבָרֵךְ יְבָשָׁא
from off thy feet H3588 for the place H4725 whereon H834 thou standest H5975
H7272 H1931

הַוָּא: קָדְשׁ אֶדְמָתָה
ground is holy H127 H6944 H1931

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 5:15 (Holy): And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Acts 7:33 (Holy): Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

Exodus 19:12 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

Ecclesiastes 5:1 (Parallel theme): Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

Hebrews 12:20 (Parallel theme): (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

Exodus 19:21 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

Leviticus 10:3 (Holy): Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

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