

Numbers 16:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

Analysis

And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram—Moses takes initiative, personally confronting the Reubenite rebels despite their earlier disrespect (v. 12-14: 'we will not come up'). His willingness to go to them shows pastoral courage—he doesn't wait for them to repent but seeks them out. The verb qum (עַל, rose up) often signals decisive action; **and the elders of Israel followed him** means the tribal leaders witness this final confrontation.

This creates public accountability: the ziqnei Yisrael (זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, elders) serve as witnesses to both Moses's humble entreaty and the rebels' final refusal. Moses doesn't hide behind authority but puts himself at risk—approaching those who despise him. Christ's pattern: 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies' (Matthew 5:44). Leadership isn't pulling rank but pursuing the wayward.

Historical Context

The elders were tribal representatives, distinct from the 250 rebel leaders. Their presence validates Moses's actions—this isn't personal vendetta but judicial process. In ancient Near Eastern culture, elders served as legal witnesses; their following Moses creates a 'court' before which Dathan and Abiram can repent or face judgment.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. When has God called you to pursue someone who rejected you, risking further humiliation for the sake of their restoration?
2. How does Moses's 'going to them' model servant leadership contrary to our instinct to demand opponents come to us?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר קָם	יְהוָה לְקָם	מֵשֶׁה אָל	דָּתָה	אַבִּיכָם	יְלִכֵּד	אָמַר קָם
rose up	And Moses	H1980	H413	unto Dathan	and Abiram	H1980
H6965	H4872			H1885	H48	him H310

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