

Numbers 31:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Analysis

Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites—From the congregation's half, Moses extracted a 2% Levitical tax (אֶחָד אַחֲצֻט מִן־הַחֲמִישִׁים, echad achutz min-ha-chamishim, "one drawn/seized from the fifty"). This totaled 6,750 sheep, 720 cattle, 610 donkeys, and 320 persons for **the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD** (שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה, shomrei mishmereth mishkan YHWH, "keepers of the keeping/service of the tabernacle").

This wasn't Moses' innovation but **as the LORD commanded Moses**—divine provision for those without tribal inheritance. Levites maintained worship, taught Torah, and administered justice. The 2% tax on community spoils (versus 0.2% on warriors' portion, v. 28-29) shows that communal wealth bore greater responsibility for supporting religious infrastructure.

Historical Context

Levites received no land inheritance in Canaan (Numbers 18:20-24), depending on tithes and offerings. This spoil distribution provided immediate livestock and labor for tabernacle service during the conquest period. The 320 persons likely assisted

with animal care, tent maintenance, and transport—essential for a mobile worship center serving 600,000+ people.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the Levitical provision from spoils teach about the community's responsibility to support those in full-time ministry?
2. How does the principle "keepers of the charge" apply to pastoral oversight and spiritual stewardship today?
3. Why does Scripture emphasize "as the LORD commanded"—what dangers arise when support for ministers comes from human invention rather than divine command?

Interlinear Text

וָתָּח	מֹשֶׁה:	מִמֶּחֶצַח	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶת	חֶסֶת
took	Moses	half	Even of the children	of Israel's		portion
H3947	H4872	H4276	H1121	H3478	H853	H270
וְאֶחָד	מִן	חֲמִשָּׁים	מִן	הָאָדָם	וּמִן	הַבְּהֵמָה
one		of fifty		both of man		and of beast
H259	H4480	H2572	H4480	H120	H4480	H929
וְנָתַתָּ						
אֵת		לְלִוִּים	שְׁמֵרֵי	מִשְׁמַחַת		מִשְׁכַּן
		them unto the Levites	which kept	the charge		of the tabernacle
H853		H3881	H8104	H4931		H4908
יְהוָה	כָּאֵשׁ	צִוָּה	יְהוָה	אֶת	מֹשֶׁה:	
as the LORD		commanded	as the LORD		Moses	
H3068	H834	H6680	H3068	H853	H4872	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 31:30 (Temple): 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.