

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

Psalms 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

וְשָׁמְרוּ	וּמִשְׁמֶרֶת	וּמִשְׁמֶרֶת	כָּל	הָאֵלֶּה	
And they shall keep	and the charge	and the charge	H3605	of all the tabernacle	
H8104	H4931	H4931		H168	
אֵל	כֵּלֵי	הַקֹּדֶשׁ	וְאֵל	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	לֹא
H389	H413	the vessels	H413	and the altar	H3808
	H3627	of the sanctuary		H4196	
		H6944			
יִקְרָב	וְלֹא	יָמָּה	גַּם	וְגַם	
only they shall not come nigh	H3808	that neither they nor ye also die	H1571	H1992	
H7126		H4191			
גַּם	אַתֶּם:				
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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