

Numbers 3:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons camping east of the tabernacle, before the entrance, positioned the supreme leaders at the place of highest honor facing the Holy Place's entry. This spatial arrangement taught that covenant leadership derives from proximity to God's presence and responsibility for guarding His holiness. The warning that 'the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death' maintained the distinction between those called to leadership and the general congregation.

Historical Context

The eastern position facing the tabernacle entrance placed Moses and the priests at the most prominent location, from which they could oversee both the tabernacle and the entire camp. This positioning reinforced their mediating role between God and Israel.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Moses and Aaron's positioning closest to the tabernacle illustrate that spiritual leadership requires intimate communion with God?
2. What does the death penalty for unauthorized approach teach us about respecting God-ordained offices and not presuming on positions for which we're not called?

Interlinear Text

וְהָחִנּוּ יָם	לִפְנֵי	הַמִּשְׁכָּן	קִדְמָה	לִפְנֵי
But those that encamp	before	the tabernacle	toward the east	before
H2583	H6440	H4908	H6924	H6440
אֶת־	מוֹעֵד דָּן	מִזְבֵּחַ	מֹשֶׁה	וְאַהֲרֹן
the tabernacle	of the congregation	eastward	shall be Moses	and Aaron
H168	H4150	H4217	H4872	H175
בָּנָיו	שֹׁמְרֵי	לְמִשְׁמַחַת	הַמִּקְדָּשׁ	לְמִשְׁמַחַת
and his sons	keeping	for the charge	of the sanctuary	for the charge
H1121	H8104	H4931	H4720	H4931
בָּנָיו	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְהַזָּר	הַקֹּרֵב	יוֹמָתוֹ
and his sons	of Israel	and the stranger	that cometh nigh	shall be put to death
H1121	H3478	H2114	H7131	H4191

Additional Cross-References

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 1:53 (Temple): But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

Numbers 2:3 (Parallel theme): And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be captain of the children of Judah.

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