

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS
"Dedication of Levites"
Numbers 8:1-22

LINES OF CONNECTION

1. Numbers is a book about Israel in the wilderness. They were counted (1, 2) and given job descriptions (3, 4). Their camp was cleansed (5) and special vows allowed (6:1-21), but blessing provided for all (6:22-27).
2. The princes or leaders of the tribes voluntarily offered to the Lord (7). Sacrifice and ministry are essential to the life of the people of God. You may call it a privilege, but it still is a sacrificial life that counts with God (Rom. 12:1, 2).
3. Now Moses records three important items. They relate to the worship of God in the wilderness.

1. THE LAMPSTAND vv. 1-4

a. It's place *Menorah*

According to the instructions, the holy place included three pieces of furniture: table of showbread (on the N side), golden lampstand (on the S side), and the golden altar of incense (on the W side before the veil).

b. It's purpose

Clearly a seven-branched lampstand (menorah) was designed to give light (v. 2). Particularly it was designed to shine forward and the light would be seen on the table of showbread. Aaron is charged with keeping the lights burning (v. 2).

c. It's pattern

It was the most ornate of all the furniture being of pure gold. It had 7 branches, 3 on either side of a center shaft. All was adorned with almonds and flowers (Ex. 25:32-35). It was made of a talent of pure gold (about 67 lbs. and at \$450 an ounce it would be worth today about \$500,000!). It was a beautiful hammered work (v. 4).

N.B. God spared no cost nor workmanship to His service and worship. Do we?

2. THE DEDICATION vv. 5-22

Chapter three gives the Levites' census, chapter four their tasks in dismantling and transporting the tabernacle, chapter seven the gift of oxen and wagons for transport, now they are dedicated to their roles as movers and guardians of the tabernacle. God leaves nothing to guess work! The priests had special arrangements for their ordination (Lev. 8) while the Levites had a more ordinary ceremony. It included:

a. Washing v. 6

While this might sound rather simple, it provided for sprinkling of water, shaving, washing of clothes. They were to be clean (cf. Isa. 52:11).

b. Sacrifice vv. 8, 12

Several offerings are involved: meal, sin, and burnt offerings are mentioned (vv. 8, 12). All of this was related to the atonement or covering for the people of Israel (vv. 12, 19).

c. Separated v. 14

The Levites are to be a special group with the Lord. They are taken from among the rest of the tribes. To minimize their separation is the same fault today in minimizing the Christian worker's special commitment to God.

d. Substituted vv. 16-18

Clearly the Levites are taken for God (v. 6) in place of all the first born in Israel (3:45ff, 8:16-18). The price is high, but worthy of God!

e. Offered vv. 11, 13, 15

This is associated with the substitution idea. The verb "offer" means to wave, hence the Levites were offered by Aaron before the tabernacle (v. 9) and therefore before the Lord (vv. 11, 13, 15). The laying on of hands (v. 12) noted the bold substitution aspect. The whole congregation was involved (v. 9).

N.B. The Levites were: 1) to do the service, 2) to make atonement (vv. 19, 22). Everything was done as the Lord commanded (vv. 20, 22).

3. THE RETIREMENT vv. 23-36

a. Timed

It is clear that from 25-50 years of age the Levites served (Hebrew: worked, therefore, they were part of the workforce for those 25 years.

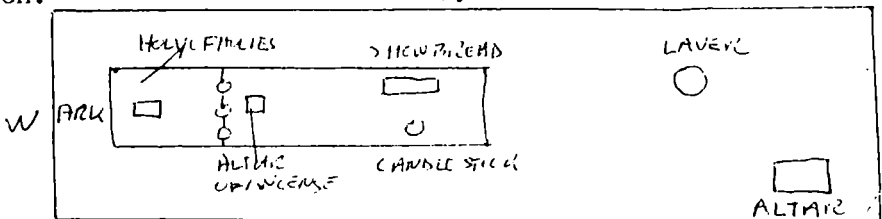
b. Utilized

After retirement, the Levites continued to exercise guard duty (v. 26, Hebrew: to guard= "guard"). They never stopped!

CONCLUSION What does this chapter say? 1. Keep the light on (vv. 1-4). 2. Keep the specialty team clean (vv. 5-22). 3. Keep the work going (vv. 23-26).

Amen.

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