Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only）

Numbers 27: 12-23

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 27. Today, we are reading verses 12 through 23.

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Forty years later, they arrived at the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River, directly across from the city of Jericho in the land of Canaan, west of the Jordan. On the plains of Moab, Moses counted the men of the new generation of Israelites in preparation for distributing the land as their inheritance after they entered the good land. Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh had no sons but had five daughters. They requested that they also be allowed to inherit property so that their father's name could be preserved.

Moses did not dare make the decision himself, so he brought their case before the LORD. The LORD ruled that daughters could also inherit property. Considering the customs and traditions of that time, this was a declaration far ahead of its time. At the same time, for the saints in the New Testament age, it also established that brothers and sisters are completely equal in receiving God's promises and blessings, although they may have different functions in the church life. By this time, Moses' ministry was drawing to a close, and the LORD God came to speak to Moses.

Verses 12-14: "Now the LORD said to Moses: 'Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.'"

Moses was God's faithful servant, and God specially brought Moses up to Mount Abarim. This mountain range is east of the Jordan River, and its highest peak is Mount Nebo. From Mount Nebo, one can see a panoramic view of the land of Canaan. This was God's special mercy, allowing Moses to see the good land of Canaan promised to the Israelites before his death. Moses was called by God at the age of eighty, and after forty years of labor, he finally led the Israelites to the land east of the Jordan River. The Israelites would soon cross the Jordan River and enter the good land, but Moses himself could not enter it.

God once again mentioned the reason Moses could not enter the good land. At Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin, when the people quarreled because they had no water to drink, God commanded Moses to speak to the rock so that it would bring forth water. Thirty-eight years earlier, Moses had already struck the rock at Rephidim. From the perspective of typology, Jesus Christ had already been crucified on the cross. His body had already been broken, and living water had already flowed from His side. Therefore, thirty-eight years later, at Kadesh, before the new generation of Israelites, Moses could not strike the rock again. He only needed to speak to the rock, and living water would flow out. However, the Israelites' quarreling provoked Moses to anger, and Moses struck the rock once again.

Although water still flowed from the rock and quenched the people's thirst, this water was called the waters of Meribah, and Meribah means "quarreling." However, Moses did not follow God's command and did not sanctify the Lord before the congregation of Israel. Therefore, God decreed that Moses could not enter the good land. Like his brother Aaron, he would die in the wilderness and be gathered to his ancestors.

For Moses, this was indeed a regret. He had been faithful in all God's house throughout his life, and when he committed a transgression, he was willing to accept God's righteous punishment. In His mercy, God brought Moses up to Mount Nebo so that he could look upon the good land of Canaan. Deuteronomy 34:5-6 tells us that God personally buried Moses, and no one knows where his grave is. Moses' death was specially arranged by God, and even after his death, Moses received God's special preservation. For fifteen hundred years later, when Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, came to the earth, Moses would bear witness to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Verses 15-17: "Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: 'Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.'"

God told Moses that his time had come and that he would be gathered to his ancestors. God also brought him up to Mount Abarim to look upon the good land of Canaan, which he would not be able to enter. When ordinary people face death, they usually feel sorrow, sadness, regret, and reluctance to leave. But Moses' response was different. He asked God to appoint the next leader to take his place. Moses was indeed a good servant who was faithful in all God's house. When he learned that he was about to die, what came to his mind was: What would happen to the Israelites? His heart was entirely devoted to the welfare of the Israelites. It was the stubbornness and rebellion of the Israelites that had provoked his anger and caused him to strike the rock a second time, resulting in his being forbidden to enter the good land. Yet he had no thoughts of complaint against the Israelites. Instead, he thought about how the Israelites would continue moving forward after his departure. After all, he had not completed the commission of leading the Israelites into the good land.

Therefore, he said, "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation." Here, the way Moses addressed God was very special. He called Him "the God of the spirits of all flesh." When God first created all things, plants had bodies, and animals had souls in addition to their bodies, enabling them to express simple thoughts, emotions, and wills. Only man received God's breath and therefore had a spirit. Zechariah 12:1 says, "The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." This verse mentions that in the LORD God's creation, there are the heavens, the earth, and

the spirit of man. This shows that man's spirit is the most precious part of man. God is the God of the spirits of all flesh because God is Spirit. The Israelites are God's chosen people. Therefore, the most important characteristic of someone who governs God's chosen people is that his spirit can be governed and led by the Spirit of God.

Moses himself had governed the Israelites for forty years, and he understood the importance of the spirit. Only when God's Spirit governed his entire being through his spirit could he become a qualified leader to govern God's people. Therefore, he addressed the LORD as the God of the spirits of all flesh. He asked God to appoint a man full of spirit to govern the Israelites, to take Moses' place in going out and coming in before the Israelites, to guide them in all things, and to shepherd them, so that the Israelites would not be like sheep without a shepherd. In the wilderness, sheep without a shepherd cannot survive. This is especially true of those who are mischievous, those who love to complain, and those who insist on going their own way. Without the care and management of a shepherd, they are constantly in danger of losing their lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, the New Testament church is also God's chosen people. What makes us even more blessed than the Israelites is that every saint has been regenerated in spirit and has the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore, the leaders of the church must be spiritual people. That is to say, their spirits must be sensitive so that they can perceive the spiritual condition of the saints at any time.

Furthermore, a leader's spirit must be filled with the Holy Spirit and be able to govern his soul, so that his mind, emotions, and will can all live and act according to the Holy Spirit. Only then can he become an example to the saints and shepherd God's flock according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He lives together with the saints, goes out and comes in with them, and helps them follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter listed the qualifications for serving as an elder or leader in the church. 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

Moses prayed that God would appoint a spiritual leader, and this was exactly what God intended to do. Moses himself was a qualified leader, and he must certainly have trained the next generation to be capable of taking over the responsibility of leadership. However, here Moses did not make any suggestions. He simply asked God to appoint the leader of the next generation. Whom to appoint was entirely under God's sovereignty. In human society, monarchies depend on hereditary succession, while democracies depend on elections. But among God's people, God has absolute sovereignty to appoint those who are according to His heart's desire as leaders. Therefore, the leaders of the church should all train a group of qualified successors and ultimately allow God to reveal His will.

Verse 18: "And the LORD said to Moses: 'Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;'"

God immediately responded to Moses' request, showing that God not only agreed with Moses' request but had already chosen the person. The LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit." The Chinese Union Version translation is not very accurate. The KJV translates this phrase as "a man in whom is the spirit," which, translated literally, means a man who has a spirit within him. Here, the spirit refers to the human spirit, meaning that Joshua's spirit was very sensitive and could be led by the Spirit of God and follow the Spirit of God.

God fully agreed with Moses' request. To be a leader of the Israelites, a person must be a man who has a spirit, and Joshua was such a person. God chose Joshua, and Moses was to bring him forward and lay his hand on his head. The meaning of laying on hands is identification and union. Moses was the universally recognized leader of the Israelites and was loved and respected by the people. When Moses laid his hand on Joshua's head, he testified to the Israelites that Moses and Joshua were one and were in agreement. Just as the people had obeyed Moses, they should also obey Joshua.

Verses 19-20: "set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient."

Moses was to lay his hand on Joshua's head and also have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire congregation of Israel. This indicates that it was a public testimony, transferring the responsibility of leadership before everyone. Moses was also to commission Joshua and give him some of his honor. The laying on of hands signifies union. After laying his hand on Joshua, Moses was also to publicly commission him, instructing him how to fulfill the responsibility of leadership. At the same time, Moses was to use this opportunity to introduce the new leader to the entire congregation. Moses was to give Joshua some of his own honor so that the people would obey him. Moses had led the Israelites for forty years. The people all knew Moses, respected his authority, and therefore obeyed him.

God told Moses to transfer some of the people's respect and obedience to Joshua, so that the people would also obey Joshua. Actually, this is a test for a leader who is about to step down. Most leaders are reluctant to give up their positions and are unwilling to retire. Even after stepping down, they still want to retain the people's respect and obedience. Yet God clearly instructed Moses to share his honor with Joshua so that the people would obey Joshua.

Verse 21: "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation."

In addition to Moses transferring the responsibility of leadership before the congregation, God's will also had to be revealed through Eleazar the priest inquiring before God. The Israelites were God's chosen people. Therefore, the transfer of leadership also required God's confirmation. The priest was the mediator between God and man. Joshua was to stand before Eleazar the priest, and Eleazar was to wear the high priestly garments, with the ephod on his chest. Within the ephod

were the Urim and the Thummim. The Urim was a stone that could emit light. When the priest inquired before God, God would reveal His will through the shining of the Urim. In other words, Eleazar the priest was to inquire before God in the presence of the people to determine whether God had chosen Joshua to be the next leader.

God's response would be revealed through the shining of the Urim. In this way, Joshua could succeed Moses as leader before the people according to God's will. Joshua became the leader who succeeded Moses. At this point, the Bible adds another statement: Joshua and the entire congregation of Israel were to go out and come in according to Eleazar's word. This statement is very special. Although Joshua was the leader of the Israelites and led them in going out and coming in, he still needed to listen to Eleazar. In this respect, Joshua was very different from Moses.

This was because Moses was especially close to God. When God spoke with Moses, He spoke plainly, face to face, without riddles, visions, or dreams. Therefore, Moses understood God's will and did not need to inquire separately through Aaron the high priest. Joshua, as the leader who succeeded Moses, was capable of leading the Israelites, but he still needed to inquire concerning God's will. God's will had to be revealed through the Urim and the Thummim of the high priest. After Eleazar the high priest inquired of God, he would communicate God's will to Joshua. Only then could Joshua lead the Israelites in going out and coming in.

Here we see a very important turning point. Through Moses, God gave the law, built the tabernacle, and established the system of priestly service. Because of Moses' special relationship with God, Moses was able to lead the Israelites according to God's will. However, beginning with Joshua's time, they entered a period in which rulers and priests governed together. Only through the priests understanding God's will could the rulers lead the people to carry out God's will. If a ruler or priest failed to fulfill his responsibility, God would raise up a prophet to convey His word. The functions of ruler, priest, and prophet thus frequently came to be exercised by three different groups of people.

Verses 22-23: "So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses."

After Moses heard God's command, he brought Joshua forward and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire congregation of Israel. Moses laid his hand on Joshua's head and commissioned him according to God's command so that the people would also obey Joshua. Through Eleazar the high priest, God's will was also confirmed, and Joshua succeeded Moses in the responsibility of leadership. From today's passage, we also see that the succession of leadership in the church today must be public. The laying on of hands expresses union, the commissioning declares God's entrustment, and there must also be the confirmation of the Holy Spirit to reveal God's will.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You. You are the good Shepherd. You not only call Your own sheep by name, but You also lay down Your life for the sheep, enabling us, unworthy sinners, to become children of our heavenly Father through faith. You have also placed us in the church life and appointed elders to shepherd the flock that belongs to You. May You bless the leaders in the church so that they may shepherd the saints according to Your will. Grant the leaders spiritual wisdom and understanding so that they may become examples to the flock according to God's will, and lead the church along the path that is pleasing to God as we await Christ's return. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.