

Numbers 1:51

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Analysis

The Levites' responsibility to dismantle and transport the tabernacle emphasizes their mediating role between God's holiness and Israel's camp. The warning that 'the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death' underscores the seriousness of approaching God improperly. Only those consecrated for this service could handle holy things without incurring judgment. This foreshadows Christ's exclusive mediation—He alone provides safe access to God's presence, and attempts to approach God apart from Christ result in judgment.

Historical Context

The tabernacle's components were carefully assigned to Levitical clans: Kohathites carried the holy furniture, Gershonites transported the curtains and coverings, and Merarites handled the structural framework (Numbers 3-4). This division of labor ensured orderly movement.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the prohibition against unauthorized persons handling holy things illustrate that God determines how He may be approached?
2. In what ways does Levitical mediation point to Christ's exclusive role as our way to the Father?

Interlinear Text

וְנַסֵּעַ	בְּמִשְׁׁאָךְ	יֹאֵךְ יְדָאָה	בְּלִי מְאֹתָה
setteth forward	And when the tabernacle	shall take it down	the Levites
H5265	H4908	H3381	H853
וְבָנֵה	בְּמִשְׁׁאָךְ	יֹאֵךְ יְמָנוֹ	בְּלִי מְאֹתָה
is to be pitched	And when the tabernacle	shall set it up	the Levites
H2583	H4908	H6965	H853
וְיִהְיֶה	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְיִמְתָּה	
and the stranger	that cometh nigh	shall be put to death	
H2114	H7131	H4191	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 3:38 (Temple): But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Numbers 3:10 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Numbers 18:22 (Temple): Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

1 Samuel 6:19 (Parallel theme): And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty

thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

2 Samuel 6:7 (Parallel theme): And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

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