

Exodus 18:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

Analysis

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness—Jethro's criteria for judges establishes qualifications for spiritual leadership. 'Able men' (אָנְשֵׁי-חַיִל, anshei-chayil) means capable, strong, competent. 'Such as fear God' (יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים, yirei Elohim) prioritizes spiritual qualification—reverence for God precedes all other qualifications. 'Men of truth' (אָנְשֵׁי אֶתְתָּה, anshei emet) indicates integrity and reliability. 'Hating covetousness' (שָׁתְאֵי טָזָע, son'ei vatza') means rejecting bribery and corruption. These four qualifications—ability, godliness, truthfulness, incorruptibility—apply to all church leadership (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7). The command to 'place such over them' as rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens establishes hierarchical structure for efficient governance.

Historical Context

This fourfold qualification system predated formal law but established enduring leadership criteria. Acts 6:3's deacon qualifications echo these standards: 'men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.'

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why does 'fear of God' appear first among qualifications, before ability or integrity?
2. How does 'hating covetousness' protect justice from corruption through bribery?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה	H859	תַּחַזֵּה	H2372	מִכֶּל	H3605	בְּעַם	H5971	בְּאַנְשֵׁי	H376	אִלְּבָד	H2428
such as fear	H3373	God	H430	of truth	H376	hating	H571	covetousness	H8130	and place	H1215
and rulers	H5921	of thousands	H8269	and rulers	H505	of hundreds	H8269	and rulers	H3967	and rulers	H7760
of fifties	H2572	and rulers	H8269	of tens	H6235						

Additional Cross-References

Acts 6:3 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Exodus 18:25 (Parallel theme): And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

Genesis 42:18 (References God): And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

Ezekiel 18:8 (Truth): He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

2 Samuel 23:3 (References God): The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

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