HEROIC LEADERSHIP IN THE WILDERNES, Part 1

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1. Introduction

Although Pentecostalism is said to be a restorationist movement,¹ its weak biblical foundations² which opted for a proof-texting methodology,³ a long term baggage of dispensationalism⁴ and anti-

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³ The classic proof-texting example in Pentecostal writing is Carl Brumback, "What Meaneth This?: A Pentecostal Answer to a Pentecostal Question" (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1947).

⁴ See for example Frank M. Boyd, *Ages and Dispensations* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1955), and the use of both Larkin's works and Scofield's Bible. Also Gerald Shepherd's important article: "Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: An Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship," *Pneuma*, Volume 6:2 (Fall 1984), 5-34.
intellectualism has caused us to flirt with many cultural fads and theological obscurantism. The most recent fad is the study of leadership in the church and parachurch. The problem that I perceive is not the field itself, although others may question its cross-cultural applicability or credibility from the perspectives of business education or the behavior sciences. My issue is that a lack of in-depth biblical and theological ground tilling has occurred in this field. In the following two-part essay, I would like to at least make one furrow and thereby prepare the soil for others to plant. I will plow in the Pentateuch, focusing especially on the book of Numbers. I will also give a summary-application at the conclusion of the second essay.

The book of Numbers, at first blush, depicts a tribal based extended family that has been given a cultic and military order. However, its social and religious development is a far cry from a neat and orderly world. Chapter 1 quickly clusters the Israelites into clans (תִּמְנֵה) and ancestral houses (תְּנֵךְ) that form an elite group of chosen (Q, אוֹר) leaders who assist (אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אֶל) Moses and Aaron in enlisting the recruits. Only the tribe of Levi is exempt from this military conscription. To them fell the task of porters for the sacred accoutrements and when stationary, to guard (מעמיד) the sacred precincts. All this is coordinated with a prearranged trumpeted series of signals to systematize the bivouacking. Beneath the façade of this perfectly symmetrical social architecture was an institutional quagmire that only a person of heroic propensity could possibly keep together. This is one of the major thematic trajectories that runs though the book of Numbers as Jeffrey Cohen articulates it, "...there is not one portion which does not provide us with some insight into the nature of Moses’ leadership and the manifold challenges with which a leader has to contend."

In the following synchronic study of the Masoretic Text of the book of Numbers, I would like to present a sketch of the infrastructure of the "congregation of the Israelites" (נֵכֶשׁ הָעִבְדֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל) and the exemplary leadership of the heroic Moses, who dealt with a leadership structure that at times was contentious and yet crucial in upholding a vision for a future generation.

2. The Congregation of the Israelites

The primary term that is used to describe the pre-monarchic Israel's social-political structure is הָעִבְדֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל. Although makes a few cameo

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5 It is important to remember that one of the major architects of Pentecostal theology was Ernest S. Williams, president of Assemblies of God, U.S.A.'s most prestigious Bible school, Central Bible Institute in the years 1929-1931 and again between 1939-1948, had only a eighth grade education. See Virginia Lieson Brereton, Training God's Army: The American Bible School 1880-1940 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), 13. Recent Russell Spittler has as stated "Abiding anti-intellectualism is one of our flaws. In the Assemblies of God, when you apply annually for credentials, you have to identify your ministry: pastor, chaplain, missionary, evangelist, other. For years, I had to check "other." I was always an "other" because a teacher is not highly respected [so it's not on the list]. If the Holy Spirit is teaching you, why would you have any regard for this or that teacher? There's a kind of theological independence that scoffs at education. Yet you can't do theology without intellect. You can't." In Madison Trammel and Rob Moll, "Three leaders talk frankly about Pentecostalism: grading the movement: the good, bad, and the unpredictable," Christianity Today 50, no. 4 (2006), 41. See also Roger Olson, "Pentecostalism's Dark Side," Christian Century 123, no. 5 (2006), 27, where he writes, " endemic to Pentecostalism is a profoundly anti-intellectual ethos. It is manifested in a deep suspicion of scholars and educators and especially biblical scholars and theologians."


8 Numbers 10.1-10.

numbers, it is מָן that dominates. Thorkild Jacobsen set the stage for the modern discussion of מָן when he drafted the early scenario of democracy. His stance was that the day to day activities of the primitive states were handled by elders, but at pivotal crises, it was a "provisional and ad hoc gathering of the people, an assembly, that dealt with the problem. " In a later study, Jacobsen analyzes the *Enûma Eliš* with an eye toward a social-political analysis. He notes of *continuing* political inconsistencies that ultimately bring about crises. Jacobsen writes,

In this conflict stages of progressively greater concentration and permanence of power arise one out of the other: virtual anarchy and private war give way to primitive democracy with an ad hoc leader, the king, chosen in the general assembly when common danger imposes unanimity and concerted action, and this in turn resolves into permanent monarchy with its promise of administrative benefits far beyond merely temporary safety of life and property.

The above analysis could well be applied to the biblical history of Israel, in which a post-Judges era would produce a cry for a change from primitive democracy under Samuel and others to a monarchical society. The complexities in both the developing monarchical era and the fully matured dynastic kingdom of Judah are quite different from that portrayed in the book of Numbers. Here in Numbers the primitive democracy expressed by the מָן is maintained under the watchful eyes of Moses.

The usage of מָן, as analyzed by Jacob Milgrom, follows the standard Ancient Near Eastern pattern as depicted by Jacobsen and others. Milgrom writes concerning the biblical perspective in the pre-monarchical era:

In sum, the מָן can only be conceived as an ad hoc emergency body called together by the tribal chieftains whenever a national trans-tribal issue arose. However, once the monarchy was firmly established, there was no further use of the מָן and it disappears. Thus the phenomenon of the sporadic assembly of the pre-monarchical city-state described by Jacobsen for ancient Mesopotamia, though separated from Israel by vast stretches of time and space, is *mutatis mutandis* duplicated by the history and function of the Biblical מָן.

Earlier in his study, Milgrom also indicated that "the מָן can be equivalent to all the Israelites, to the adult males, or to their national representatives." The "all Israelites" often included both women and children along with men of all ages. In the book of Numbers this full range is evident.

Due to the ad hoc nature of the מָן, the texts cluster around major turning points and leadership struggles. For example, the use of מָן in Num 13:26; 14:1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 27, 35, 36 clusters around the scout report and the response, not of the general populous which would have been expressed by the phrase מָן אתה רב alone or some combination with מָן, מָן he.

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10 See Num 14.5, 16.3 and 20.4. It is noteworthy that the מָן is found in negative contexts with all of these verses.

11 See Num 1.2, 16, 18, 53; 3.7; 4.34; 8.9, 20; 10.2, 3; 13.26; 14.1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 27, 35, 36; 15.24, 25, 26, 33, 35, 36; 16.2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26; 17.5, 6, 7, 10, 11; 19.9; 20.1, 2, 8, 11, 22, 27, 29; 25.6, 7; 26.2, 9, 10; 27.2, 3, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22; 27, 2, 3, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22; 31.12, 13, 16, 26, 27, 43; 32.2, 4; 35.12, 24, 25.


15 A biblical perspective on leadership needs to work through the different social-political contexts that are present in the different texts, before one can say that they have established a biblical view/s. Needless to say this study cannot deal with these other layers and it would potentially be another area of future study.

16 Milgrom, "Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel," 75.

17 Milgrom, "Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel," 70.

18 Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers* 1-20: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 4A (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 130, differentiates the two terms and defines the מָן as "a more widely used ethnographic designation in which בן 'son' functions to express group affiliation."
but the הרעה. The מנה here, differentiates this crisis event from those in chapter 11 (11.1-3, 11.4-35, ומקרא) and דגלה, where the organized opposition against Moses and divine guidance is illegitimate and spontaneous or charismatic without the sanction of the "primitive democratic" system. Chapter 13.25-14.45 on the other hand, begins with the legitimate gathering of the legal body for such occasions, that is the הרעה, along with Moses and Aaron. There would have been greater symmetry in this pericope if the scouts had returned to Moses first, however the discontinuity may be intended to accentuate the intensity of the rebellion (14.9, ומקרא) of the legitimate legal assembly.

It would seem that a valid study of leadership in the book of Numbers, necessitates an awareness of the role of the הרעה before applying a characterized and synthetic picture of leadership as represented in the life of Moses.

Furthermore, the catalogue of technical terms dealing with social stratification needs to at least be mentioned. The book of Numbers as well as other pre-monarchic biblical texts refer to the following: "tribe (םן) ⇒ clan (תת), household (ינע) ⇒ individual (ךד),"20 Both the words for "tribe" and "clan" have parallel terms: נא for מנה and קב for תת, with the phrase "יהבככ תככ also meaning "clan." Valid leaders within specified spheres of influence are indicated by each of these social stratification terms. A full differentiation cannot be accomplished in this paper. Instead the tribal leader or "chieftain" will be investigated next.

3. Tribal Leaders

Leadership in the book of Numbers is not vested in just crisis based assemblies, nor monopolized by Moses or even a Moses-Aaron-Miriam triumvirate. It is a rich and variegated hierarchy that is both institutional and charismatic, legitimate and at times illegitimate. The tribal leadership infrastructure was both institutional and legitimate. The words that depict

21 Moshe Weinfeld, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," IOS 7 (1977), 65. Conrad, ""�א*גנ, מ*גנ, מ*גייע, ג*גנ, ג*גנ," in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Volume IV; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 123. writes, "The elder is . . . a member of a special committee representing a specific, clearly defined social community; he must be thought of primarily as the holder of an office, not the representative of a particular age group."

22 Milgrom, "Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel," 80.


Tetragrammaton as a theophanic element in their names. Their specific tasks include: 1) assisting Moses and Aaron (יהוה יעזר, 1.5a) in the census taking (יהוה יעזר, 1.2a) and in fact they were in charge of the conscription (יהוה יעזר, 7.2b); 2) stationing themselves among their respective camps (יהוה יעזר, 2.3a) which would be the basis for the decampment and bivouac (2.34); 3) offering a series of gifts and dedicatory offerings (יהוה יעזר, 7.1ib); 4) commanding the tribes as they were to move out (יהוה יעזר, 10.14b).

The first task hints at a hierarchical infrastructure in which these tribal leaders are subservient to Moses and Aaron as they fulfill the divine command to take a census. This may be argued from the use of the preposition ה פָּנִי along with the verb יָהַר.27 However, the fact that 7.2b describes these same tribal leaders as being in charge28 of the census process mitigates their subservience. Instead a fully delegated process is indicated. This is crucial since the census taking plays a significant role in the orderliness in the encampment and militaristic advancement is depicted as within the parameters of their responsibilities. It is possible to link these passages to 10.1 - 13, which precedes the last pericope in this cluster. Here, the two silver trumpets call the tribal leadership together in 10.4 (יהוה יעזר, 10.4) and then spell out the order of decampment according to the blast.31

The appearance of the tribal leaders in the narrative context that chapter 7 establishes is paradigmatic. As Eryl W. Davies indicates, "there can be little doubt that the object of its inclusion was to emphasize the unstinting generosity of the tribal leaders of old. . ."34 a role model for future generations. The leadership role of these chieftains is obviously beyond the Zahlgehilfen rubric that Kellermann subsumes them under.35

Numbers 1.16 is an important verse for understanding this tribal leadership. It reads:

These were called ones of the congregation the leaders of their ancestral tribes, the heads of the divisions of Israel.

Both the Qere reading (וֹטֲּפֵּן, Qal passive participle) and the Kethib reading (טֵפְּן, masculine plural adjective) may be understood as passive.36 So readings such as "those called" or "elected" of the community may be contrasted with a leadership role that would be under

27 See Genesis 45.1 which refers to Joseph's attendants.
31 Scolnic, Theme and Context in Biblical Lists, 59.
36 Kellermann, Die Priesterschrift von Numeri 1.1 bis 10.10, 6. "Die Form יֹטְפֶּן kann sowohl akkativ wie passiven Sinn haben. . ."
the direct appointment of Moses and/or Aaron. If this is the case, then the 250 Israelite leaders that rose up against Moses and Aaron in Num 16.1-4 and Dathan and Abiram (26.9) were of the same elected status, i.e., legitimate leaders. Needless to say then, the 12 in chapters 1, 2, 7 and 10 were only a small portion of the larger leadership infrastructure in the tribes. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the leader does not guarantee proper submission to divine guidance.

The most dramatic example of legitimate institutional leadership failure can be seen in the scout narrative of chapters 13-14. Here, in the typical Mosaic pattern of obedience, Moses follows YHWH's command to send men out to scout the land which was to be given to the Israelites (13.2, 3). Each was to be a tribal leader (13.2b לְמָשַׁה אֶחָד שֵׁם; 13.3a מֵאֵת כָּל שֵׁם אֵש אֵש נַעֲשָׂה), so they were legitimate institutional leaders. In fact, parodying the named chieftains of chapters 1, 2, 7, and 10, they are individually named. With the exception of Joshua, which the narrator indicates as an altered name, the chieftains do not have the theophanic Tetragrammaton in their names. Also, the list begins with Reuben like Num 1 and 26, in contrast to Num 2, 7, 10 and 34 which begins with Judah. As tribal leaders they could call for the.NoError:01:29:57 assemble to meet in the primitive democratic mode. However, the result was failure due to their covenant unfaithfulness in the form of rebellion. The Masoretic Text expresses the words of rebellion as: "We are not able to go up against the people, for it is (they are) stronger than us." (13.31) It is interesting to note that Jewish scholars from the medieval period had found the unpointed text as indicating an even greater level of rebellion. The comparative preposition and its suffix had been pointed to read: which is a first person plural, i.e., "than us." However, in an unpointed text the same consonants could be read as "than he." Rashi writes, "They said this... if this were at all possible, i.e., if one may be permitted to say so of God - with reference to the Omnispresent挎挎, stronger than "He": they thus uttered blasphemy. Numbers 14.4 continues the depth of the paradox, by having the members of the have suggest the choosing of another and heading back to Egypt. Once again, a legitimate action by the ad hoc assembly, however the special, atypical status of Moses was not recognized, nor was "majority rule" the answer to the "rejection" of YHWH (14.1 lap, "כְּאֶלֶף מִלְיָה תַּכְּלַי נָאָת מְלַיִּי" (14.11b, כְּאֶלֶף מִלְיָה תַּכְּלַי נָאָת מְלַיִּי) and their "not believing" in YHWH (14.11b, כְּאֶלֶף מִלְיָה תַּכְּלַי נָאָת מְלַיִּי). It is interesting to note that the forgiveness that Moses attempts to gain is not for the or the unfaithful chieftains, but for the . Even after forgiveness is extended to the , the is under judgment as can be seen in 14.27, 35 and 36, while the unfaithful tribal leaders "who caused the to complain against him," died unceremoniously by a plague.

The leadership infrastructure of the book of Numbers therefore implies a vast pyramid of responsibilities and spheres of authority whereby tasks are truly delegated. On the other hand, these leaders may err or even participate in sedition against Moses and/or Aaron, along with a rejection of divine fidelity. It should be noted that both the and tribal leaders who were legitimate within the social-political infrastructure of the pre-monarchical community were immediately judged over against the forgiveness offered to the .

4. Elders & the 70 Elders of Moses

The elder system is another component within the hierarchical infrastructure of the pre-monarchical community of Israel depicted in the book of Numbers. Although the noun may derive from the word "beard" and "a third of the occurrences has the meaning" old... Most often by far the noun is used in the specialized sense of "elder." Hanoch Reviv has compared the terms and and...
established an important clarification of terms, especially in Numbers and Chronicles.

... "heads" were the leaders (the "elders") at the sub-tribal and settlement levels, or parallel to the "chiefs" at the tribal level. However, the "elders" are invariably second in rank to the "head" in the sense of "chief," when these terms are both mentioned in a particular context. Consideration of the titles assigned to the "chiefs," in the sense of tribal heads, such as "heads of fathers," "heads of fathers' houses," "heads of the people of Israel," implies that the individual tribal chief came from the ranks of the elders.45

Earlier in his study, Reviv adds another important insight, that in the relationship, the term שֵׁם (šēm), which is not used in this sense in the singular form.46 This may very well mean that the social-political authority of the sub-tribal leadership is vested in the collective "elders" rather than the individual "elders." It is only the individual elder who has been singled out as a tribal leader/chieftain that has authority individually.

A case of collective sub-tribal eldership activity is seen in the interesting Zelophehad's daughters hearings (27.1-11; 36.1-12). The difficult judicial ruling concerning the property rights of the daughters of Zelophehad is deliberated before Moses, Eleazar the new priest, the tribal leadership (בְּנֵי הַנָּחַל), and the whole הַנָּחַל (27.2). The ruling comes via divine fiat in favor of the daughters. However, in Num 36.1 a sub-tribal elder (גְּפֶרֶם בְּנֵי הַנָּחֲל), in this case שֵׁם is used with "clan" along with the term נָחֲל to identify the elders. They then bring a counter-claim before Moses and the tribal leadership. Here, as is expected the eldership approaches as a collective and receives a hearing that mitigates the initial ruling.

The Pentateuch as a whole has several important sections that deal with eldership and its development: Exod 18.12-27; 24.1-11; Num 11.16-17, 24-30 and Deut 1.9-17. However, it is difficult to produce a consistent synthesis from these texts. Reviv bemoans that "the written sources are not homogeneous. There are difference of approach, argumentation, and background which reflect different conditions and

Indicate different dates of composition.47 Reviv in fact, concludes that the Exod 18.13-27 "reflects the time of David, prior to Absalom,"48 Num 11.16-25 is "related to the establishment of high court in Jerusalem in the days of Jehoshaphat,"49 while Deut 1.9-17 "suits the period of the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah."50 When attempts are made to present a unified picture of eldership in the Pentateuch, it is the fact that they do not seem to play an "independent role"51 that is significant. In fact the elders "are silent representatives of the people, who are summoned or instructed by Moses, or appear alongside him, without ever developing any independent initiative."52

The interpretative quagmire may be simplified by first realizing that the numbers of elders were large, having naturally developed in the social infrastructure of the clan, a sub-tribal leadership. Even the idea of an "institution of a council of seventy attached to a ruler is well attested in the ancient Near East."53 Passages such as Exod 4.29 and 12.21 indicated that the biblical tradition acknowledged the eldership strata of Israelite leadership before the above four pericopes. Secondly, the four pericopes may depict changes or special utilizations of the clan eldership.

Exod 18.22, for example, proposes that the elders who qualified could function as judges.

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51 Conrad, יָּאִ֥ן יָּאָ֖גֶן, יָּאנָֽה; יָּאִ֥ן נָּאָ֖גֶן; יָּאִ֥ן נָּאָ֖גֶן," 129.
52 Conrad, יָּאִ֥ן יָּאָ֖גֶן, יָּאנָֽה; יָּאִ֥ן נָּאָ֖גֶן; יָּאִ֥ן נָּאָ֖גֶן," 129.
53 Milgrom, The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers, 87.
feared God (יְבַנְיֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), were trustworthy men (נְוִי בָּנָי) and hated gain⁵⁵ (יִצֶר אִמָּה). The men are then made to be rulers (קהנו) with varying degrees of responsibility.⁵⁶ Pietro Bovati, focusing on the function and role of judges and their interrelationship with such terms as לֶאֱגָן, סָרִים, and melek, etc., writes, "the role of the judge was not exercised indiscriminately by everybody, but rather by those recognized as having some authority (of government): in accordance with spheres of competence and in accordance with the historical evolution of (civil or military) political authority, jurisdiction belonged to different people."⁵⁷ Bovati also indicates that since there was a fundamental problem with a singularity of leadership, this problem was "solved by the creation of a corps of judges (Exod 18.22-26; Deut 1.16-17), which was not, however, a 'separate organ' endowed with autonomy within its sphere of competence, but rather an organic group of people to whom a measure of power was delegated for minor cases. The 'judges' were or became 'chiefs' in Israel; they were recognized as having received an authority that was also jurisdictional, in accordance with a well-defined hierarchical ladder."⁵⁸

Exod 24.1-11 depicts a different function that is more social-religious in nature (24.1b "worship at a distance") and not a separate organ endowed with autonomy within its sphere of competence, but rather an organic group of people to whom a measure of power was delegated. The people who were selected were "elders" over the military and then their judiciary authority. The chosen group are called "seventy from among the elders of Israel" (.Clamp of תֹּמָנוֹת חַי יִשְׂרָאֵל), which seems to lack specificity. The sacral meal (24.11), the vision of "the God of Israel" (24.10), along with the covenant rituals preformed by Moses are more central to this pericope.⁵⁹ There is no indication that the seventy here are those who reappear in the narrative sequence of Numbers 11.16-30.⁶⁰ All in all this text seems to refer to another very different group of elders selected especially for this event that was strongly religious in function.

Num 11.16-30, the main "elders of Israel" passage in the book of Numbers, presents another different group of leaders with a specific role and function that differs from the preceding texts. I argue this in spite of the fact that there are many links between the two passages. Stephen L. Cook has given an extended list:

They share the motif of the burden of the people on Moses, which he cannot bear "alone" (Num 11:14, 17; Exod 18:18), the idea of a selection of leaders from among the people for the relief of Moses (Num 11:16; Exod 18:21, 25), the identical clause יִשְׂרָאֵל, "they will share your load"; Num 11:17; Exod 18:22), and a report that Moses carried out the recommended decentralization of his office (Num 11:24-25; Exod 18:27). . .

Exod 18:13-27 and Num 11:14-30 must be connected. . .

Knierim's objection that Numbers 11 deals with prophetic, not judicial, issues does not carry weight. . . Numbers 11 involves the reinforcement of the leadership role of lineage heads in Israel. It is specifically the people's "elders and officers" that are singled out to be Mosaic leaders (Num 11:16). And the leadership role of Israel's elders had a significant judicial component, which would be presupposed by the ancient hearers of Numbers. Thus, the tradition of Moses' relief through the appointment of Mosaic elders/judges should be accepted as a common thread linking Numbers 11 and Exodus 18, although the judicial aspect of the tradition was only stressed explicitly in the later text.⁶¹

writes, "IS hayi can connote a warrior, a rich man or a citizen of deserved respect and social influence. While the last dominates here, the judges also require physical stamina and material prosperity."

⁵⁵ Propp, Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 632. "That is, immune to bribery because of their wealth."

⁵⁶ Jonathan Magonet, "The Korah Rebellion," JSOT 24 (1982), 8. Magonet give a summary of H. S. Nahmani's discussion concerning Moses' reinstatement the "elders" over the military and then their judiciary authority.


⁶⁰ Nagano, "The Elders of Israel in Exodus 24.9-11," 18. Nagano attempts to connect Exod 24.9-11, Ezek 8.11 and Num 11.16ff in light of the 'seventy' elders. Although he, speculates about the term "seventy" being used as a symbolic representation of a "political ruling body," in the Old Testament, ultimately nothing can be definitively identified between the three texts.

Cook's observation concerning the motif of the burden sharing should probably be viewed as a strong point of contact between the two texts, however the tasks which the "elders of Israel" will perform seem to be quite different. The clear indication that in Exod 18 a judicial role is being played, while there is a complete absence of this in Num 11 is telling. Furthermore, in contrast to the rather specific qualifications of Exod 18.22, Num 11.16 only indicates that the helpers of Moses be known by Moses to be "elders of the people and their נחשים. The latter qualification is an interpretative crux that is difficult to interpret. Baruch Levine gives the following standard background to the word:

In Hebrew usage, סומרי are so called primarily because they issue written documents or actually write them. This definition emerges for the Akkadian cognate, ספרע 'to write,' as well as from Aramaic סֶפֶר 'written document.' A title similar to Hebrew סומר does not, however, occur either in Akkadian or Aramaic, as far as we know. These same officials figure in the narratives of Exodus and in the laws of Deuteronomy. In 2 Chr 26.11, סומר is synonymous with סומר 'scribe.'

Moshe Weinfeld capitalizes on this scribal aspect and offers the following as a contextualized function of such a group:

The functions of the סומר attached to the judge may be clearly enumerated. The judge was certainly in need of a secretary for recording, a constable for executive-punitive measures, and a messenger or attendant for rendering service to the court. In ancient Egypt these functions are clearly illustrated on the wall-drawings: in a scene of the judgment hall, shown on the walls of the tomb of Rekhmire, vizier of Thutmosis III, we see rows of scribes on one side and an accused bring led by constables to the judgment on the other. Another scene depicts the accused brought before the court on the right side, and three men flogging the accused on the left.

Verse 25 is the parallel text that indicates that all was accomplished:

Then I will descend and talk with you there and I will take some of the spirit which is on you and I will put it on them; and they will bear the burden of the people with you so that you will not bear it alone

The texts above bristle with problems. What is the nature of the מִי that is referred to here? Is it the empowering that seems so often in the Deuteronomistic Historians work or a term used in a non-technical sense? It is especially the Exod 5.6, 10, 15, 19 passages with the "foreman over the labour gangs" that may be helpful here. Contextually Moses needed assistance with the people who were complaining and it is just these foremen that could help in the day to day leadership issues. This would clearly differentiate the Exod 18 and Num 11 texts.

Although etymologically the "writing" or "scribal" aspect of the term is dominant, its biblical usage moves beyond a "record keeper." Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm notes that "according to its usage and literary context it has the sense of civil servant, office holder, and in the plural officials, administrators." It is especially the Exod 5.6, 10, 15, 19 passages with the "foreman over the labour gangs" that may be helpful here.

62 Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers, 110-11, argues that v. 17b is an editorial addition that secondarily attaches the present text to Exod 18. Once v. 17b is removed and along with v. 11-15 from the flow of 11.16ff. the connection that Cook argues for disappears. However, this level of textual manipulation is highly questionable.


65 Weinfeld, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," 84.
sense focusing more on Moses than any divine origin. What is the nature of the verb יְתַּמֵּר and what effect does it have on the mi that is on Moses? Are the verbs יְתִמַּה and יְתַּמֵּר used as verbs of appointment? These and many other questions are fodder for future studies on this well traversed pericope.

An observation that I would like to make here, however is to focus on the symmetry of the two above verses and what this could tell us about the pericope and the function of these 70 elders. First, it is clear that יַתִּמַּה and יַתִּמְּא are in general harmony with יְתַּמֵּר and יְתִמַּה. It is with יְתַּמְּא בֶּא and יְתִמַּה בֶּא that an interesting interpretative parallelizing may be taking place. Does יַתִּמְּא aloud בֶּא парallel יְתַּמֵּר aloud בֶּא? This is how the Masoretic accentuation would have us interpret the consonantal text. The mi resting on them is parallel to the burden of sustaining the people. This would mean that the mi is not the מְשָׁפְתָּה but rather a more general descriptive use of the term to identify Moses gifting in general. Ze’ev Weisman, "The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority," ZAW 93, no. 2 (1981), 231, states, "The spirit that is conveyed to Moses is not considered as the מְשָׁפְתָּה but rather the מְשָׁפְתָּה over all of the people (2 Sam 1.12; 2 Kgs 9:6). The theme of governance also informs Num 17:6, 1 Sam 2:24, and even Zeph 2:10."

Another issue that stands out is the possibility that this passage is referring to a larger non-institutional form of governance in which propheticism performs a social-political service of checks that balance the institutional forms of leadership. The text of Num 12.6ב may be translated, "If there should be a prophet of yours, of Yahweh."

67 See my article "The Spirit of God in the Old Testament," Koudan (1992). It has been reformatted and published online at http://hebrewscripturesandmore.com/CV/Pdf-Articles/SpiritofGodintheOT.pdf. At the present time I am of the opinion that the מְשָׁפְתָּה should not be identified with מְשָׁפְתָּה but rather a more general descriptive use of the term to identify Moses gifting in general. Ze’ev Weisman, "The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority," ZAW 93, no. 2 (1981), 231, states, "The spirit that is conveyed to them from the spirit that is on Moses is meant to have them partake of Moses’ authority while also subjecting them to it in a sacred ceremony in which the main performer is God himself."

68 When יְתַּמְּא and יְתִמַּה are used as verbs of appointment they are usually followed by an accusative with rank. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 175. They cite 1 Sam 8:1; Isa 3:7; Deut 1:15 as examples. I would add Jer 1.5c.

69 See note 62 above. Here the grammatical construction, unlike 11.16 and 11.25, follows the standard for the verb of appointment and the necessary accusative, i.e., "prophets." Furthermore the first clause in 11.29 is an optative clause that utilizes an exclamatory question introduced by the מְנַשֶּׁה הַיָּם formula. B. Jongeling, "L’expression my ym dans [ancien Testament," VT 24, no. 1 (1974), 40, presents two conclusions about this formula: 1. L’expression my ym est toujours suivie d’un complément d’objet, soit un objet nominal, soit une proposition-objet. 2. Pour établir le sens de l’expression dans tel ou tel contexte il faut tenir compte des diverses nuances de signification du verbe ntsḥ. Therefore the verb of appointment nuance should be considered in this clause: "Would that all the people of Yahweh be appointed prophets!" or as a nominal clause "I wished that all the people of the Lord were prophets!"

70 The LXX has ἐπεί πρὸς τοὺς ἀντίκειστον ἐννοεῖν αὐτοῖς, which translates as "whenever the Lord would give his spirit on them."


72 Levine, Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with introduction and Commentary, 326.
In verses 1-4 of chapter 16 the different rebellious leaders are introduced, one after the other. The legitimacy of the leaders may vary. Korah may have a certain level of legitimacy as a Levite, while we cannot be sure of the Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram.\footnote{Gordon J. Wenham, \textit{Numbers. An Introduction and Commentary}, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 134-35.} It is possible that they were from a military faction, but the evidence is weak.\footnote{H. S. Nahmani in \textit{Magonet, "The Korah Rebellion."} 8, argues that Dathan and Abiram were from a military faction that was staging a coup in light of the failed attempt to go up into Palestine (14.40-45). His main evidence is that in 16.27 they are described as coming out of their tents and "taking their stand."} If military, were they elders like those of Exod 18 that combined the role of judge with military leadership? The 250 are described as tribal leaderschieftains, but chieftains that were somehow deeply integrated into the נ랫 (nátá, 16.2). Moses and Aaron are generally charged with לטש מאיים against the נחתנ by an unspecified act or attitude of "arrogance of presumption."\footnote{Levine, \textit{Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary}, 412.}

Korah and a group of Levites are depicted first as pitting themselves against Aaron in 16.5-11. The leadership struggle here is not governance in general, but specifically that of ministerial access, i.e., "to approach" or "to draw near" (לקר). Therefore Aaron and his priesthood (16.10, 11) are the object of their envy. A precedent had been set when the tribal leaders offered gifts and dedication offerings and Num 7 could have been the narratological thorn. The root used to describe this was מַשָּׂר, thus possibly opening the door to an irritant in which Korah and his disaffected cohorts secede from the נחתנ of Israel and establish their own. Milgrom has differentiated the two נחתנ by pointing out that the נחתנ of Israel in these chapters are designated by a definite article or lack the clarifying pronominal suffix that is used for Korah’s נחתנ.\footnote{Jacob Milgrom, "The Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel." 71-72. Korah’s נחתנ is found in 16.5, 6, 11, 16; 17.5, while Israel’s נחתנ is found in 16.19, 21, 22, 24, 24; 17.6, 7, 10. 11.}
The narrative does not indicate that the Levites that were accompanying Korah were judged. Moses' retort in 16.8-11 may have been sufficient to have checked their revolt. The concluding episode concerning the staff of the tribal leaders (Num 17.16-35 [17.1-13]) may function as a chiastic closure to their complaints. However, if so, its conclusion is ambiguous since it was not a test on a sub-tribal level within the Levites.

The second rebellion episode is between Dathan, Abiram and Moses in Num 16.12-15. Unlike Korah and his leviticalilha, Dathan and Abiram are not present and are summoned by Moses. They defiantly refuse this summons (וַיַּסְיֵם, 16.12, 14). The struggle is a governance issue since they refuse Moses' summons, contests his guidance in the wilderness (16.13) and his leadership style is questioned (ךָּמֶלֶךְ, יָשָּׁב). The Hithpa'el of the verb - that is used here indicates that Dathan and Abiram charged Moses with "elevating himself to a higher position of authority over the people." Milgrom claims that the form of this verb connotes "playing or pretending to be the lord." This is not the first time that such an accusation against Moses has been made (Exod 12.14 the noun - is used here). According to Dathan and Abiram, Moses had failed in his promise to bring the people to a land flowing with milk and honey, therefore he has been deceiving them and should be removed from leadership. The affirmation of Moses' leadership and the rejection of Dathan and Abiram's charges are ultimately recorded in Num 16.27-34. It is important to note that it was a divine act, i.e., "the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed them up" (סהל, 16.32a). It is usually deduced that Korah being mentioned in 16.27, met his demise along with Dathan and Abiram.

The third episode, Num 16.16-18, focuses on Korah as a leader of the 250 tribal leaders who were introduced in 16.2. The use of the censers as a test tends to blur the dividing line between the Levites of 16.5-11 and these chieftains. This interpretative problem may be artificial and caused by an inappropriate division between secular – governance issues and the sacred – religious struggles. The rebellion of the 250 is concluded by a notification that they were incinerated (16.35a-bc). The issue of "approach" (ךָּטָּצַס), continued from chapter 7 may be behind their contentions since the root appears frequently in their execution and the disposal of the censers.

The fourth episode (16.19-22) is initiated by Korah in his attempted coup. He assembles, not just his ownילה, but in 16.19 and 22 it is the true Israeliteילה. They are an important and legitimate governing body, but one wonders if their Achilles heel is not their susceptibility to mass hysteria with their collective constitution. As a whole they lack culpability and therefore they are made to separate themselves from Korah'sילה (16.21א). The起义 is spared in 16.23-27א, only to respond negatively to Moses and Aaron in 17.1-15 (16.36-50) and dispute and to Moses' insistence that all of the tribes take part in the conquest of Canaan, west of Jordan.

83 Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, 178. Coats writes, "the complaint has nothing to do with the issue of the Exodus but with a problem of Moses' authority over the people."
84 Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, 165.
85 Milgrom, The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers, 133.
86 See Nurmela, The Levites: Their Emergence as a Second-Class Priesthood, 132-33.
87 The meaning of "Would you put out the eyes of these men?" is obscure. Does it mean that Moses is accused of bribery (Coats, 165), hoodwinking (Milgrom, 134), punishing the people as "runaway slaves, prisoners, and rebellious vassals" (so Levine, 414)?
88 Timothy Ashely, The Book of Numbers, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 303 suggest that the contention was the the Reubenites "felt slighted that the rights of the firstborn had been lost. . ." Levine, Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 424, sees the problem as a "Transjordanian
thereby incur their own deserved divine punishment. It is poetic justice that Aaron and his censer stand at the line of demarcation between those who would live and those who would die, thereby affirming once again Aaron's divine appointment.

The overall thrust of the narrative of Korah's rebellion is one of rejection of divine leadership. The spheres of the sacred (priestly hierarchy) and secular (governance hierarchy) are intertwined and contested. The tests via censers and staff are not normative means of testing the validity of leadership. The punishment of earth swallowing up the obstinate or being incinerated are outside the normal purview of disciplinary activity. It ultimately argues that generally speaking, Moses and Aaron must be placed outside the parameters of a repeatable model of leadership legitimation.91

91 Philip J. Budd, *Numbers: Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 5, electronic edition (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1984), argues that 16.1-35 was actually used to justify the establishment of a post-exilic priestly hierarchy. The above argument based on the uniqueness of Moses and Aaron would make such application within post-exilic struggles hard to sustain.