

Numbers 35:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

Analysis

And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; from them that have few ye shall give few—This principle of proportional giving (מֵאַת תְּהִרְאָב עַמּוֹת טַרְבָּב וְמֵאַת עַמּוֹת תְּהִרְאָב, mē'ēt hārāb tarbū ūmē'ēt ham'aṭ tam'īṭū) reflects both justice and equity. Larger tribes (like Judah, Ephraim) with more territory gave more cities; smaller tribes gave fewer. God didn't impose equal burden regardless of ability—He required proportional sacrifice.

This anticipates New Testament teaching on giving: 'according to what one has, not according to what one does not have' (2 Corinthians 8:12). The widow's mite was proportionally greater than the rich man's abundance (Mark 12:41-44). God sees percentages and heart attitude, not merely absolute amounts. This principle guards against both the pride of large gifts and the excuse of small resources.

Historical Context

The tribal allotments varied significantly. Judah and Simeon in the south and Ephraim/Manasseh in the center received large territories and thus contributed more Levitical cities. Smaller tribes like Benjamin and Dan contributed fewer.

Joshua 21:1-42 records the actual distribution, showing this proportional principle in action. The system remained functional until the exile (586 BC).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does proportional giving (based on what you have, not absolute amounts) challenge both wealth and poverty as excuses for not supporting God's work?
2. What would change in your church if everyone gave proportionally rather than fixed amounts?
3. How can you discern what is truly 'proportional' sacrifice for you—not too little (stinginess) but also not beyond your actual capacity?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי	מְאֹדִזְׁ תִּהְיֶה	אָשָׁר	מִשְׁבַּע יְהִי
And the cities	H834	shall give	shall be of the possession
H5892		H5414	H272
of the children	H1121		
לִשְׁבָּא יְשַׁבָּא תִּמְאָה	H853	רַבְבָּה	רַבְבָּה תִּמְאָה
of Israel	H3478	from them that have many	ye shall give many
		H7227	H7235
תִּמְעָט	H4592	תִּמְעָט	אֲשֶׁר
but from them that have few	H4591	ye shall give few	every one according
			H376 H6310
נְתַנְלָתוֹ	H834	אָשָׁר	מִשְׁבַּע יְהִי
to his inheritance	H5159	וְיִגְּדֶל	shall give And the cities
		H5157	H5892
לְלוּם:	H3881		
unto the Levites			

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 33:54 (Parallel theme): And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.

Numbers 26:54 (Parallel theme): To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him.

Exodus 16:18 (Parallel theme): And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

