

Numbers 26:61

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD.

Analysis

And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD (אֵשׁ זָרָה, *esh zarah*)—unauthorized fire, perhaps representing worship innovations God didn't command. Leviticus 10:1-2 records their immediate death: "there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them." In a census of the living, the dead interrupt—a memorial warning that presumption in worship brings judgment.

The Hebrew זָרָה (*zarah*) means "strange/foreign/unauthorized." The same word describes foreign women who led Solomon astray. Strange fire parallels strange teachings (Hebrews 13:9)—innovations that seem worshipful but contradict God's revealed pattern. Sincerity doesn't sanctify disobedience; Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's sons, yet burned.

Historical Context

Nadab and Abihu died on the eighth day of tabernacle dedication (Leviticus 9-10), possibly drunk (Leviticus 10:9 prohibits priestly drinking immediately after). Their deaths occurred 40 years before this census, yet the record persists. God doesn't let presumptuous worship fade from memory—it remains a perpetual warning.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What modern forms of 'strange fire' (unauthorized worship innovation) might seem sincere but violate God's revealed will?
2. Why does God interrupt a census of the living to memorialize those who died in judgment? What does this teach about warning the next generation?
3. How does the immediacy of Nadab and Abihu's judgment demonstrate that privilege (being Aaron's sons) doesn't protect against consequences of disobedience?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת	וַיָּמָת
died	And Nadab	and Abihu	when they offered	fire	strange	before
H4191	H5070	H30	H7126	H784	H2114	H6440
וַיָּמָת						
the LORD						
H3068						

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 3:4 (References Lord): And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.