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The Status of the Levites

1: 47-54

The status of the Levites DIG: What importance were the Levites? What could the Levites do that was prohibited for anyone else? Why do you think God wanted the Levites separated from the people? How would this affect the way the people viewed them?

REFLECT: How much distance do we need to keep from God today? In this chapter we see the importance of not neglecting our spiritual responsibilities. What keeps us from our time with the Lord? Do you sometimes find yourself too busy? What was the result?

The Levites were not counted among the tribes, but were set apart as holy for the priestly service of ADONAI.



But those who were Levites, according to the clan of their fathers, were not counted in this census; because ADONAI had told Moshe, “Do not include the tribe of Levi when you take the census of the people of Isra’el (1:47-49). When the prophet of the nations, the wicked Balaam, saw the people of Isra’el, he prophesied over them, “Behold, a people who dwells apart, and will not be numbered among the nations’ ‘ (23:9). So too, the Levites dwell apart from the other tribes; and therefore, not counted

among census taken.²³ In this anticipatory passage (see [Ac - Numbers from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: Anticipatory Passages](#)) description of **the Levites'** responsibilities is clearly irrelevant to the fact that **they** were not included in **the census of the people of Isra'el**, but summarizes and anticipates the **Levitical** duties delineated in **Chapters 3 and 4**.²⁴

Set apart (1:47-50): Based upon the zealous actions of **the Levites** who sided with **Moses** in the **golden calf** incident (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Gq - The Golden Calf Incident**), the tribe of **Moses, Aaron, and Miriam** was set apart for special service in **the Tabernacle**. Thus, **they** were not to be **counted among** the potential military personnel.²⁵ In one sense, the **Levites'** relationship to **the other tribes** is analogous to **Isra'el's** relationship to **the nations**. **The Levites** were not **counted among the tribes**, and **Isra'el** is not **counted among the nations**. **The Levites** were set apart as holy for the **priestly** service of **ADONAI**, and **Isra'el** is set apart to be **a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6)**.

Instead, give the Levites charge over the Tabernacle of the testimony, its equipment and everything else connected with it. In **Exodus 38:21**, the Sanctuary is called **the Tabernacle of the testimony**. **The testimony** refers to the Ten Words (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bk - The Ten Words**). These **tablets** were placed in **the ark**, leading to the phrase **the ark of the Testimony (Exodus 25:22, 26:33-34, 40:3 and 20)**.²⁶ **The Ten Words** served as the foundation from which all the mitzvot of Judaism were derived; hence, later the term **testimony** alluded to the Torah in general. **They are to carry the Tabernacle and all its equipment, serve in it and set up their camp around it (1:50)**.

Their separation provides for us a glimpse of the Messianic Age when all **the nations** will be under the commonwealth of **Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fk - Gentiles in the Messianic Kingdom**). Even then, **the descendants of Isra'el** will be set apart, a holy nation in the midst of a holy people. And from within their midst, **the Levites** will be set apart, a holy tribe with a holy nation, within a holy people.²⁷ And from with **the Levites** there will be holy, set apart order of **priests who are descendants of Zadok**. **They** will be honored with a special ministry in the Millennial **Temple**. **They** were the ones **who guarded God's Sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from Him. In First Samuel 2:31-36** we read how **YHVH** through **Samuel** prophesied that **the house of Eli** was to be deposed and replaced by a faithful priest. That was finally fulfilled in **First Kings 2:26-27**. Then in **Second Samuel 8:17** we read that **Zadok** became the high priest under **King David** and remained loyal to **David** after Absalom revolted (**2 Samuel 15:24-29**).

Furthermore, **Zadok** was also loyal to **Solomon (First Kings 1:8, 32-39, 2:26-27, 35)** and **the descendants of Zadok** remained faithful during the days of **Isra'el's** apostasy. As a result of **their** past faithfulness, they will be given a superior role in the ministry of **the Temple** during the Kingdom. **The Zadokites are to come near to minister before Me; they are to stand before Me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood,** declares **Adonai ELOHIM (Ezeki'el 44:15-31).**²⁸

Death and wrath (1:51-53): **The Levites** were charged with assembling and disassembling **the Tabernacle**. They alone were sanctioned to handle the holy articles. **When the Tabernacle is to be moved onward, it is the Levites who are to take it down and set it up in the new location. They** created a buffer zone around **the Tabernacle**, protecting **it** from **the people** and protecting **the people** from **the Tabernacle**. With the living **God** in **their** midst, a wrong step might prove to be fatal (see the commentary on **Leviticus Bh - The Death of Nadab and Abihu**). A non-Levite **who** trespassed in the sacred grounds of **the Tabernacle** was **to be put to death (1:51)**. Therefore, **their** encampment protected **the Tabernacle** from defilement and sacrilege. **Joshua 3:4** tells us that **the tribes** were to **keep a distance of about a thousand yards** away from **the Tabernacle**. How much **distance** do we need to keep from **YHVH** today? Zero! Because **Yeshua tabernacled among us (John 1:14)** and **the inner veil** has been torn from top to bottom. Therefore, there is no longer any separation between the believer and the throne of **ADONAI** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lw - The Accompanying Signs of Jesus' Death**).²⁹

The three camps (1:52-53): The encampment of **Isra'el** was composed of ascending spheres of holiness. **The Sages teach that there were three camps: first, within the curtains of the courtyard of the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus Ex - The Courtyard and Gate of the Tabernacle**), **that is, the camp of the Sh'khinah; secondly, the camp of the Levites around the Tabernacle; and thirdly, the camp of the tribes of Isra'el.** The rest of **Isra'el** are to set up camp, company by company, each man with his own banner. **But the Levites are to camp around the Tabernacle of the testimony** to prevent unauthorized **Israelites** from interfering with the services, **so that no anger will come upon the assembly of the people of Isra'el. They were also to be in charge of the Tabernacle of the testimony.** The most important thing about **the Israelite encampment** was that **the Sh'khinah** was in the middle of it.³⁰

But please note that the word **Sh'kinah** is not found in the Bible. **It is a word used by the rabbis to describe the Glory of the LORD as it was manifested in the Most Holy Place** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**). To

say that it's not a word found in the Bible however, does not mean it's a bad or wrong word to use. On the contrary, it's a convenient word which describes in short-hand that manifested itself in the Most Holy Place. So the image being formed is that this was not really **Isra'el's camp**. It was really **God's camp**! The other two **camps** surrounding **it** were merely guarding **His Presence**. And just as **the Sh'khinah** was the physical manifestation of **God** as seen in the Tabernacle, so was **Yeshua** the physical manifestation of the unseen **God** made visible on planet earth. Moreover, just as **the Sh'khinah** was in the center of **Isra'el's camp**, so is **Messiah** at the center of everything in **God's** spiritual camp - the called-out ones who believe in **Yeshua**. In fact, **the B'rit Chadashah** refers to **His Body** of believers as **the temple of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh (First Corinthians 6:19)**. **Yeshua** is in the center of **the Temple**, glorifying **Himself** through us, just as **ADONAI** was in the center of **the camp of Isra'el**, glorifying **Himself** in **the Sh'khinah**.³¹ The distinction between the different uses of the term "**camp**" becomes important to remember when we read about people being sent out of "**the camp**" for various reasons. One must consider the context to determine if it means they were sent out of **the camp of the Sh'khinah, the camp of the Levites, or the camp of Isra'el**.³²

Summary (1:54): This is what the people of Isra'el did - they did everything that ADONAI had ordered Moshe and did not touch the Tabernacle. In view of **Isra'el's** great disobedience (see [By - The Report of the Spies](#)), these words of initial compliance to **God's Word** have a special sadness. **Isra'el** began so well, then failed so horribly; her experience remains a potent lesson to all people of faith who follow **them**. Ending well is the point. To **run the race** well (see the commentary on [Hebrews Cy - We Are Surrounded by a Great Cloud of Witnesses](#)), means to finish well.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that as I run the race of life with my eyes focused on **You**, I am assured of victory and eternal life in heaven with **You**! **You keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3)**. Praise **You** that **You**, my Almighty, the All-Powerful Sovereign of the universe, are unstoppable unbeatable and nothing can hinder **You** from redeeming those who love **You (Ephesians 1:7)**. **You** are all-wise and know even the future (**Daniel 2, 7, Revelation 19**). It is a comfort to know that **You** not only have all-power, but **You** are also always loving and perfectly holy. **Your** Almighty power is wrapped in **Your** love. When I run to you for protection and advice, whatever **You** say to do is always the best and wisest action to take for me at that time.*

*Thank you that even problems and trials are all under **Your** control. In **Your** infinite wisdom **You** have allowed problems as an opportunity for me to trust in **You** and seek **Your** care*

and advice. **You** have allowed the trials in my life to refine me and to bring **You** glory and honor. **So that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yeshua Messiah (Second Peter 1:7).** **You** are always walking with me, even in trials, to bring me comfort and help. Thank **You** for being such a wise and wonderful Heavenly **Father**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen