

Leviticus 21:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.

Analysis

But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.

This verse falls within the section on **Priestly Holiness**. Higher standards for priests due to their sacred role, including restrictions on mourning practices and marriage.

Every sacrifice and ritual in Leviticus points forward to Jesus Christ, who fulfills the entire sacrificial system as both perfect sacrifice and eternal high priest.

Historical Context

Higher standards for priests due to their sacred role, including restrictions on mourning practices and marriage. Chapters 17-27, often called the 'Holiness Code,' expand covenant obligations beyond ritual to encompass all of life—sexuality, economics, justice, and relationships. The repeated refrain 'I am the LORD' grounds these laws in God's character and covenant relationship with Israel. Israel received these laws while encamped at Sinai, before entering Canaan. The laws prepared them for life in the promised land, distinguishing them from Canaanite practices and establishing their identity as God's holy nation. The portable tabernacle, central to Levitical worship, accompanied them through wilderness wanderings and eventually found permanent form in Solomon's temple.

Archaeological discoveries at sites like Ugarit reveal Canaanite religious practices Israel's laws explicitly rejected, confirming the Bible's historical reliability and the distinctiveness of Israelite worship.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does this verse teach about the seriousness of sin, the cost of redemption, or the beauty of holiness?
2. How does this verse help you understand both God's justice and His mercy in salvation?
3. In what ways does this verse challenge contemporary cultural values or your personal attitudes?

Interlinear Text

ל א

H3808

אֵלֶיךָ א

But he shall not defile

H2930

בַּעַל

himself being a chief man

H1167

בְּתוֹכָם י

among his people

H5971

לְהַלְבִּישׁ

to profane

H2490