

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	לְשָׁבָטִיכֶם:	בְּאֶשׁ יִם	לְשָׁבָטִיכֶם:	אָנָשׁ יִם	מִכְמִים	יְהוָה יִמְכְּרֶת
So I took	H853	the chief	among your tribes		H376	wise	and known
H3947		H7218		H7626		H2450	H3045
וְאֶת מִצְמָאָת	אָלָף יִם	וְשָׁרֵב	עַלְיָכֶם	בְּאֶשׁ יִם	אָוֹת מִ	וְשָׁרֵב	אָלָף יִם
and made	H853	the chief		H5921	and captains	over thousands	
H5414		H7218			H8269		H505
וְאֶת מִצְמָאָת	עַשְׂרֵת	וְשָׁרֵב	סְמִינִים	וְשָׁרֵב	מֵא זֹת	וְשָׁרֵב	עַשְׂרֵת
and captains	over hundreds	and captains	over fifties	and captains	over tens		
H8269	H3967	H8269	H2572	H8269	H6235		
וְאֶת מִצְמָאָת	לְשָׁבָטִיכֶם:						
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;