

# LEVITES ARE THE LORD'S!

Scripture Reading: Numbers 3:11-13

*Numbers 3:11-13.*

*11 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12 Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the firstborn of the womb among the sons of Israel. So, the Levites shall be Mine.*

*13 For all the firstborns are Mine; on the day that I fatally struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from the human firstborn to animals. They shall be Mine; I am the LORD.”*

**Introduction:** Last week, we came across 4 camps around the tabernacle (refer to last week sermon). It is drawn proportionately according to the size of each tribe, and it does look like a cross. People who saw them were stunned. Balaam, a prophet said “ **5**How pleasant are your tents, Jacob, Your dwelling places, Israel! **6**“Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, Like cedars beside the waters. (Num. 24:5,6).

The aerial view might have been a dazzling sight to behold! I would like you to see something else also around the tabernacle. You will see 4 small camps pitched right next to the tabernacle. They are the Levites' camp, and we will study about them today. We will see how Levites take care of all the tabernacle related matters.

*Numbers 3:5-8.*

*5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 6 Bring the tribe of Levi forward and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.*

*7 They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.*

Please note: the Levites were to present before Aaron and serve him! There was one ultimate leader for them: the high priest! Some denominations insist on plurality of leadership. It can lead to unnecessary politics within the church. God usually appoints one person to lead, and he holds him responsible.

Another important point: If you see the organization structure for Levites, they were standing in the gap, became a medium between the High priest Aaron and the congregation!

Also, Levites were to take care of all the details of God's holy temple. God set apart the Levites as holy men of God!

This is exactly the shadow of image between Christ, the High Priest and us, who are redeemed by Him as His slaves! We are bought by the precious blood, and we must stand in the gap, and strive to reconcile the world to Christ! The Levites worked under

the High Priest. Likewise, we must all surrender to Christ, and work under His command and instruction, and lead the world toward Christ also.

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The first born of the animals were sacrificed, but not the firstborn Israelites. They were redeemed through 5 shekels, but instead of the first born, Levites are to be the Lord's servants forever. They were chosen by the Lord, and they belong to Lord alone. That means they are servants of the Lord, carrying out His laws and commandments among the congregation.

We are the Lord's too! Jesus bought us with His own precious shed blood on the cross. We are not our own! The “I” disappears, and “Thou” becomes the motto! We must live for God's work, and we must die for God's work, just as Jesus lived and died for the will and purpose of God. There is only one difference between us and Levites: the Levites did not have the option of not working for God's temple. But we do, and we abuse that free will, and do for the lord very minimum.

*Numbers 3:15-17*

*15 Count the sons of Levi by their fathers households, by their families; every male from a month old and upward you shall count.”*

*16 So Moses counted them according to the word of the LORD, just as he had been commanded.*

*17 These, then, are the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.*

This Levis census was different. They counted all the male levis who were one month and older. The important name to remember among the Levites is Kohath or Kohathites. In modern Jewish context, they may be called Kohanim. People with surname Cohen, Katz, or Kahn belong to superior, priestly clan of kohanim. Any name with Levy, or Levi, or even Levin belong to the Levites! But Kohathites are part of Levites, and Levites may or may not be part of Kohathites. Among Kohathites, God chose Aaron's clan to be the high priest clan. Ask your Jewish friends' what tribe they belong to? Most will say, Kohanite or Levite, or Judah, or Benjamin. You may not hear any other names! Why is that? Do not make any judgement. Just do the research and let us know what you find!

*Numbers 3:25,26.*

*25 Now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting included the tabernacle and the tent, its covering, and the curtain for the entrance of the tent of meeting,*

*26and the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain for the entrance of the courtyard which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its ropes, according to all the service concerning them.*

Gershonites camped west of tabernacle, and their number was 7500.

The Gershonites took care of the tabernacle and the tent coverings, and the curtains.

Number 3:29-32.

*29*The families of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle, *30*and the leader of the fathers' households of the Kohathite families: Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.

*31*Now their duties included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, the curtain, and all the service concerning them; *32*and Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest was the head of the leaders of Levi, and he had the supervision of those who performed the duties of the sanctuary.

They were to camp on south side, and their total was 8600.

Merari family was to camp north side of the tabernacle, and their total number was 6200. The duties were as follows in the following words:

*Numbers 3:36,37.*

*36*Now the appointment of duties of the sons of Merari included the framework of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its bases, all its equipment, and all the service concerning them,

*37*and the pillars around the courtyard with their bases, their pegs, and their ropes.

*Numbers 3:38. 38*Now those who were to camp in front of the tabernacle eastward, in front of the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, were Moses and Aaron and his sons, performing the duties of the sanctuary for the obligation of the sons of Israel; but the layman coming near was to be put to death.

The important high priest Aaron's families, and Moses camped near the east part of the tabernacle.

### **Genealogy of Kohathites.**

*Exodus 6:18-20*

*18*And the sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel; and the length of Kohath's life was 133 years.

*19*And the sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations.

*20*Now Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses.

Please note the Kohath genealogy. All the priests came through him, but Amram/Aaron genealogy leads to high priest and other priests that are qualified to be potential high priest after the death of any high priest!

In our situation, our high priest Jesus Christ, our Lord will be there forever, and we will serve Him as His priests forever eternally. What a glorious calling!

*Numbers 4:1-4.*

*1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,  
2 Take a census of the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers households,  
3 from thirty years old and upward, even to fifty years old, everyone who can enter the service of ministry to do work in the tent of meeting.  
4 This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things.*

Another census for Kohathites males from 30 to 50.

Age limit for Levite's temple work. 30-50?  
But High Priest continues until he dies.

Num. 4:7. *7* Over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall also spread a cloth of violet and put on it the dishes, the pans, the sacrificial bowls, and the jugs for the drink offering; and the continual bread shall be on it.

When they are ready to move, the Aaronic descendants must collect all the items and cover everything with a purple clothing. I just gave you the example of the table of the bread of the presence. It is the same procedure for the lamp stand, incense stand, and the ark of the covenant.

The significance of the purple!

Jesus was clothed with purple cloth before He was crucified. Mark 15:17. Purple stands for royalty! That is why our priesthood in Christ is called the Royal Priesthood. We are both kings and priests appointed by Jesus Christ Himself. What a great privilege! Are we walking like that?

*Numbers 4:15.*

*15 When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them by the poles, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die.*

No one touches these items except the descendants of Aaron. But other priests can carry them using those long poles.

Uzzah story - David brought the ark of the covenant from priest Abiathar's house to take it to Jerusalem. On the way, the oxen almost overturned the ark, and Uzzah reached out to take hold of it in order to stabilize the ark. But the anger of the Lord was kindled, and He struck Uzzah and killed him. (2 Sam. 6:6,7).

Many of us may not understand this story properly and may think that God is very short tempered. But the reason for Uzzah's death can be explained through this verse: Numbers 4:15! "the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them by the poles, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die".

They can only touch the poles, and not the holy objects!

When it comes to God's ministry, pay attention to detail. Do not do what you feel like. Do not walk around where you feel like!

*Numbers 4:16.*

*Now the responsibility of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil—the responsibility of all the tabernacle and everything that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings."*

Eleazar, the son of Aaron had to make sure that all the temple supplies are there for sure.

*Numbers 4:17-20.*

*17Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,*

*18 Do not let the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be eliminated from among the Levites.*

*19Rather, do this for them so that they will live and not die when they approach the most holy objects: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load.*

*20but they shall not come in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die."*

Kohathites should not be cut off because of Aaron or Moses, or any other priest's negligence or indifference. Must pay attention to every detail in God's ministry.

Let us not take working for the Lord lightly.

Conclusion:

The Levites belong to the Lord's

Called to serve the Lord in His sanctuary. It was a forced labor! No options. Punishment was severe.

Be ye separate from the world. Do not get involved in anything unclean.

We are all called to be priests. Cleanse yourself and serve. We serve as though it is not optional.

We must serve like Levites. Levites play 3 vital roles:

1. They must submit to the high priest.
2. They must stand in the gap between high priest and the congregation.
3. Must take care of all the vital components of sanctuary.

(Please note there is no instruction about music or musical instruments!)

Note: there is no role for preaching and singing in this wilderness temple! But there is emphasis for teaching and transmitting the Word of God.

Levite/priest role is inherited but we are called for it.

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