

# Numbers

For our admonition. I Corinthians 10:11

22 November 2023

Lesson: 11

Numbers 17:1-18:24

## The Failure of Israel in the Wilderness

Once again, the main outline is from the Open Bible, slightly edited.

### Role of the Priests

#### Aaronic priesthood confirmed (17:1-13).

God commanded that the chief prince from each tribe bring his rod to Moses (17:2). These rods were dry walking sticks. The name of each man was written on his rod. Aaron's rod represented the tribe of Levi (17:3).

These 12 rods were then laid before the testimony (i.e., the ark or the stone tables in it) in the tabernacle. The rod that blossomed would mark the man and his tribe that God chose to lead Israel (17:4-5). The people did as God commanded (17:6-7).

The next day, the rod of Aaron came alive. It had buds, blossoms and even almonds hanging from it (17:8). The others were unchanged. Every man saw his rod as well as Aaron's.

God commanded to keep Aaron's rod as a testimony against any future rebels (17:10). The people got the message. Read their words in Numbers 17:12-13.

#### Duties of the priests and Levites (18:1-7).

God placed Aaron's family in charge of the sanctuary. The word "sanctuary" denotes all that was sacred or holy, including the tabernacle and all that was in it. If they failed to do this duty, they would bear the sin of it (18:1).

The proper aged Levites, of the tribe of Levi, were the priest's helpers (18:2). However, they could not come near the furniture or vessels of the tabernacle, lest they die (18:3).

No stranger (i.e., a non-Levite) could come near the tabernacle like this.

If they properly kept the charge of the sanctuary and the altar, what did God promise? (18:5) That there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

To be sure that they understood, God repeated His desire for the priests and the Levites (18:6-7).

#### God assigned provisions for the priests (18:8-24).

First, the priest and his sons, no one else, could eat, the portion of the meat (meal) offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings that were not burned. However, they must eat them in the holy place (18:8-10).

Second, the priests, and the sons and daughters could eat the heave offerings and the wave offerings (18:11, 19). However, each person must be clean before they could eat of this.

These were offerings, not sacrifices.

Regarding the heave offering, Easton's Bible Dictionary states, "*Some of the rabbis attach to the word the meaning of elevation, and refer it to the heave offering, which consisted in presenting the offering by a motion up and down, distinguished from the wave offering, which consisted in a repeated movement in a horizontal direction, a 'wave offering to the Lord as ruler of earth, a heave offering to the Lord as ruler of heaven.'*"

Third, the priests' portion was the best of the oil, wine, wheat and firstfruits of the land which were given by the people (18:12-14).

Fourth, the firstborn of both people and animals belonged to the priests (18:15-18). However, the firstborn of people the family must redeem with money given to the priest.

Last, the priests received no inheritance of land, for God was their inheritance (18:20). For their income and provision, God gave them the tithe of all the people (18:21). Since the people could not come near the tabernacle, the Levites do so on their behalf. For this reason, the Levites inherit the tithes (18:23-24).

### Principles for Us Today

What can we learn from the budded rod of Aaron that could apply to leadership today? \_\_\_\_\_

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With privilege always comes accountability. How might this apply to church? \_\_\_\_\_

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How might it apply to your family? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some other ways in which we ought to apply the truths and principles found in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

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