

Numbers 18:1 ¶ And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

Another hard chapter for me. The whole chapter is an instruction from the LORD to Aaron concerning how He will provide for the priests and Levites through the tithes and offerings of the people.

The LORD begins by telling Aaron that he and his sons will be held accountable for anything that is done wrong (not according to the LORD's instructions) in the sanctuary.

Numbers 18:2 And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee *shall minister* before the tabernacle of witness.

Numbers 18:3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

Numbers 18:4 And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you.

Numbers 18:5 And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

These verses seem to be saying that though the tribe of Levi are allowed to assist Aaron and his sons as they minister in the tabernacle, they are not allowed to touch any of the holy vessels in the sanctuary or the altar. If they disregard this instruction, it will result in the death of both the offender and the priest responsible for their supervision. No stranger or unauthorized person is to come near one of the priests. If they follow the LORD's commands pertaining to ministry in/at the tabernacle before the LORD, the people of Israel will not suffer at the hand of God's wrath.

Principle: Greater authority equals greater accountability.

Luke 12:48 "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...."

James 3:1 "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

Numbers 18:6 And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you *they are given as a gift* for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 18:7 Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office *unto you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

The LORD states once again that the Levites have been given to the priests as a gift from the LORD to serve and assist the priests at the tabernacle. Only Aaron and his sons were authorized to perform priestly functions at the altar and within the holy of holies. This privilege is a gift from the LORD. Any other person who presumes to assume any of the priestly functions will be put to death.

Numbers 18:8 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

Numbers 18:9 This shall be thine of the most holy things, *reserved* from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, *shall be* most holy for thee and for thy sons.

Numbers 18:10 In the most holy *place* shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee.

I think this section is saying that all of the meat not burned from the offerings that are brought as sacrifices from the people are to serve as food for Aaron and his male descendants. They are to recognize it as holy (set apart for the LORD's use) and eat it in the holy place—not inside the tabernacle but in its court.

Numbers 18:11 And this *is* thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it.

Numbers 18:12 All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

Numbers 18:13 And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it.

This section seems to stipulate that the oil, wine, wheat and firstfruit offerings brought by the people are to serve as food for the priests and their families. Only those that were ceremonially clean could eat from these food sources.

Point is continually made that only our best is to be offered to the LORD.

As I looked at some commentaries for help, the “heave” and “wave” offerings here are a reference to the shoulder and breast offerings that accompanied peace or thanksgiving offerings. This was meat that could be shared with the families of the priests.

Numbers 18:14 Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine.

Numbers 18:15 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.

Numbers 18:16 And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

The LORD declared that everything that was consecrated as belonging to Him belonged to the priests. Every firstborn male, whether of man or beast, belonged to God.

Exodus 13:12 "That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S."

The firstborn of man and unclean beasts were to be redeemed at the age of one month for the sum of five sanctuary shekels or twenty gerahs. If they did not want to redeem the animal, they could break its neck or redeem it with a lamb—at least in the case of an ass.

Exodus 13:13 "And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck:"

I found this information at gotquestions.org; if true, the price of redemption was quite a large expenditure: "Scholars are uncertain what exactly a shekel was, but here is one calculation of its value: the sanctuary shekel was defined as 20 gerahs. A gerah has been traditionally measured as 1/50 of an ounce, or 0.6 grams. The sanctuary shekel would then equal 0.4 of an ounce of gold (20 times 1/50 of an ounce), or 12 grams. Based on a price of 46.43 USD per gram, the approximate value of a sanctuary shekel would be \$557.16, in today's market."

Numbers 18:17 But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.

Numbers 18:18 And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine.

Numbers 18:19 All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

Animals that were acceptable sacrifices could not be redeemed. They were to have their blood sprinkled upon the altar and their fat burned as an offering before the LORD. The meat was to be given to the priests and their families for food.

One of the primary uses of salt is as a preservative. A covenant of salt references an unbreakable, perpetual covenant.

Numbers 18:20 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

Numbers 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The LORD continues by reminding Aaron that neither he nor any of the Levites were to be given a land inheritance in the land of promise. Their inheritance was in the LORD. They were to be given the tithes (10%) made by the rest of the people of Israel in compensation for their service before the LORD. The people gave to the LORD, and the LORD gave to the Levites and priests.

We learn later that the Levites will be given 48 cities, six of which will serve as cities of refuge.

Numbers 35:6–8 “And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.”

Numbers 18:22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

Numbers 18:23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

Numbers 18:24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer *as* an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

The LORD warned once again that none of the people were to pass the established boundaries of the tabernacle. Only the Levites were authorized to serve there. The Levites were responsible for ensuring that the people complied with this instruction. If a person crossed the line, so to speak, he and the responsible Levite would be put to death.

The LORD reiterates that Levites were to have no land inheritance and would be supported by the tithes of the people.

Numbers 18:25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Numbers 18:26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, *even* a tenth *part* of the tithe.

Numbers 18:27 And *this* your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though *it were* the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

Numbers 18:28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest.

Numbers 18:29 Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, *even* the hallowed part thereof out of it.

Numbers 18:30 Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress.

Numbers 18:31 And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 18:32 And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

The Levites were not exempt from making their own tithes and offerings. They were to make their tithes and offerings from the best of their assigned portion from the tithes and offerings of the people. The LORD looks upon their portion as coming from their very own fields and vineyards. After making their tithe, the rest was to be used by the Levite and his family.

Guzik makes a good observation regarding the application to those in full-time ministry: "Those who are supported through the giving of God's people should expect that they would not have the best of both worlds; they will not be wealthy in this life, though they should be comfortable. It is wrong for the congregation to keep the pastor "humble" through poverty, and just as wrong for the pastor to be using the gifts of God's people to live above God's people."

Though we are not under the law, the scripture is everywhere clear that we will be blessed when we give cheerfully to the work of the LORD.

Proverbs 3:9–10 "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

Malachi 3:10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Acts 20:35 "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

2 Corinthians 9:6–7 "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he

purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."