

# “Priests and Levites – What’s the Difference”

## Numbers Chapter 18

After the challenge of Korah and the congregation, God has clearly demonstrated to all His choice for the High Priest is Aaron. In this chapter, God reiterates the priestly duties of the priestly line.

### Num 18:1 1) Responsibilities of the Priests and Levites vs 1-7

So the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood.

- Aaron and his descendents are the priestly line. They are Priests and they are Levites. But not all Levites are Priests. Only Aaron's descendents.
- God gives them this authority as priests. God is consistent. With **Authority** comes **Accountability**.
- James 3:1 "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment."  
Teachers have an **Accountability** for their Ministries
- 1 Peter 3:7 "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."  
Husbands have an **Accountability** how they treat their Wives
- Proverbs 21:13 "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered."

Mankind is **Accountable** for how they treat the poor.

Num 18:2 "But bring with you also your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony.

Num 18:3 "And they shall thus attend to your obligation and the obligation of all the tent, but they shall not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die.

Num 18:4 "They shall be joined with you and attend to the obligations of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent; but an outsider may not come near you.

Num 18:5 "So you shall attend to the obligations of the sanctuary and the obligations of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel.

Num 18:6 "Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a **gift** to you, **dedicated to the LORD**, to perform the service for the tent of meeting.

Num 18:7 "But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

- While Aaron's line was to serve the priestly duties, the rest of the tribe of Levi was given to Aaron and the priest to serve them and the tabernacle.
- God says in verse 5 that this is done so there will be NO MORE WRATH on Israel. This is Grace and God is putting behind them chapter 16 where the Levites rebelled.
- These Levites had a very interesting position.
  - They Did Not Have the Prominence of the Priests.
  - They Were Not Unnecessary - Their role was very important
- You and I can imagine how they could have wrestled with the flesh in their role. Maybe we have wrestled in the same way. Desiring the more prestigious role but cannot seem to get there. Or the having a feeling of insignificance.
- Verse 6, God calls these Levites a GIFT and DEDICATED TO THE LORD. They are to perform specific service that no one else can do

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11 "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

## Num 18:8 2) Privileges of the Priests and Levites vs 8-19

When the sons of Israel enter the Promised Land, the Land will be allotted to each of the different tribes of Israel. It will be an inheritance for them from the Lord.

The exception to this is the tribe of Levi. They will not get land to settle in. Their inheritance is the Lord. The sons of Israel (other than Levi) will cultivate the land.

The Levites (and priests) will cultivate the spiritual in the nation. (See verse 20)

Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, "Now behold, I Myself have given you charge of My offerings, even all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual allotment.

- Num 18:9 "This shall be yours from the most holy *gifts reserved* from the fire; every offering of theirs, even every **grain offering** and every **sin offering** and every **guilt offering**, which they shall render to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons.
- Num 18:10 "As the most holy *gifts* you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.
- Num 18:11 "This also is yours, the offering of their gift, even all the **wave offerings** of the sons of Israel; I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual allotment. Everyone of your household who is clean may eat it.
- Num 18:12 "All the best of the fresh oil and all the best of the fresh wine and of the grain, the first fruits of those which they give to the LORD, I give them to you.
- Num 18:13 "The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours; everyone of your household who is clean may eat it.
- Num 18:14 "Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.
- Num 18:15 "Every first issue of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.
- Num 18:16 "As to their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.
- Num 18:17 "But the firstborn of an ox or the firstborn of a sheep or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall offer up their fat in smoke *as* an offering by fire, for a soothing aroma to the LORD.
- Num 18:18 "Their meat shall be yours; it shall be yours like the breast of a wave offering and like the right thigh.
- Num 18:19 "All the offerings of the holy *gifts*, which the sons of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an **everlasting covenant of salt** before the LORD to you and your descendants with you."

- God's assignment for the Priests and Levites is to serve the Lord, the Tent of Meeting and to serve the people in their offerings. This was fulltime duty and the Lord didn't want them distracted with agricultural duties. It was important that they were not divided and did excellence in their duties.
- So the Lord set us a system that provides for the Levites and the Priests. They shared in portions of the tithes and offerings.
- Of the offerings, the burnt offerings were totally consumed on the altar. But the other

offerings the Priests were allowed a portion to be theirs. The grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering a portion was for them to take home. The wave offering was holy before the Lord and while a portion was theirs they were not allowed to take it home but were to eat it on the grounds of the tabernacle.

- "All the Best" 2 times in verse 12 the Lord instructs that of that which was first given to God then God gives the best to the Priests.
- "Everlasting Covenant of Salt" - Salt speaks of:
  1. **Preservation** - salt was used to prevent meat from rotting. It provides a protective barrier so meat would not become corrupted. God's covenant will not corrupt.
  2. **Purity** - salt was used as a disinfectant. A wound was cleaned with salt to promote healing. Salt does not decay. It doesn't change. Neither does God's covenant.
  3. **Price** - salt was an article of trade. Goods and services were bought with salt. The phrase being "*worth its salt*" is from this practice. The covenant with the Levites and Priests were "*worth its salt*"

### Num 18:20 3) Congregation's Tithe Goes to the Levites vs 20-24

Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.

- God declares to the Priests and to the Levites that HE is their portion. Not the Land.
- Psalm 16:5-11 "*The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*"
- Psalm 73:26-28 "*My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.*"
- Lamentations 3:24-26 "*The LORD is my portion,*" says my soul, "*Therefore I have hope in Him.*" *The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the LORD.*"
- We Christians are called Priests. A Royal Priesthood.
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 "*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.*"
- To the priesthood God says "*you shall have no inheritance in their land*" and "*I am your portion*". It makes me wonder if we as a "*royal priesthood*" are content with our portion being the Lord. Or are we dissatisfied with Him and desire a portion that is in the world around us?

Num 18:21 "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.

Num 18:22 "The sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, or they will bear sin and die.

Num 18:23 "Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

Num 18:24 "For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, 'They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.'"

- The Levites were provided for by the tithe (10% of the all the increase that the sons of Israel were blessed with). This tithe was given to the Levites.

- Verse 21 says GOD GIVES THE TITHE to the Levites. The tithe is really God's but given to the Levites. With holding the tithe was not robbing the Levites it was robbing God.
  - Malachi 3:8-10 "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."
- Is Tithing Instructed in the New Testament? No but
  - What the New Testament does speak with great clarity on is the principle of giving; that giving should be regular, planned, proportional, and private (1 Corinthians 16:1-4); that it must be generous, freely given, and cheerful (2 Corinthians 9). (Guzik)
- This Tithe was given for the service they perform. Verse 21. The Levites could expect support for the work they do.
  - Paul brought up the same principal in 1 Corinthians 9:7-11

#### Num 18:25 4) Levites' Tithe Goes to the Priests vs 25-32

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 18:26 "Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, 'When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe.'

Num 18:27 'Your offering shall be reckoned to you as the grain from the threshing floor or the full produce from the wine vat.

Num 18:28 'So you shall also present an offering to the LORD from your tithes, which you receive from the sons of Israel; and from it you shall give the LORD'S offering to Aaron the priest.

Num 18:29 'Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the sacred part from them.'

Num 18:30 "You shall say to them, 'When you have offered from it the best of it, then *the rest* shall be reckoned to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine vat.

Num 18:31 'You may eat it anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the tent of meeting.

Num 18:32 'You will bear no sin by reason of it when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not profane the sacred gifts of the sons of Israel, or you will die.'

- The Levites were instructed to tithe as well. They would give a 10<sup>th</sup> of the 10<sup>th</sup> they received.
- Those who are supported by the generosity of the believers are responsible to be generous themselves.
- Here is the Israelites Giving Portfolio
  - 10% of Increase - the Tithe Numbers 18:21
  - The Firstfruits of the Grain Numbers 18:12
  - The Firstborn of the Flock Numbers 18:15
  - Required to leave portions in the field for the poor Leviticus 19:9-10
  - Passover Sacrifice once a year Exodus 12:43-47
  - There were also temple taxes, Special offerings for the poor as well as voluntary wave or burnt offerings as the worshipper desires,
- God's word promises Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine."

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