

Numbers 1:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel:

Analysis

The command 'thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi' establishes their unique status among Israel's tribes. Levi's separation for holy service meant they would not fight in Israel's wars or own tribal territory, depending instead on offerings and designated cities. This prefigures the New Testament principle that those who serve the gospel should live by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14), supported by God's people rather than pursuing secular employment.

Historical Context

Levi's numbers were counted separately and differently—all males from one month old (Numbers 3:15), not just military age. This produced a total of 22,000 Levites (Numbers 3:39), a small fraction of the fighting-age men from other tribes.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Levi's dependence on God's provision through the people challenge modern assumptions about pastoral ministry requiring secular employment?

2. What does Levi's exemption from military service teach us about the priority of spiritual warfare over physical conflict?

Interlinear Text

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|---------|-------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|------|
| וְ | אֶת | מִטֵּה | לֵוִי | לֹא | תִּפְקֹד | וְ |
| H389 | H853 | the tribe | of Levi | H3808 | Only thou shalt not number | H853 |
| | | H4294 | H3878 | | H6485 | |
| וְ | לֹא | תִּשָּׂא | בֵּת וְ | בְּנֵי | יִשְׂרָאֵל: | |
| the sum | H3808 | neither take | of them among | the children | of Israel | |
| H7218 | | H5375 | H8432 | H1121 | H3478 | |

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 26:62 (References Israel): And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.