

## Numbers 18 Chapter Study

### VII. RULES FOR THE LEVITES

### Ch. 18

**1Then the Lord said to Aaron: “You and your sons and your father’s house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.**

What we find in this chapter serves as a good counterpoint to the vying after leadership that we see in the previous 2 chapters.

Here we’re reminded that being a leader means added responsibility for to whom much is given, much is also required.

Lest Aaron get a big head for the powerful way God has just affirmed him in his role as high priest, He reminds him that he is now responsible for all the duties of the office.

If they neglect their duties or perform them in a wrong way, they will bear the guilt.

It never ceases to amaze me to watch how some people ambitiously angle for position, oblivious to the fact that the position they’re lusting for is a ton of work and carries with it great accountability before God!

I wonder if when Korah and his cronies began to criticize Moses, he didn’t say, “Look, you want my job? You can have it! Do you really want to have to deal with a bunch of clowns like you?”

**2Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. 3They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die—they and you also. 4They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you.**

The tribe of Levi was to assist Aaron & his sons in their duties as high priest but they were not to come near the sacred precinct of the tabernacle as Korah had thought to do.

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As a Kohathite, Korah as privileged to serve in the tabernacle and to help transport the holy furnishings when they moved.

How tragic that in his bid for more he lost not only his calling but his life!

Every one of us in the body of Christ has a calling to fulfill and a role to play.

Be faithful to whatever your calling is, and be on guard against unholy ambition.

**5And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel.**

Aaron’s faithful duty as high priest would help to atone for the sins of the nation and provide relief from the threat of God’s judgment.

Jesus said that as we followed Him, we would be salt and light to this world, protecting it from the corruption of sin and showing it the way to God.

This places a great responsibility on us as the people of God for we realize that

if the nation is in moral decline, the fault is to be laid where?  
It can't be laid at the foot of the lost world for it is the nature of sinners to sin.  
The blame, the responsibility lies with us who are supposed to be salt and light.  
In the same way that Aaron's faithful service as high priest would stay God's  
wrath, our faithful intercession in prayer and witness to the lost will delay  
God's judgment.

**6Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 7Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."**

Aaron's call to his office as high priest was a gift, a measure of grace and not as the result of anything in him.

There were lots of things that were well, less than perfect with Aaron, he had his problems.

God did not pick him because of some great skills or because he was a particularly godly or gifted guy.

He picked him because He's God!

The reasons for grace are in God himself and it's best to leave them humbly with Him and waste no time or effort in trying to figure them out.

**8And the Lord spoke to Aaron: "Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. 9This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons. 10In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. 11" This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.**

As Aaron faithfully served in his role as high priest, he would be allowed to partake of the heave, or wave offerings the people brought as a form of worship and dedication to the Lord.

This lays down the principle that those who serve at the altar are to partake of the altar.

Those who are employed in full-time ministry are to partake of the gifts the people bring to the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Paul writes –

**13Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? 14Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**

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God then goes on to give a list of additional things Aaron and his sons would be able to partake of when the people brought them as gifts to the Lord.

**12“All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you.**

**13Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.**

**14“Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.**

These were special gifts people brought as unique acts of devotion & worship.

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When the people brought their gifts to the Lord, they were to bring the first and the best, not the left-overs; not the worn, used, and least.

God is worthy of the best because He is The Best.

He wants our giving to be a thing of delight and joy, not begrudged and cheerless.

As Paul says to the Corinthians – God loves our giving to be marked by a joy that borders of hilarity. [2 Cor. 9:7]

Right now, most of us in this room look at our giving to the Lord either as a burdensome option or as a delightful privilege.

Either we give God our best or the least; the first or the left-overs.

Fantastic things begin to take place in our lives when we simply decide to start giving God our best.

Something happened last night that taught me a good lesson in this regard.

After dinner, my wife & daughter went into the living room and sat down to watch TV together and to talk.

I went to the computer to play a game. I sat in front of that stupid monitor, playing that silly game until after 10 o'clock!

About 15 minutes before my daughter's bed-time I went into the living room, grabbed the bible, Lynn turned off the TV, and we read and prayed.

But I went back to the game and Karesse went off to bed.

When I went to bed later, it hit me as I crawled under the covers that I had just given the best of my time to a stupid computer game while my family sat in the other room unattended !!!!

How much better served the time & my family would have been to spend that time with them!

It won't be long before my daughter is grown and gone and my chance to invest in her will past.

Here's my point – if this is true in terms of my own family, how much more my relationship with the Lord?

If my family deserves more of me, then how much more of a waste is it when I spend the best of what I have on frivolous and empty things rather than in investing in the Lord.

Is God getting your best of what's left after you've given the best to something or someone else?

Who we are is revealed by what we do with what we have.

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**15“Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean**

animals you shall redeem. 16And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17But the firstborn of a cow, 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 burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. 18And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours. 19“**All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you.**”

A covenant of salt meant a lasting covenant – one that will not be subject to alteration.

Salt is a substance that doesn't change.

You can dissolve it in water, but it's still there in the water. If the water evaporates – presto, there's the salt again.

So a covenant of salt meant a covenant that lasts.

**20Then the Lord said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.**

This is why the priests were allowed to partake of the altar and the gifts the people brought to the Lord – because they had not other form of income.

They had no lands, fields, or flocks.

Their livelihood was drawn from their service at the tabernacle.

**21“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.**

The rest of the Levites who served in the tabernacle were supported by the regular tithes the people brought to the Lord.

This would have been quite a sum and would have taken care of the Levites.

**22Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. 23But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 24For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”**

**25Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 26“Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. 27And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the**

## **winepress.**

Since the Levites didn't have their own fields and harvests, they had no offering of firstfruits to give to the Lord.

So God said they were to offer a tithe of the tithes given them – this would be their firstfruits and their gift to God.

**28Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the Lord's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest. 29Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the Lord, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.' 30Therefore you shall say to them: 'When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. 31You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. 32And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.'"**

So the Levites gave a tithe to the high priest just as the people had given a tithe to them.

We use this principle in our giving as a church.

We do not see ourselves as the end of blessing and the gifts of God's people but as a channel and means of blessing to others.

From our beginning as a church 22 years ago we've tithed as a church to other ministries, churches, works, missions, and individuals as the Lord directs.

So when you tithe, a portion of it is going out to bless other works around the world.