

Deuteronomy 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.

Analysis

Moses' appointment of leaders 'over you' according to military divisions (thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens) created a clear hierarchy and manageable span of control. This organizational structure ensured accessibility (leaders close to the people) and accountability (clear reporting lines). The military structure suggests both order and readiness—God's people needed both pastoral care and strategic organization for their mission.

Historical Context

This system, implemented at Sinai (Exodus 18), served Israel throughout the wilderness journey and into the conquest period. The combination of tribal identity with functional organization balanced cultural continuity with practical effectiveness.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can good organizational structure enhance rather than hinder ministry?
2. Where do you need clearer lines of authority and accountability?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּדַע יָם הַחַיִּים אֲנָשׁ יָם לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם: רֹאשׁ יָם אֶת וְאֶקַּח
So I took H3947 H853 the chief H7218 among your tribes H7626 H376 wise H2450 and known H3045

אֶלְפֵי יָם וְשָׂרֵי וְעֲלִיכֶם רֹאשׁ יָם אוֹתָם וְעָשִׂיתִי
and made H5414 H853 the chief H7218 H5921 and captains H8269 over thousands H505

עָשִׂיתִי וְשָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי מֵאֹת וְשָׂרֵי
and captains H8269 over hundreds H3967 and captains H8269 over fifties H2572 and captains H8269 over tens H6235

לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם: וְשָׂרֵי יָם
and officers H7860 among your tribes H7626

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 16:18 (Parallel theme): Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

Ephesians 4:11 (Parallel theme): And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;