

Numbers 8 Commentary

PREVIOUS [Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission](#)

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
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Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai Mt Sinai			To Moab Mt Hor			At Moab Mt Nebo		
En Route to Kadesh (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere (Wilderness)			En Route to Canaan (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: Moses								

Numbers 8:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

- [Numbers 8 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Wiersbe - The events recorded in Numbers 1–6 were preceded by those described in Numbers 7:1–9:15. We are now in the second year of Israel's national history (Nu 1:1; 9:1). The tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month (Ex. 40:2, Ex 40:17 = "Now in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected."). The twelve tribal leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Nu 7:1), a procedure that lasted twelve days (Nu 7:78). On the thirteenth day, the Levites were consecrated (Nu. 8), and on the fourteenth day, the Jews celebrated Passover (Nu 9:1–14). (Ibid)

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE CALL OF THE LEVITES Numbers 8:1–14

"Choose Thou for me, and make Thy choosing mine,
Whate'er Thy love may unto me assign;
What work for Thee to do, where shall I go?
O my Lord, order Thou, I do not know;
I fear to choose self-pleasing scenes and things—
Choose for me, Lord, and give the peace it brings."

The Levites were the descendants of Levi, and were chosen by the Lord, instead of the firstborn, to do the service of the sanctuary.

Let us look at what they were—

1. By nature. When the dying Jacob called his sons together to leave his last message with them he characterised Simeon and Levi as “cruel and self-willed” (Gen. 49:5–7). The best of saints God can make out of such rough and unpromising material. Such were some of us. “Walking according to the course of the world” (Eph. 2:2). While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He came not to call the righteous.

2. By grace. The same grace of God which brought salvation to us appeared unto them. By grace they were saved through faith. They were—

1. CALLED. “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel” (v. 6). They were outcalled from among the others as every Christian is. The calling out of the Church of God may be here prefigured. “The men which Thou hast given Me out of the world.” The elect according to grace.

2. CLEANSED. “And cleanse them” (v. 6). “Such were some of you, but ye are washed” (1 Cor. 6:11). Washing implies uncleanness. It is the first necessity to fellowship and service. This washing was done for them (Heb. 9:13, 14).

3. SANCTIFIED. “Let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and make themselves clean” (v. 7). After we have been cleansed by the Blood of Christ, and justified freely by His grace, we are called upon to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh. Shave off every unbecoming habit, and wash the spots of the world out of the clothes of our daily life, and walk worthy of the Lord, in all well-pleasing.

4. ATONED FOR. “Make an atonement for the Levites” (v. 12). Here they were taught that it was through substitution that the grace of God and the privileges of the believer comes. A sin-offering must be made, and could only be made through the sacrifice of life. Christ gave Himself for us, His soul was made an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10).

5. CONSECRATED. “Set the Levites and offer them an offering unto the Lord” (v. 13). After an offering had been presented to God for them, they themselves had to be presented to Him. Having been redeemed by His Blood, we are called upon to yield ourselves unto God (Rom. 12:1, 2). Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price.

6. OWNED BY THE LORD. “The Levites shall be Mine.” They were His by choice. by grace and by blood; by love, favour, and life. A threefold cord not easily broken. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Chosen by the grace of the Father, redeemed by the Blood of the Son, claimed by the power of the Spirit. They shall be Mine. They shall be My sons to love Me, My servants to serve Me, My saints to worship Me.

Numbers 8:2 "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you mount the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in the front of the lampstand.'"

- Ex 25:37 37:18,19,23 40:25 Lev 24:1,2 Ps 119:105,130 Isa 8:20 Mt 5:14 Joh 1:9 2Pe 1:19 Rev 1:12,20 2:1 4:5

Jensen - what kind of service would the Levites perform? That which brought its worshipers into shades of darkness? That which shed no light on other peoples of the world round about, dwelling in darkness? No, it would be service in a place where there was light, divine light. Aaron was given the directions: “When thou set-test up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the candlestick” (8:2, ASV margin). Light is the key word of 8:1–4. A Voice and a Light—with these the Israelites could be assured of a successful journey through the wilderness.

Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you mount the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in the front of the lampstand

G Campbell Morgan - Num. 8:2

The seven lamps shall give light in front of the candlestick.-Num. 8.2.

A reference to Exodus 25.31-37 will explain the "seven lamps" and the one "candlestick." The word "candlestick" would certainly be better rendered "lamp-stand." The word first occurs in Genesis 1.4, where it is used of sun, moon, and stars. These are light-holders. So also was this golden stand, which occupied a place in the Holy Place opposite the table of shewbread. This light was given by the seven lamps which it held. Thus one light was shining, but it was sevenfold, coming from these seven lamps in the one light-

holder. The statement that this light was to shine in front of the lampstand raises the inquiry as to what it fell upon within that Holy Place. As we have already said, opposite to the lampstand was the table of shewbread. Upon that table the priests placed twelve cakes every Sabbath day, having frankincense on them. These were the symbols of the fellowship of the people with God. Upon that table the light from the golden lampstand ever fell. Thus were typified the great principles of the life of fellowship with God, which have their fulfilment for us in Christ. We have a table of communion, but it is well to re-member that upon it the light is ever shining. We only have right to that table as we dwell in that light. The light for us comes from the Holy Spirit; but we are responsible for the reception of His in-dwelling; we have to keep the lamps trimmed.

Numbers 8:3 Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

- this work: Ex 25:31-39 37:17-24
- beaten work: Ex 25:18 37:7,17,22
- the pattern: Ex 25:9,40 1Ch 28:11-19 Heb 8:5 9:23

Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the LORD had commanded Moses

Numbers 8:4 Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work; according to the pattern which the LORD had showed Moses, so he made the lampstand.

Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work; according to the pattern which the LORD had showed Moses, so he made the lampstand.

Numbers 8:5 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying - Nu 8:5-26 describes the cleansing of the Levites.

Numbers 8:6 "Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel and cleanse them.

- cleanse them: Ex 19:15 2Co 7:1 Jas 4:8

Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel and cleanse them - The choosing of the Levites had been described earlier in Nu 3:5. Here we see a basic principle that vessels chosen of God and useful to do His service must be clean.

THOUGHT - Paul also emphasizes the need for those who would serve the Lord to be clean writing " Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver **vessels**, but also **vessels** of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. 21 Therefore, if **anyone cleanses himself from these things**, he will be a **vessel** for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Ti 2:20-21+) Is your vessel clean? Then serve the Lord with gladness for His glory! (cf Ps 100:2+).

Numbers 8:7 "Thus you shall do to them, for their cleansing: sprinkle purifying water on them, and let them use a razor over their whole body and wash their clothes, and they will be clean.

- Sprinkle: Lev 8:6 14:7 Isa 52:15 Eze 36:25 Heb 9:10
- water: Nu 19:9,10,13,17-19 Ps 51:7 Heb 9:13
- let them shave: Heb. let them cause a razor to pass over, etc. Lev 14:8,9
- wash their: Nu 19:7,8,10,19 31:20 Ge 35:2 Ex 19:10 Lev 15:6,10,11,27 16:28 Ps 51:2 Jer 4:14 Mt 23:25,26 Jas 4:8 1Pe 3:21 Rev 7:14

Thus you shall do to them, for their cleansing: sprinkle purifying water on them, and let them use a razor over their whole body and wash their clothes, and they will be clean

Numbers 8:8 "Then let them take a bull with its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil; and a second bull you shall take for a sin offering.

- a young: Ex 29:1,3 Lev 1:3 8:2
- his meat: Nu 15:8,9 Lev 2:1
- another: Lev 4:3,14 16:3 Isa 53:10 Ro 8:3 2Co 5:21

Then let them take a bull with its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil; and a second bull you shall take for a sin offering.

Numbers 8:9 "So you shall present the Levites before the tent of meeting. You shall also assemble the whole congregation of the sons of Israel,

- thou shalt bring: Ex 29:4-37 40:12
- shalt gather the whole: The words, {kol adath,} which are rendered "the whole assembly," often signify all the elders, or principal persons in the several tribes. (ch. 15:4; 25:7; 35:12.) And they cannot well have any other sense here; for it would be impossible for all the children of Israel to put their hands on the Levites, as stated in the next verse. Lev 8:3

Source: [Logos.com/https://faithlife.com/](https://logos.com/https://faithlife.com/)

So you shall present the Levites before the tent of meeting. You shall also assemble the whole congregation of the sons of Israel

Numbers 8:10 and present the Levites before the LORD; and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites.

- Nu 3:45 Lev 1:4 Ac 6:6 13:2,3 1Ti 4:14 5:22

and present the Levites before the LORD; and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites

Numbers 8:11 "Aaron then shall present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, that they may qualify to perform the service of the LORD.

- offer: Heb. wave
- offering: Heb. wave-offering, Not that they were actually waved, but they were presented to God, as the God of heaven, and the Lord of the whole earth, as the wave offerings were; and in calling them wave-offerings, it was intimated to them that they must move to and fro with readiness in the business of their profession. Nu 6:20 Ex 29:24 Lev 7:30 8:27,29
- they may execute: Heb. they may be to execute, etc. Nu 1:49-53 3:5-43

Aaron then shall present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, that they may qualify to perform the service of the LORD

Believer's Study Bible Since the Levites could not physically be waved before the Lord, the offering here probably amounts to simply dedicating them to the Lord (cf. Lev. 7:30-31, note).

Wave offering (08573)(**tenupah** from **nuph** = to move to and fro, to wave, to sprinkle) is a feminine noun which means swinging, waving, then wave offering. **Tenuphah** implies the side to side motion involved in waving and thus is usually a reference to a "wave offering" but twice is translated simply as "offering" (Ex 38:24, 29). Halladay says it is "an offering waved toward the altar & away fm. it in consecration."

Swanson on **wave offering** - a sacrifice of animal, plants, or plant products, or metals that are waved before

the LORD as a symbolic offering of ritual manipulation.

Eugene Merrill on wave offering - The concept of "wave offering" comes from the action of the Hebrew verb **nuph**, "move to and fro, wave" (BDB, 631) used first in this verse. The exact action is unknown and suggestions have ranged from a movement toward the altar and back again in a horizontal motion symbolizing the giving of the offering by the worshiper and the reception of the offering by God, to a side-to-side motion, to a shaking motion (e.g., Isa. 19:16; 30:28). There are occasions when a literal waving motion appears to be impossible such as when the tribe of Levi was presented as a **wave offering** (Nu 8:11). **Whatever the motion, the implication is that this item was presented to the LORD but would not be burned but rather used by someone designated by the LORD** (i.e., the priests). Earlier on in the Pentateuch, this term was used as a general term referring to various gifts that were dedicated to God (e.g., Ex. 35:22). It is used later in Lev. 14:12, 24; 23:11, 12, 20. It is also used, as here, for the parts of the sacrifices that were designated for the officiating priest. It is never used to designate a non-meat priestly portion. ([Ibid](#))

Question: "What is a wave offering?"

Answer: The wave offering, part of the offerings of the Mosaic Law, was the symbolic act indicating that the offering was for the Lord. Portions of the things offered were literally waved in the air before the Lord. The wave offering is first seen in Exodus 29:19-28 in the description of the ordination ceremony of Aaron and his sons. This is the only instance where part of the wave offering was consumed by fire (Exodus 29:25). The remainder was "waved" to God but taken by Aaron, his sons, and Moses.

Other instances of wave offerings include the breast of a peace offering (Leviticus 7:28-34), a lamb from the cleansing sacrifice of a healed leper (Leviticus 14:12), and two loaves of bread and two lambs of the sacrifice affiliated with the [Feast of Weeks](#) (Leviticus 23:15-21). The largest wave offering was of an entire tribe. Because of their loyalty during the episode with the golden calf (Exodus 32), God accepted the Levites in the service of His temple in place of the firstborn male of each Israelite family (Numbers 3:12).

A wave offering was a portion of a sacrifice presented to God, then released by God for the use of those involved in the sacrifice. The meat fed the families of the priests. The Levites served first the tabernacle and then the temple, fulfilling the obligation of the rest of the Israelites. Both were God's provision for those who sacrificed themselves in service to Him. (Source - [GotQuestions.org](#))

Numbers 8:11, 13, 15, 21 Our Daily Homily F B Meyer

Aaron offered them for a wave offering. (r.v.)

This is interesting and instructive. The Levites were substituted for the firstborn of Israel. They were first separated from the rest of the people, cleansed, sprinkled, shaven, and finally presented to the Lord by the act of Aaron, who, according to the Hebrew word, waved them before the Lord. This waving must, of course, have been done in symbol and figure. But it was not enough that they were thus waved, they had thereafter to go in to do their service. In other words, they were called to realize actually that which was their position and standing in the sight of God.

There is a precise analogy in all this to the work which the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us all. He said, "I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated." When He offered Himself without spot to God, to do his Father's will, though it cost Him the agony of Calvary, the heavenly Aaron waved us before God to be his. We were separated by his most precious death, that we should be wholly for God. But what is ours in the great deed of Christ, must become ours by our own choice and deed. We must go in to do the service for which we have been chosen and set apart by the Holy Ghost.

This can only be through the grace of the blessed Spirit. Ask Him to realize in you the purposes of God: trust Him to keep you trusting: each morning say, "Holy Spirit, I rely on Thee to keep me in the current of the Divine purpose." Then dare to go forth to do the day's duties, believing that you may be always engaged in God's holy service; that in everything, whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God.

Numbers 8:12 "Now the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls; then offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites."

- Levites: Ex 29:10 Lev 1:4 8:14 16:21
- the one: Nu 8:8 6:14,16 Lev 5:7,9,10 8:14,18 9:7 14:19,20,22 Heb 10:4-10
- atonement: Lev 1:4 4:20,35 8:34 16:6,11,16-19 Heb 9:22

Now the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls; then offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites

Believer's Study Bible - The laying on of hands was a ritualistic sign that the animals represented the life of the offerer (v. 10) and carried his sins which were atoned for in the offering (cf. Lev. 16:21-22, note). Pictured here is the concept of substitutionary atonement.

Burnt offering (05930) ('olah from 'alah = to ascend and thus the picture of *going up* in smoke) refers to a whole burnt offering (one which *goes up* in smoke), which was voluntary, was understood as a sacrificial gift to God, resulting in a pleasing aroma acceptable to Jehovah (Lev 1:9). The presenter laid hands on the sacrifice which many feel signifies they saw the animal sacrifice as their substitute. The blood was sprinkled on the altar (Lev 1:6) When this offering was properly carried out (including a right heart attitude not just a "going through the motions," [which was not pleasing to God - Jer 6:20, Jer 7:21, 23, 24, see David - Ps 51:16-17-[note](#)] not just an external "work," but an internal submission and obedience to Jehovah), they made atonement and were acceptable before Jehovah. The total burning indicated (or should have indicated) total consecration of the presenter's heart and soul and life to Jehovah. As noted a key feature of 'olah appears to be that among the Israelite sacrifices only 'olah is **wholly burned**, rather than partially burned and eaten by the worshipers and/or the priest. Thus, the whole animal is brought up to the altar and the whole is offered as a gift (minha) in homage to Yahweh. Whole offering would be a better rendering in English to convey the theology. It is indeed burned, but the burning is essentially secondary to the giving of the whole creature to Yahweh.

THOUGHT Does the **burnt offering** (wholly burned) not make us think of Paul's great exhortation in Ro 12:1+? That's a rhetorical question of course.

Uses in Numbers - Num. 6:11; Num. 6:14; Num. 6:16; Num. 7:15; Num. 7:21; Num. 7:27; Num. 7:33; Num. 7:39; Num. 7:45; Num. 7:51; Num. 7:57; Num. 7:63; Num. 7:69; Num. 7:75; Num. 7:81; Num. 7:87; Num. 8:12; Num. 10:10; Num. 15:3; Num. 15:5; Num. 15:8; Num. 15:24; Num. 23:3; Num. 23:6; Num. 23:15; Num. 23:17; Num. 28:3; Num. 28:6; Num. 28:10; Num. 28:11; Num. 28:13; Num. 28:14; Num. 28:15; Num. 28:19; Num. 28:23; Num. 28:24; Num. 28:27; Num. 28:31; Num. 29:2; Num. 29:6; Num. 29:8; Num. 29:11; Num. 29:13; Num. 29:16; Num. 29:19; Num. 29:22; Num. 29:25; Num. 29:28; Num. 29:31; Num. 29:34; Num. 29:36; Num. 29:38; Num. 29:39;

Related Resource:

- [Chart Summarizing the Offerings](#)

Question: [What is a burnt offering?](#)

Answer: The burnt offering is one of the oldest and most common offerings in history. It's entirely possible that Abel's offering in Genesis 4:4 was a burnt offering, although the first recorded instance is in Genesis 8:20 when Noah offers burnt offerings after the flood. God ordered Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, in a burnt offering in Genesis 22, and then provided a ram as a replacement. After suffering through nine of the ten plagues, Pharaoh decided to let the people go from bondage in Egypt, but his refusal to allow the Israelites to take their livestock with them in order to offer burnt offerings brought about the final plague that led to the Israelites' delivery (Exodus 10:24-29).

The Hebrew word for "burnt offering" actually means to "ascend," literally to "go up in smoke." The smoke from the sacrifice ascended to God, "a soothing aroma to the LORD" (Leviticus 1:9). Technically, any offering burned over an altar was a burnt offering, but in more specific terms, a burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal (except for the hide) in an effort to renew the relationship between Holy God and sinful man. With the development of the law, God gave the Israelites specific instructions as to the types of burnt offerings and what they symbolized.

Leviticus 1 and 6:8-13 describe the traditional burnt offering. The Israelites brought a bull, sheep, or goat, a male with no defect, and killed it at the entrance to the tabernacle. The animal's blood was drained, and the priest sprinkled blood around the altar. The animal was skinned and cut it into pieces, the intestines and legs washed, and the priest burned the pieces over the altar all night. The priest received the skin as a fee for his help. A turtledove or pigeon could also be sacrificed, although they weren't skinned.

A person could give a burnt offering at any time. It was a sacrifice of general atonement—an acknowledgement of the sin nature and a request for renewed relationship with God. God also set times for the priests to give a burnt offering for the benefit of the Israelites as a whole, although the animals required for each sacrifice varied:

- Every morning and evening (Exodus 29:38-42; Numbers 28:2)
- Each Sabbath (Numbers 28:9-10)
- The beginning of each month (Numbers 28:11)
- At Passover (Numbers 28:19)
- With the new grain/firstfruits offering at the Feast of Weeks (Numbers 28:27)
- At the Feast of Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah (Numbers 29:1)
- At the new moon (Numbers 29:6)

The ultimate fulfillment of the burnt offering is in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His physical life was completely consumed, He ascended to God, and His covering (that is, His garment) was distributed to those who officiated over His sacrifice (Matthew 27:35). But most importantly, His sacrifice, once for all time, atoned for our sins and restored our relationship with God. (Source: GotQuestions.org)

Numbers 8:13 "You shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and before his sons so as to present them as a wave offering to the LORD.

- offer them: {Wehainaphta othom tenoophath,} literally, as in ver. 11, "and thou shalt wave them for a wave-offering;" manifestly in allusion to the ancient sacrificial rite of waving the sacrifices before the Lord; and it is probable, that some significant action, analogous to the waving of the sacrifice, was employed on this occasion; for the Levites were considered as an offering to the Lord, to whose service they were wholly dedicated. To this the apostle Paul manifestly alludes, when, in writing to the Romans, he says, (ch. 12:1,) "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Nu 8:11,21 18:6 Ro 12:1 15:16

You shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and before his sons so as to present them as a wave offering to the LORD.

Wave offering (08573) see note on [tenupah](#)

Numbers 8:14 "Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.

- separate: Nu 6:2 De 10:8 Ro 1:1 Ga 1:15 Heb 7:26
- and the Levites: Nu 8:17 3:45 16:9,10 18:6 Mal 3:17

Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine

Numbers 8:15 "Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the tent of meeting. But you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering;

- go in: Nu 8:11 3:23-37 4:3-32 1Ch 23:1-32 25:1-26:32
- and offer: Nu 8:11,13 3:12

Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the tent of meeting. But you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering;

Jensen - The Levites were to go into the **tent of meeting** to do its service. What kind of service would that be? Cold, formalistic and dead, with no contact with the living God? No, it would be service in a place where God dwelt and where He spoke with His people. Voice is the key word of Nu 7:89.

Wave offering (08573) see note on [tenupah](#)

Numbers 8:16 for they are wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel.

- wholly given: {Nethunim, nethunim,} "given; given;" The word being repeated, "because," says Bp. Patrick, "the children of Israel had devoted them to him, by laying their hands upon them, (ver. 10,) and Aaron had waved them as a wave-offering to the Lord." (ver. 11.)
- instead of such: Houbigant, on the authority of the Samaritan, reads, "instead of every first-born of the children of Israel, who openeth the womb." Nu 3:12,45

for they are wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. That the Levites are to be dedicated unto God is made quite clear by the original Hebrew text which is (nathan, nathan), this repetition ["given, given"] being an idiom for totality. In [Nu3:9] they were wholly given to Aaron & his sons

I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel.

Numbers 8:17 "For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself.

- all the: Nu 3:13 Ex 13:2,12-15 Lu 2:23
- on the day: Ex 12:29 Ps 78:51 105:36 135:8 Heb 11:28
- I sanctified: Ex 13:14,15 29:44 Lev 27:14,15,26 Eze 20:12 Joh 10:36 17:19 Heb 10:29 Jas 1:18

For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself

Numbers 8:18 "But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel.

- I have given: Nu 3:6-9 18:2-6 1Ch 23:28-32 Eze 44:11-14
- a gift: Heb. given
- that there: Nu 1:53 16:46 18:5 1Sa 6:19 2Ch 26:16-20

But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel

Numbers 8:19 "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary."

I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary

Numbers 8:20 Thus did Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the sons of Israel to the Levites; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the sons of Israel did to them.

Thus did Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the sons of Israel to the Levites; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the sons of Israel did to them

Numbers 8:21 The Levites, too, purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; and Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD. Aaron also made atonement for them to cleanse them.

- were purified: Nu 8:7 19:12,19

- offered: Nu 8:11-13, 15 3:12
- Aaron made: Nu 8:12

The Levites, too, purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; and Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD. Aaron also made atonement for them to cleanse them.

Wave offering (08573) see note on [tenupah](#)

Numbers 8:22 Then after that the Levites went in to perform their service in the tent of meeting before Aaron and before his sons; just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.

- after that: Nu 8:15 2Ch 30:15-17, 27 31:2 35:8-15
- as the Lord: Nu 8:5-26

Then after that the Levites went in to perform their service in the tent of meeting before Aaron and before his sons; just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them

Numbers 8:23 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Numbers 8:24 "This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting.

- from twenty: In ch. 4:3, the Levites are appointed to the service of the tabernacle at the age of 30 years; and in 1 Ch 23:24, they are ordered to commence their work at 20 years of age. In order to reconcile this apparent discrepancy, it is to be observed, 1. At the time of which Moses speaks in ch. 4:3, the Levitical service was exceedingly severe, and consequently required full grown, robust men, to perform it; the age of 30 was therefore appointed as the period for commencing this service, the weightier part of which was probably there intended. 2. In this place God seems to speak of the service in a general way: hence the age of 25 is fixed. 3. In David's time, and afterwards, in the fixed tabernacle and temple, the laboriousness of the service no longer existed, and hence 20 years was the age appointed. Nu 4:3, 23 1Ch 23:3, 24-27 28:12, 13

wait upon: Heb. war the warfare of, etc. 1Co 9:7 2Co 10:4 1Ti 1:18 6:12 2Ti 2:3-5

This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting.

Numbers 8:25 "But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more.

- cease waiting upon the service thereof: Heb. return from the warfare of the service, Nu 4:23 2Ti 4:7 The Levites, above fifty years of age, might superintend and assist their junior brethren in the ordinary offices, and give them and the people counsel and instruction; but they were exempted from carrying the tabernacle and from other laborious services. It is remarkable, that no law was made concerning the age at which the priests should begin to officiate, and though various blemishes disqualified them for the service of the sanctuary, yet they continued their ministrations till death, if capable. On the other hand, nothing is said concerning any bodily defects or blemishes disqualifying the Levites; but the time of their service is expressly settled. Their work was far more laborious than that of the priests; it is therefore likely that the priests would not begin very early to officiate; and the wisdom and experience of age would increase, rather than diminish, their fitness for the sacred duties of their office.

But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more

Numbers 8:26 "They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep an obligation, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations."

- to keep: Nu 1:53 3:32 18:4 31:30 1Ch 23:32 26:20-29 Eze 44:8,11
- and shall: 1Ti 4:15

They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep an obligation, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations

Keep (careful, guard, kept, observe, watch) ([08104](#))([shamar](#)) means to keep, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard.

The first use of **shamar** in Ge 2:15 is instructive as Adam was placed in the garden (a perfect environment) and was commanded to "**keep**" it which in the [Septuagint](#) is translated with [phulasso](#) (which is used to translate **shamar** in Nu 8:26) which means to guard like a military sentinel would at his post. Clearly Adam did not do a good job at "keeping" the garden safe from intruders! And because of this failure he was cast out of the garden and angels stationed to "**guard**" (Lxx = [phulasso](#)) the way to the tree of life" so that he would not eat of it (Ge 3:24+). After Cain murdered Abel he answered God "Am I my brother's **keeper**?" (Ge 4:9)

Shamar is used 6 times in the seven verses of Psalm 121 and most notable is our Keeper (3b "He who **keeps** you will not slumber. Behold, He who **keeps** Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your **keeper**; ...7 The LORD will **protect** you from all evil; He will **keep** your soul. 8 The LORD will **guard** your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.: see [commentary](#))

Uses in Numbers - Num. 1:53; Num. 3:7; Num. 3:8; Num. 3:10; Num. 3:28; Num. 3:32; Num. 3:38; Num. 6:24; Num. 8:26; Num. 9:19; Num. 9:23; Num. 18:3; Num. 18:4; Num. 18:5; Num. 18:7; Num. 23:12; Num. 28:2; Num. 31:30; Num. 31:47

Numbers 8:23-26 Don't Just Retire

They may minister with their brethren ... to attend to needs. —Numbers 8:26

The first people to climb Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, were Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. Hillary was just 33 years old. His feat afforded him fame, wealth, and the realization that he had already lived a remarkable life.

So, what did Hillary do for the next 55 years? Did he retire and rest on his laurels? Absolutely not.

Although Hillary had no higher mountains to climb, that didn't stop him. He achieved other notable goals, including a concerted effort to improve the welfare of the Nepalese people living near Mt. Everest—a task he carried on until his death in 2008.

Did you know that God told the Levites to retire from their regular duties at age 50? (Num. 8:24-25). But He did not want them to stop helping others. He said that they should "minister with their brethren ... to attend to needs" (v.26). We cannot take this incident as a complete teaching on retirement, but we can see a godly implication that continuing to serve others after our working days are over is a good idea.

Many people find that when they retire they have nothing meaningful to do with their time. But as the Levites and Sir Edmund Hillary did, we can refocus when we retire—giving of our time to help others. By C. P. Hia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Lord will give you help and strength
For work He bids you do;
Serve others from a heart of love
Is what He asks of you.
—Fasick

Life takes on new meaning when we invest ourselves in others.