

Numbers 31:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD.

Analysis

And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty—The non-combatant majority (congregation) gives 1/50 to the Levites who assist priests but don't perform high priestly duties. This tenfold higher rate (compared to soldiers' 1/500) reflects their non-risk status and larger numbers.

Give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle—The Levites (shomer mishmeret, keep the charge/watch) maintain sacred space, transport Tabernacle components, assist sacrifices. Numbers 18:21-24 establishes their livelihood through Israel's tithes. This spoils distribution supplements regular tithes, acknowledging their essential ministry supporting national worship.

Historical Context

The Levites numbered 23,000 males (Numbers 26:62), significant population requiring support. 'Keeping the charge' involved guarding Tabernacle sanctity, preventing unauthorized access (which brought death, Numbers 18:7), and performing ritual duties. This wasn't leisurely work but demanding sacred responsibility.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why do Levites receive less per capita than priests, and how does this reflect ministry hierarchy?
2. How might churches today ensure adequate support for those in 'behind-the-scenes' ministry roles like Levites?

Interlinear Text

וּמִמָּחָצַת	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	תִּקַּח	אֶחָד	אֶחָד
half	And of the children	of Israel's	thou shalt take	one	portion
H4276	H1121	H3478	H3947	H259	H270
מִן	הַחֲמִשִּׁים	מִן	הַבָּקָר	מִן	הַחֲמֹרִים
H4480	of fifty	H4480	of the beeves	H4480	of the asses
	H2572		H1241		H2543
וּמִן	הַצֹּאן	מִכָּל	הַבְּהֵמָה	וְנָתַתָּה	אֲתָם
H4480	and of the flocks	H3605	of all manner of beasts	and give	H853
	H6629		H929	H5414	
לְלוֹיִם	שְׂמֹרֵי	מִשְׁמֶת	מִשְׁכַּן	יְהוָה	
them unto the Levites	which keep	the charge	of the tabernacle	of the LORD	
H3881	H8104	H4931	H4908	H3068	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 3:25 (Temple): And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,

Numbers 3:31 (Temple): And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof.

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