

Numbers 18:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

Analysis

Levites were to 'keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar.' Clear boundaries protected both the Levites and the sanctuary's holiness. God establishes limits not arbitrarily but to preserve life. Respecting divine boundaries demonstrates wisdom; transgressing them invites judgment.

Historical Context

This prohibition recalled Nadab and Abihu's fatal error (Leviticus 10:1-2) and reinforced the lesson from Korah's rebellion. The tabernacle vessels were so holy that even seeing them improperly caused death (4:20). These regulations weren't arbitrary restrictions but necessary protections.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What boundaries has God established that you're tempted to cross or resent?
2. How do divine limitations actually serve your good rather than restrict your freedom?

Interlinear Text

בָּאַ הַל וְמִשְׁמָתְּ רַת כָּל וְמִשְׁמָתְּ רַת כָּל
And they shall keep and the charge and the charge of all the tabernacle
H8104 H4931 H4931 H3605 H168

לֹא אֶל אֶל כָּל יְשָׁרֶת כָּל בְּקַדְשָׁה וְאֶל כָּל מִזְבֵּחַ
H389 H413 the vessels of the sanctuary H413 H3627 H6944 and the altar H3808 H4196

לֹא יְקַרְבֶּנּוּ יְמִתְתָּהּ לֹא יְמִתְתָּהּ לֹא יְמִתְתָּהּ
only they shall not come nigh that neither they nor ye also die
H7126 H3808 H4191 H1571 H1992

לֹא יְמִתְתָּהּ

H1571 H859

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 4:15 (Temple): And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 3:36 (Temple): And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto,

Numbers 16:40 (Parallel theme): To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense

before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.

Numbers 3:25 (Temple): And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,

Numbers 3:31 (Sacrifice): And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof.

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