

Numbers 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

Analysis

The Kohathites receiving no wagons appears surprising until we remember their unique calling—they carried the most sacred objects (ark, table, lampstand, altars) on their shoulders. These items were too holy to be placed on wagons pulled by animals. Physical proximity and direct human contact emphasized their sanctity. This teaches that the most precious things require the most careful handling. The Reformed understanding of the means of grace is relevant—some things are too sacred for casual treatment and require reverent, personal attention.

Historical Context

The ark of the covenant and the other sacred furnishings had to be carried on poles by the Kohathites' shoulders, never touching the objects directly (which would cause death) or placing them on carts. David later violated this principle, resulting in Uzzah's death when the cart stumbled and Uzzah touched the ark.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does the prohibition on using wagons for the most sacred objects teach about reverence in worship?
2. How should the principle of careful, personal handling of holy things inform our approach to Scripture and sacraments?
3. In what ways does convenience sometimes threaten appropriate reverence for sacred things?

Interlinear Text

וְלִבְנֵי י	קֹהַת	ל א	נָתַן	כִּי	עֲבֹדָת
But unto the sons	of Kohath	none	he gave	H3588	because the service
H1121	H6955	H3808	H5414		H5656
הַקֹּדֶשׁ	עֲלֵיהֶם	בְּכֵתֵף			
of the sanctuary	H5921	upon their shoulders			
H6944		H3802			
	וְשֵׂאוּ:				
	belonging unto them was that they should bear				
	H5375				

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 15:13 (Parallel theme): For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

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.

2 Samuel 6:13 (Parallel theme): And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

