

Analysis of Number 27:12-23 for Christian Organization

Yohanes Parapat
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekumene,
Jakarta, Indonesia
yparapat@sttekumene.ac.id

Esther Natasaputra
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekumene,
Jakarta, Indonesia
esther_natasa@yahoo.com

Hasiholan Sihaloho
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekumene,
Jakarta, Indonesia
hasiholansihaloho40@gmail.com

Andri Pasaribu
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekumene,
Jakarta, Indonesia
andripasaribu@sttekumene.ac.id

Stephen Erastus
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekumene,
Jakarta, Indonesia
stephen.erastus@gmail.com

Abstract—The Setbacks, divisions, and even destruction threaten the sustainability of the state or nation and religious organizations such as the church after the leadership succession, especially at the highest level. The study aims to study the succession management of Moses' leadership as the highest leader of the nation of Israel as recorded in Numbers 27:12-23, and the sustainability of the nation of Israel as an organization after its implementation. The study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis methods and data is analyzed through exegesis which includes word studies, historical context of the text, social and reality of the subject. In addition to setting requirements for successor candidates, succession is also important to pay attention to the process of handover and transition of official leadership, legitimacy, and the existence of post-succession support by incumbent leaders. Leadership succession is not just a process of transition and handover of leadership, but a well-managed and integrated process starting with ensuring the qualifications of successors and continuing with an official, legitimate, and supportive transition process by incumbent leaders to their successors. **Research Contribution:** The study is expected to provide insight as well as alternative models of succession management, especially for churches, as well as other Christian organizations. In the process, it is recommended that further research be carried out in accordance with the specific conditions of each organization to obtain optimal results.

Keywords—moses leadership transition, succession management, organizational sustainability, numbers 27:12-23, christian organization

I. INTRODUCTION

Under normal conditions, the succession of leadership in a country/nation as well as religious organizations can be predicted when its implementation. For example, in a democracy, the timing of the succession of the leadership of a President or Prime Minister is regulated by law. Meanwhile, in the religious sphere, such as churches or other Christian organizations, it is regulated in the regulations of each of these institutions. However, in reality, the succession of leadership in an organization often occurs unexpectedly and at an unpredictable time, which is triggered by the death, illness, or resignation of an incumbent leader [1]. In addition, the succession of leadership, especially at the highest level in a nation or state, and religious organizations, is a critical event. Research shows that various threats or serious problems to the sustainability of the organization occur after the implementation of leadership succession, both predictably and not in terms of time [2]. The threats in question include setbacks, divisions to the destruction of an organization

The fact that various organizations are experiencing serious problems after the implementation of leadership succession is not difficult to find. For example, in the context of the nation or state, it happened in Indonesia after the resignation of Suharto as President in 1998 [3]. Although Habibie as the successor is also a cadre, Indonesia has experienced serious economic and political setbacks after the succession of President Soeharto. Another example occurred in Brazil after the succession of leadership from President Luiz Lula da Silva to his chosen cadre, the Rousseff Dilemma.

The failure of Rouseff's leadership resulted in economic decline, massive corruption, and rampant street crime, which ultimately led to Brazil's downturn due to multiple crises [4].

In Christian organizations such as churches, a division is a form of threat that often occurs after the succession of the leadership of the church leader (the pastor). The split caused major problems for the survival of the church. In practice, church members who do not accept the new succession of pastors will usually resign and establish a new church [5]. The magnitude of the impact of the split on the church depends on how many members leave. The impact of a church's succession of leadership on its sustainability is often more serious due to the direct appointment of family members as successors, regardless of qualification factors. Succession with this pattern is mostly carried out by Pentecostal and Charismatic churches [6], which adhere to the autonomous or autocratic church government model [7]. The term autonomy is a local church whose activities are almost entirely carried out independently without the intervention of the synod [8]. As a concrete example, the large Crystal Cathedral church founded by Robert Schuller went bankrupt due to problems after problems after the implementation of the leadership succession passed on to his son [9].

Based on the problems above, this article aims to study the events of the transition or succession of Moses' leadership as recorded in Numbers 27:12-23. After the succession of leadership from Moses to Joshua as the supreme leader of the nation of Israel, the continuity of the nation of Israel is maintained as can be found in the book of Joshua (see Jos. 23:1). Therefore, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the management of the succession of Moses' leadership and its relevance to the sustainability of the nation of Israel as an organization. It is hoped that this understanding can be applied to churches and other Christian organizations based on Bible principles (parachurch) so that they can avoid threats that interfere with their sustainability. The transition or succession of Moses' leadership by referring to Numbers 27:12-23 has been mentioned in several studies, including by Ben-Amos, and also by Health [10] [11]. However, the study of the succession of Moses' leadership in Num. 27:12-23 through exegesis studies to get a compressive understanding has never been done.

II. METHODS

The study in this article uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. Data analysis is carried out by exegesis in this case against the text of Numbers 27:12-23, which is a passage in the Bible specifically on leadership succession. The use of exegesis was chosen because the purpose of the study is to find meaning from the text that can be relevant to the present context [12], especially by churches and other Christian organizations.

Exegesis studies were carried out on some of the words in Numbers 27:12-23 that were relevant to the theme of the article. In addition to word studies, exegesis also includes the history or background of the text, the sociological context, and the context of the reality of the subject [13]. The results of the

exegesis study are then described according to the principles in the discipline of leadership, especially in the aspect of succession, to provide a complete or comprehensive meaning.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. A. Determination of Successor Requirements in Leadership Succession

Although the passage "Joshua replaces Moses" in Numbers chapter 27 starts from verse 12, the succession process starts from verse 16. Especially in verses 16-17a, Moses as the incumbent leader conveys to God the requirements for his successor candidate or it can also be seen as a request.

"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of creatures, set up a man over this people over them when they go out and come in" (Numbers 27:16-17a).

The word "appoint" in verse 16 uses the Hebrew word $\text{קָדַד} = \text{pâqad}$ (*paw-kad'*) which means to appoint to be given the power and responsibility to lead, run, supervise, regulate, guard, defend, rule, judge, punish. Meanwhile, the word "one" in Numbers 27:16 uses the Hebrew word $\text{אִישׁ} = \text{'yish}$ (*esh*) which means a man who is a fellow of the Israelites, a person of good character. The form of use is absolute singular masculine case noun. This request was made by Moses with the background not only filling the period between the exodus and Sinai until preparations for entering the Land of Canaan. More than that it is intended as a reminder of the thirty-eight years of punishment for disloyalty, rebellion, apostasy, and distrust of the Israelites to God [14]. Therefore, the leader of Moses regarding his successor is not of good character in a weak context. Instead, he can be a just judge, as well as a leader who is firm and dares to punish anyone who commits a crime, in addition to defending and protecting those who are right.

In the daily Indonesian translation of the Bible, Numbers 27:17a is written: "who can become commanders when they are at war". Therefore, the word "chief" uses the term in military and legal context. In addition, according to David L. Baker, the structure of the book of Numbers is divided into three, and Numbers 22:2-36:13 is the third or final part, namely the preparation for entering the Land of Canaan or the Promised Land [15]. Therefore, the context of the dialogue takes place when the Israelites will seize and inhabit the Land of Canaan, so that Moses' requirements were a leader who primarily had the skills to lead troops in battle. Based on the explanation above, in addition to character, Moses also conveyed the skill requirements of the successor who would replace him. In this case, the skill factor of a successor is important because it contributes significantly to the potential for success in his later leadership [16]. The rest Moses left completely to God to determine or choose. Moses did not impose his will on his successor, whether it was his family or people close to him. Instead, he humbly left the final decision to God completely.

Christian leaders who lead an autocratic model organization have full authority, including in determining successors. Among them are pastors of autonomous churches who are widely embraced by the Pentecostal and Charismatic sects, including this group. Practically many autonomous church leaders carry out succession without a clear basis of requirements but rather kinship or kinship factors. However, just as Moses avoided the system of kinship, closeness, and favoritism, Christian incumbent leaders are expected to see objectively the bigger interest, namely the continuity of the church in which the souls are entrusted by God. The importance of avoiding kinship systems, closeness, or favoritism in leadership including succession to reduce the risk of organizational failure, has been stated through research [17].

B. The Relevance of Leadership Succession and Organizational Sustainability

The relevance or the relationship between leadership succession and organizational sustainability has been widely considered and studied by scholars. For example, explaining the purpose of leadership succession is to ensure the fulfillment of long-term goals and short-term goals, so that ultimately the sustainability of the organization can be maintained [18]. In other words, the purpose of leadership succession is to maintain continuity of vision achievement and organizational stability [19]. Leadership succession also needs to be planned and managed progressively to ensure organizational sustainability and leadership development [20] [21].

From the series of presentations of Moses to God, the connection of his succession of leadership with the continuity of the nation of Israel can be found in verse 17. "Someone who ..., and brought them out and in, so that the people of God should not be like sheep without a shepherd". Especially in the section "...as the sheep without a shepherd" has the meaning of Moses asking his successor to function as a shepherd for the flock. The word "shepherd" in Numbers 27:17 uses the Hebrew word רעה = *râ'âh* (*raw-aw*) which has the meaning of raising a sheep and thus also providing its food, and more broadly to accompany. While the word sheep in Numbers 27:17 uses the Hebrew word צֹאן = *tsô'n tse'ôn* (*tzone, tseh-one*) has the meaning of flocks of sheep or goats that do not have a permanent residence or migrate, which is also used as an allusion to humans.

The use of the word "so" in Numbers 27:17b explains the purpose of Moses asking for a successor who will replace him in leading the Israelites. In this case, the new leader is someone who is responsible for protecting and providing for the needs of the entire people of Israel. The goal is to maintain the existence of the Israelites and avoid possible attacks or interference from outsiders. In other words, according to Moses understanding, a successor who meets the character and skill requirements will be able to maintain the survival of the Israelites.

Research on leadership succession within the scope of Christian organizations, including churches, has not been

widely carried out. Therefore, it is understandable that Christian leaders do not or do not fully understand the relevance of leadership succession to organizational sustainability as exemplified in the introduction. Regardless of the situation, churches and other Christian organizations need to start paying attention to the impact of leadership succession on the sustainability of other churches that have implemented leadership succession. Therefore, leaders are expected to start comparing with the internal conditions of their church and start estimating the impact that may be experienced later when implementing succession. Thus preparations that are deemed necessary to avoid or at least reduce threats such as divisions can be started.

C. Successor Selection

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man full of spirit, and lay your hands on him" (Numbers 27:18-21). The word "one" in Numbers 27:18 again uses the Hebrew word *אֶחָד* = *'ysh* (*esh*) in the same definition as in Numbers 27:18. This shows that God agreed to Moses' request to appoint someone as his successor. The word "one" used in Num. 27:18 uses the same Hebrew word as in Num. 27:16 when Moses asked God to appoint "one" in his stead. This shows that in the case of Moses' request that someone is appointed as his successor, God agreed to his request. In addition, because the word one in verse 18 refers to Joshua son of Nun, it means that he was chosen as Moses' successor.

Furthermore, the word take uses the Hebrew word *לָקַח* = *lâqach* (*law-kakh*) which means to take/take, receive, place. The form of use is the imperative/command singular masculine case verb. Plus the suffix in the second person is singular masculine. This means that God commanded Moses to appoint Joshua son of Nun as his successor and lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan. Joshua is referred to as Joshua's son (son of) Nun. The Bible explains that Joshua (formerly Hosea) was from the tribe of Ephraim (see Num. 13:8).

The part of the phrase "a man full of spirit" in Numbers 27:18 is clarified in Deuteronomy 34:9 which is a verse that refers to Numbers 27:18. "And Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid his hands on him...", so based on the verse in Deuteronomy 34:9 what is meant by the spirit in Numbers 27:18 is the spirit of wisdom. The word "wisdom" here uses the Hebrew word *חֵכְמָה* = *chokmâh* (*khok-maw*) which means wise in the context of good, skillful, wise things based on wisdom from God. The word "wisdom" in this section uses the absolute form. It is understandable that Joshua became an absolute wise person (full of wisdom) both because God directly gave him wisdom and through the process of learning from the attitude and every decision made by Moses during his leadership period. Moses was involved when Joshua was "being selected and processed by God." [22]. God's choice of Joshua as successor did not ignore the qualifications Moses requested, on the contrary, it was affirming.

D. Leadership Handover and Transition

Numbers 27:18-20 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man full of the spirit, put your hands on

him, and make him stand before Eleazar the priest and in front of all the people, and give him your orders before their eyes, and give him some of your authority, so that all the people of Israel may hear him."

The word "put" in Numbers 27:18 which uses the Hebrew word סמך = *sâmak* (*saw-mak'*) physically means Moses placed his hand on Joshua's head. Then Moses used Joshua's head as a support for his hands. Here Moses begins the process of handing over leadership to Joshua. The word *sâmak* means to solidify, to establish firmly, to support, to strengthen. The form of its use is the second person masculine singular verb. Thus Moses confirmed Joshua as the new leader chosen by God. In addition, it also means that Moses prayed to God that He would give Joshua everything he needed to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

In some cases, the old church leaders tried to take back leadership positions for various reasons due to incomplete handovers [23]. Therefore, in the succession of leadership in Christian organizations such as churches, a clear and legal handover is very important for incumbent leaders, so that their successors can work fully. Furthermore, a Christian leader in an incumbent position is expected to support his successor leadership since the handover and in the transition period. The form can be in the form of advice, input and in prayer.

Next, the word "give" to him your command in Numbers 27:19 uses the Hebrew word צוה = *tsâvâh* (*tsaw-vaw'*) which means intensively ordering, appointing, pointing, commanding. The form used here is a singular masculine second person verb with a connecting particle. This means that Moses took an action in the form of direct delivery to Joshua. The content is the appointment of Joshua in his place (Moses) to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Comp. Deut. 31:7). The daily Indonesian Bible translates Numbers 28:20 as "serahkanlah kepadanya sebagian dari kekuasaanmu, supaya umat Israel mentaati dia".

The word "your authority" in Numbers 27:20 uses the Hebrew word הוד = *hôd* (*hode*) which means glory, majesty which can be seen in the form of beauty, grace, greatness, majesty, glory, goodness, respect, power, or authority, possession. According to the form of the use of the word "authority" which is a masculine and singular noun, what is meant is that Moses began to give/surrender some of the power or authority that was previously only entrusted to him, to be given to Joshua. The Bible does not explain the form or manner of this gift or surrender (whether through an inscription on a stone as when God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses as a kind of handover). Based on the granting of some of this power/authority, Joshua is no longer just a "servant of Moses" but is now a "colleague/partner". The words "that all the house of Israel might hear him" indicate that Joshua was beginning to rule. It also means that Joshua began to lead from the time Moses was alive (transition) and as is well known, at its peak, Joshua led completely when Moses died. The word "listen" in the King James English Bible uses the word obedient which means obedient or obedient. Meanwhile, in the BBE version of the

Bible, the word under his authority means to submit to his authority.

In today's leadership contest, it is important for incumbent leaders of Christian organizations to realize the importance of this transition process. In addition, the willingness to give up power if finding the successor is someone who meets the expected qualifications. Some churches experience problems when incumbent leaders begin to show their unwillingness in the transition process because they feel they have lost power [24]. As a result, the church experienced a shock due to confusion and even a split in the attitude of the congregation.

E. Legitimacy in Leadership Succession

Furthermore, in the succession event as recorded in Numbers 27:18, one of the meanings of the Hebrew word סמך = *sâmak* (*saw-mak'*) as Moses did in the process of transferring and transitioning the leadership of the nation of Israel as an organization, which also contains legitimacy, is an organization. sustainability. This shows the importance of legitimate transfers and transitions as an integral part of the leadership transition, to create or maintain organizational sustainability.

In addition to the presence of witnesses, the process of handing over and transitioning Moses' leadership before the priest Eleazar and the people of Israel also made him strong in terms of legitimacy. Because Moses conveyed Joshua's appointment directly, his legitimacy became strong because the Israelites recognized Moses' leadership. In this context, research supports the importance of gaining the trust of the group being led in a leadership transition, especially for a successor [25]. In addition, the idea of legitimacy received from the stakeholders of an organization in the leadership transition is important for gathering all existing resources [26]. In the context of Joshua, the resource referred to is the entire army and people of Israel.

From a social perspective, Joshua's status as a descendant of a tribal leader in Israel is considered to have strengthened the acceptance-based legitimacy of all the Israelites he leads. The status of Joshua who is the grandson of Elisama bin Amihud (1 Chr 7:26-27), the highest leader of the Ephraim tribe (Num. 2:18) gave a positive impact in gaining legitimacy from the Israelites through the leaders of the existing tribes, considering the nation Ancient Israel, especially in the Old Testament, still adheres to class and social strata [27]. The legitimacy of Joshua's leadership was ultimately proven by the support of the Israelites to him later on (Joshua 1:17). The impact of this legitimacy ultimately creates stability for the Israelites in the Land of Canaan (Jos. 11:23).

F. Post Succession Support

Post-succession support was given by Moses to Joshua since the transition process in Numbers 27:12-23. Moses delivered it directly and in front of all the Israelites, thus giving Joshua strength and encouragement especially. This was really needed by Joshua considering that the task was not an easy task and the challenges faced were so great, both from outside and from within the Israelite community itself, as it

turned out later (see the Book of Joshua). Moses also reminded and strengthened Joshua through the statement "strengthen and strengthen your heart". (Deut. 31:6,7). Research shows that post-succession leadership is a critical phase in the history of an organization because it is associated with high levels of organizational failure and the failure of top leaders [28]. Based on the biblical record, Moses gave a statement of support for Joshua, after the procession of his rapture (Deut. 31:4-5). Moses wanted to make sure Joshua was ready and that's why he gave his support.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the exegesis study of Numbers 27:12-23, leadership succession has a strong relevance or linkage with organizational sustainability. For the continuity of the organization to be maintained, successional leadership cannot be interpreted as just a process of training and gratitude from leaders to their successors. On the other hand, the leader in the number of a Christian organization such as a church, which has the authority to choose its successor, needs to pay attention to the qualifications of the potential successor, and not any sentimental factors. Furthermore, leadership succession needs to be managed in an official, legitimate, and supportive process until post-implementation, all of which demand the full role of the incumbent leader. The entire process is part of the leadership success management which is integral and important to be carried out by each part in order to obtain optimal results, namely maintaining the sustainability of the organization.

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