

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

וַיַּדַּע יְהוָה בְּאֶתְנָאָק חַ		אָנָשׁ יִם	מִכְמִים	וַיַּדַּע יְהוָה בְּאֶתְנָאָק חַ		
So I took	H853	the chief	among your tribes	H376	wise	and known
H3947		H7218	H7626		H2450	H3045
וְאֶתְנָאָק חַ		בְּאֶשׁ יִם	עַלְיָכָם	וְשָׁרֶב	אֶלְף יִם	אֶלְף יִם
and made	H853	the chief	H5921	and captains	over thousands	
H5414		H7218		H8269		H505
וְאֶתְנָאָק חַ		מִאָה וָתֵן	סְמִינִים	וְשָׁרֶב	עַשֶּׂר תְּ	עַשֶּׂר תְּ
and captains		over hundreds	and captains	over fifties	and captains	over tens
H8269		H3967	H8269	H2572	H8269	H6235
וְאֶתְנָאָק חַ		לְשָׁבְטֵיכֶם	וְשָׁטָר יִם	וְשָׁרֶב	וְשָׁרֶב	וְשָׁרֶב
and officers		among your tribes				
H7860		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;