

Numbers 7:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered:

Analysis

The leaders of Israel, heads of their fathers' houses, who were the rulers of the tribes, offered willingly. These tribal leaders presented dedicatory gifts after the tabernacle's completion. The phrase 'offered willingly' (vayaqrivu, וַיָּקַרְבּוּ) indicates voluntary gifts beyond required offerings. The leaders' generosity set example for their tribes. Their offerings (described in detail, Numbers 7:10-88) demonstrated honor for God's sanctuary. This teaches the principle of leadership generosity—those who lead should exemplify giving, not merely command it. The gifts' uniformity (each tribe gave identically) showed equity, preventing competition or showing off. Yet Scripture records each tribe's offering individually (verses 12-88), demonstrating God notices and honors every gift. This prefigures New Testament teaching that leaders should be 'given to hospitality' (1 Timothy 3:2) and generous in supporting God's work.

Historical Context

The tribal leaders' offerings spanned twelve days, with one tribe presenting gifts daily (Numbers 7:11). Each gave identical gifts: silver and gold vessels, animals for sacrifice, showing equality despite tribal size differences. The detailed repetition of each tribe's offering (making Numbers 7 the Bible's longest chapter) emphasizes God's attention to every contribution. Ancient Near Eastern dedication ceremonies for temples and altars involved elaborate gifts from rulers, but Israel's tribal structure distributed honor among all tribes rather than concentrating on a king.

The leaders had previously assisted in the census (Numbers 1:4-16). Archaeological discoveries include dedication deposits at ancient temples containing precious vessels and offerings. The offerings' value demonstrated that honoring God's house requires our best, not leftovers. The twelve-day ceremony gave each tribe equal honor.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the tribal leaders' voluntary generosity teach about leadership setting example in giving?
2. Why did God have Moses record each identical tribal offering separately, and what does this teach about God's notice of our gifts?

Interlinear Text

אֲבָתִים מִבֵּית בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת יְבֹן
offered That the princes of Israel heads of the house of their fathers
H7126 H5387 H3478 H7218 H1004 H1

עַל בְּעִמָּד יְמֵינֵם וְמִלְּפָנֵיכֶם תַּחֲנֹן
H1992 That the princes of the tribes and were over H1992 H5975 H5921
H5387 H4294

בְּפִקְדִּים:

them that were numbered

H6485

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 35:8 (Parallel theme): And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings two thousand and six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen.

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