

## **Day 165 - WEDNESDAY: May 24th**

### Numbers 18

#### Numbers 18:1–32 NKJV

Then 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. Also 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. They 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. They 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. And 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. Behold, 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. Therefore 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." And 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. This 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. In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. "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. "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. Whatever 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. "Every devoted thing in Israel shall

be yours. "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. And 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. But 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. And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours. "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." Then 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. "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. Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. But 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. For 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.' " Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "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. And 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. Thus 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. Of 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.'

Therefore 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. You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. And 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.' "

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Here is the UCG reading plan for this chapter: "The congregation now seems to have a healthy reverence and respect for the holy things of God. The people are to generally keep their distance from the tabernacle. But as we glimpsed in yesterday's reading, they are apparently very concerned that they could be annihilated for some random mistake or oversight when they were required to approach the tabernacle, such as when bringing offerings. And indeed, God reveals that if mistakes happen at the tabernacle, someone will be called to account. But God lets it be known that the responsibility for ensuring the proper care and appropriate service of the tabernacle belongs to

the priests and other Levites, and that *they* will be held individually accountable if anything goes awry.

The thought is expressed this way: "You and your sons and your father's house with you [i.e., all the Levites] shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons [i.e., just the priests] shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood" (verse 1). The word "iniquity" can throw us off a little. The word translated "iniquity" (Hebrew *'avon*) means "perverseness" and derives from a root meaning "to be bent or crooked." The English word "wrong," which originally connoted being "wrung out of course," gives us the same word picture (E.W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, appendix 44, sec. 4.) While it can mean deliberate evil, it can also simply mean that something is incorrect or not the way it is supposed to be for whatever reason. And if some aspect is out of kilter in the service of the priesthood or tabernacle due to slackness, incompetence, neglect or any such thing on the part of an individual who is supposed to be keeping watch over this aspect, that individual will be held guilty.

In reading through these passages, we should desire to understand the import they hold for us now. Leadership today, as in ancient Israel, carries great responsibility and

accountability. Every consideration must be given to lead in a righteous way, using mature wisdom in following all the laws and principles of God. Those in God's Church are told not to take too much upon themselves. Just as the Levitical priesthood was not for all Israelites, so being ordained as a minister of Jesus Christ or appointed by the ministry to teach is not for all *spiritual* Israelites, i.e., true Christians. The apostle James wrote to fellow Christians, "Let not many of you become teachers [which was anciently the responsibility of the priests and Levites], knowing that we [teachers, as James was] shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Leaders today will "bear the iniquity" if they misuse their offices.

To Aaron and his sons, and their families, belonged all the tabernacle offerings for their sustenance. This required Aaron and his sons to live by faith. Having no worldly jobs or income, they depended entirely on God. Aaron's family had no inheritance in the land and looked to God to be their inheritance. "I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel," God said (verse 20). The Levites would only have small lots of land for the purpose of keeping a few animals to provide their daily needs. So to the Levites went the tithes that were received of all Israel as

their inheritance (verse 21). The Levites, in turn, then tithed on their income to Aaron the priest (verses 26–28). And now, as the book of Hebrews explains, God has directed that tithes and offerings go to different recipients—those who represent the Melchizedek priesthood (see Hebrews 7).” [END]

Verses 6 & 7 – We should notice that it’s God who selected the Levites to serve as a gift to Aaron. Also, God gave Aaron the priesthood as a gift. None of these individuals decided of themselves to serve in this way, they were chosen by God for these important roles.

Verses 9 – 19: Notice, there were some aspects of the offerings that were only to be consumed by Aaron and his sons (only the males), while the heave & wave offerings were for the entire family. The requirement to be clean (a principle we discussed at length in Leviticus) applies to everyone who ate from the offerings. All of these things belonged to God, but God gave them to them out of His love and appreciation for their dedicated service.