

New Covenant Levites

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The subject that I have today I have found absolutely fascinating. We're going to be talking about the tribe of Levi. When I was running across things, reading God's Word about the Levites, I then discovered—I had a thought—that this applies to us too. I became more and more fascinated with this concept. This subject, that the Levites have a lot of similarities to the New Covenant Christians—to the church. I'm going to be talking about this subject today. The title of the sermon is:

New Covenant Levites

When you read through Leviticus and through the rituals of the Levites, one of the things, and I found this, it is really tempting to read through them quickly. To read fast and not attach meaning to what each of the steps meant. For me, reading through those rituals of the Levites—the “you do this”, “you do that” and you have all these tiny steps that are involved, it was really tempting to read through them quickly and not attach meaning to what each of the steps meant. Then you go back and realize that this is talking about us—and these symbols have a reason. All things were written for our benefit and all these little rituals have meaning. Then, you dig into it and I read it with a “new pair of glasses” and was fascinated.

Today I want to lay out how some of these similarities that I found that were meaningful to me. I discovered that:

The Levites were chosen.

They were called firstborn.

They were bought with a price.

They were called to do a special work that the other tribes couldn't even participate in.

They were the least of the tribes. (The number of Levites was around 22,000 while the average of the other tribes was around 50,000.)

They had a closer proximity to Yehovah.

They were scattered throughout the land of Israel—once they were in the land,

They set an example that we will go through where they put Yehovah in front, ahead of their relatives.

They put serving Yehovah above financial gain and inheritance.

The Bible says they are like a “wave offering” and we know when we go to Pentecost, we see ourselves as part of the loaf.

The Firstfruits belong to God and they are given to the High Priest.

We all know that the Firstfruits belong to God and that they are given to the High Priest, but there is a parallel there too. So today, I want to go through the instructions about the *wave offering*, the *firstborn*, and the *Firstfruits*, and how all these tie together and paint a picture, through which I was really able to relate to and connect with. I hope I can make

this as fascinating for you as it was to me. It kind of opened up sections of scripture that I used to speed read and now I'm reading with fascination and many "aha" moments all the way through.

Let's nail down what a firstborn is. We're going to start by going to Genesis 33; this is where Jacob is on his way back from escaping from Laban.

Genesis 33:18 *Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.*

19) And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. (NKJV)

I'm skipping through this pretty quickly because there are a lot of scriptures.

Genesis 34:1 *Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.*

2) And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. (NKJV)

So he raped her. Genesis 34:7.

7) And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.

8) But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. (NKJV)

Then they go through a negotiation. Drop to verse 15.

15) But on this condition, we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised,

16) then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. (NKJV)

Verse 25.

25) Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.

26) And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.

27) The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.

28) They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field,

29) and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.

30) Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

31) But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?" (NKJV)

There was only one person who raped Dinah, so this is a pretty violent response. Let's go to Genesis 49; Jacob did not forget this. This ties into the Levites. This is when Jacob is blessing all the sons right before his death. He says of Simeon, in verse 5:

Genesis 49:5 *"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.*

6) *Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.*

7) *Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel.* (NKJV)

If you look at what happened to both tribes, that is what happened. So, then Simeon and Levi showed a level of violence and a level of intolerance that we will see repeats itself in the future. With that black mark on their record, you can tell Jacob didn't think this was a good thing. With that black mark on their record, how did they become the favored tribe, selected for special work. Let's go to Exodus 32, this is the golden calf episode. It ties in—I know you are familiar with these but we are just painting the picture.

Exodus 32:26 *then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD's side—come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.*

27) *And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'"*

28) *So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

29) *Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."* (NKJV)

They distinguished themselves from the rest of the tribe with their violent intolerance and willingness to kill, even as a tribe. We are now going to go a little deeper into the "firstborn". Let's go to a famous story in Genesis 25:29 where Esau sold his birthright.

Genesis 25:29 *Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.*

30) *And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.*

31) *But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."*

32) *And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"*

33) *Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day."*

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34) *And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (NKJV)*

The word *despised* is interesting. It's the same word that Goliath used to describe his *disdain* for David when he faced David. *Despise* is a really good word to express that feeling. Let's look at what a birthright is. The firstborn son assumes leadership of the family. I want to start with Genesis 43—these are all breaking into the middle of stories but it's stories we are all familiar with. This is when the sons of Jacob appear before Joseph and they don't know who Joseph is—Joseph knows who they are of course.

Genesis 43:32 *So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.*

33) *And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. (NKJV)*

How did they know who had the birthright and who was oldest and who was youngest. Of course, they figured that out. Turn to 1 Chronicles 5:1. Reuben was the oldest.

1 Chronicles 5:1 *Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright;*

2) *yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's— (NKJV)*

Genesis 48 is where Ephraim and Manasseh are blessed by Jacob. You know the story where Joseph brings in his children—Genesis 48:13 begins the story. Joseph begins to put a blessing on Ephraim and he says, "Bring the boys to me." He reaches out and crosses his hands and puts his right hand on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh. In the story, Joseph says, "Not so father" and Jacob says—drop down to verse 18.

18) *And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."*

19) *But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."*

20) *So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. (NKJV)*

So Ephraim is God's firstborn. In Jeremiah 31:7, way into the future, this is reaffirmed.

Jeremiah 31:7 *For thus says the LORD: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!'"*

8) *Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there.*

9) *They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn. (NKJV)*

We see that the benefits of the firstborn are first of all, recognition, and second a double portion of inheritance. But with that came responsibility to take care of the family. God clearly made exceptions and gave the firstborn benefits and responsibilities to younger sons. Yehovah did that, but he had specific instructions in Deuteronomy that say that you can't do that. Even if it's the son of an unloved wife, you have to give the double portion to the eldest son, period.

Let's look at Exodus 4; this is instruction to Moses about what to say to Pharaoh and notice the emphasis on "firstborn".

Exodus 4:22 *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.*

23) *So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'" (NKJV)*

Israel is the firstborn of nations. Exodus 11:4 is where Moses is talking to Pharaoh and he is upset with Pharaoh, as you can imagine. Pharaoh has broken promise after promise after promise and Moses is telling him what's going to happen. This is where he is telling him the story—"the death angel is going to come and kill all the first born of all your children, of all your animals, firstborn of everybody and then you're going to tell me I can leave."

Exodus 11:8 *... After that I will go out.'" Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger. (NKJV)*

So, God spared the firstborn of Israel. We know that through the Passover—the blood on the doors. God spared them and when He spared them, He also claimed them as His own. Exodus 13:2.

Exodus 13:2 *“Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.” (NKJV)*

Verse 11.

11) *“And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you,*

12) *that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD’s.*

13) *But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.*

14) *So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’ (NKJV)*

Of course, we are thinking of this as, “God brought us out of sin. We were slaves, we were trapped.” What the significance of the firstborn is, as we are referred to and are also referred to as the church of the firstborn, we will see later. This is all “hooking up” with us.

15) *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’*

16) *It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.” (NKJV)*

He brought us out of “Egypt” individually. It’s just a reminder of God’s power and His intention to choose us and bring us out of sin.

Now I want to show you where the Levites are purchased. We know we are bought and paid for with a price. So let’s look at Numbers 3:5.

Numbers 3:5 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

6) *“Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.*

7) *And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle.*

8) *Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle.*

9) *And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.*

10) *So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.*"

11) *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

12) *"Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,*

13) *because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD."* (NKJV)

In verses 40 through 51 it explains in detail how there was a census taken of the Levites and then there was a census taken of all the firstborn and there was a slight discrepancy in the number. In verse 49 it says Moses took the redemption money for each of these of the numerical discrepancy and they were paid for. This ritual was bought and paid for and change given. It was down to the minutia. I was thinking of this scripture, you probably are too—1 Corinthians 6:19.

1 Corinthians 6:19 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*

20) *For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* (NKJV)

Let's go to Numbers 1:52 where God is telling them how the camp is to be laid out around the tabernacle.

Numbers 1:52 *The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp ...* (NKJV)

So then they had three tribes in front, three tribes in back, three tribes on the right, three tribes on the left.

52 continued) *... everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;*

53) *but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony."*

54) *Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they did.* (NKJV)

The Levites surrounded the tabernacle on all four sides. You had three groups of Levites on the front, the left side and the right side and then in the back, you had Moses and Aaron's tents; they were surrounded.

Now let's look at the duties of the Levites. There were three Levite families and one of them was the family of Kohath. The family of Kohath was the family where Moses and Aaron were from and only that family was to handle the objects of the temple—carry the ark, carry the table and all of that. They could not even look at it until the priest had

covered them all up. The family of Kohath took all of the things that had to be carried by hand, which were the ark, the table of offering, the incense table, candlesticks, plates, silverware, altar of incense, utensils for the altar and basins. A total of twenty-four people had things to carry that couldn't be put open a cart, couldn't be packed on an animal or anything like that. The sons of Gershonites, it says in Numbers 4:25, carried the curtains of the tabernacle. The tabernacle of meeting is covered with badger skins—so they have their things that they were to carry. The sons of Merari were in charge of transporting the boards, bars, pillars, sockets and ropes of the Tabernacle. All of this is set out so meticulously among these three Levite families. The other tribes carried their own belongings. They had their tents and backpacks, food and their other belongings, but the Levites had to carry their belongings and all this other stuff. It was a tribe of only about 22,000 and from these three families who were involved in the census had to do the work of carrying these. There was only 13,000 listed in the census.

We know that in the Holy Place, in the Holy of Holies, almost everything was covered with gold. The floor was covered with gold, the walls were covered with gold, the ceiling was covered with gold, the table was covered with gold, the ark was covered with gold—this was Fort Knox, everything was solid gold. I don't know if you have ever picked up a chunk of gold but it is heavy. Gold is heavy, the menorah all by itself weighed like seventy-five pounds—just that one candlestick. It wasn't just that it was heavy, it was just so very, very valuable. Notice 1 Corinthians 3:16. The tabernacle was pretty ornate and amazing. It was made to be portable. We know the temple, built in the time of Solomon when gold was a very common thing, had even more gold.

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

17) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (NKJV)

Gold is worth a lot of money, but we are worth even more because wherever God is dwelling, that's where true value is. Look at 1 Peter 2, talking about us.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

10) who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (NKJV)

Ephesians 2—I know these are really familiar scriptures, but this all just came together in my mind and I thought it was so cool.

Ephesians 2:19 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

21) *in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,*
22) *in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* (NKJV)

The temple we know is where God placed His name and it was right there. It was not going to move. But the tabernacle was portable, so it could move everywhere and God moved with the tabernacle—or actually the tabernacle moved wherever God moved. We are pretty portable; we can move too just like the tabernacle and we do.

Let's look at Joshua 13 and tie in another point with the New Covenant church.

Joshua 13:14 *Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said to them.* (NKJV)

So the Levites were given more work. They received no inheritance in the land but they were in closer proximity to God and they got to do God's work, moving the tabernacle. But they did not get to pursue riches. Let's look at Matthew 6:19.

Matthew 6:19 *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;
20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
22) “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good [that means you're generous], your whole body will be full of light.
23) But if your eye is bad [you're stingy], your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!
24) “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* (NKJV)

That's why the Levites did not have an inheritance in the land. Matthew 6:33.

Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
34) Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.* (NKJV)

The Levites, just as Jacob predicted, were scattered throughout the land. Numbers 35:1.

Numbers 35:1 *And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying:*

2) Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities. (NKJV)

But they didn't get any land. Ephraim had their part, Manasseh had their part, Reuben had their part—everybody had their chunk of land except the Levites. They got cities scattered throughout the land and that was for a very important reason.

The firstborns have more responsibility to care for others. They do have a double portion of inheritance, but that double portion comes with a price. Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30) Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (NKJV)

In Hebrews 12:23, I'm going to skip part of this and just get to the important verse.

Hebrews 12:23 *... to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

24) to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (NKJV)

So now you see the importance of the firstborn. Christ paid a huge price to be the *firstborn among many brethren*. We are the church of the firstborn, meaning there is a price that we have to pay and sacrifices that we have to make. These emphasize that these are put on us so that we qualify by setting our priorities on God and His will and on what is important to Him, rather than seeking what the rest of the world seeks.

Let's look at Numbers 8, I want to talk about wave offerings now because we know that on Pentecost, we see the ceremony of the wave loaves. I missed something on the wave loaves until just recently and I want to point that out. James and I were talking two or three weeks ago and he asked me the question, "Is there a wave ceremony ever involving the Levites?". Not that I knew of, then the next day I was reading through Numbers and there it was and I called him on the phone and said, "How did you know that?". It was interesting.

Numbers 8:5 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

6) Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially.

7) Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

- 8) Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering.
- 9) And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel.
- 10) So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites;
- 11) and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD. (NKJV)

So the question is, what is the significance of a wave offering?

- 12) Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites.
- 13) "And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them like a wave offering to the LORD.
- 14) Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.
- 15) After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them like a wave offering.
- 16) For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel.
- 17) For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself.
- 18) I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel.
- 19) And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary."
- 20) Thus Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them.
- 21) And the Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them like a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them.
- 22) After that the Levites went in to do their work in the tabernacle of meeting before Aaron and his sons; as the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them. (NKJV)

What were the wave offerings? What did they mean? What did they signify? Look at Exodus 29. What you see here is that the consecrating of Aaron and his sons is the same process. There are sin offerings, there are cleansing rituals, there is the actual act of the wave offerings. We want to pick it up in Exodus 29:22.

Exodus 29:22 *Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver ... (NKJV)*

And it describes the animal.

23) one loaf of bread, one cake ... (NKJV)

Go to verse 25.

25) You shall receive them back from their hands and burn them on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the LORD. It is an offering made by fire to the LORD.

26) Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion.

27) And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering which is waved, and the thigh of the heave offering which is raised ... (NKJV)

A *heave offering* just means “donation”; I was kind of hung up on that word so I had to look it up to see what it actually means. But it just means “donation”.

27 continued) ... of that which is for Aaron and of that which is for his sons.

28) It shall be from the children of Israel for Aaron and his sons by a statute forever. For it is a heave offering; it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, that is, their heave offering to the LORD. (NKJV)

Leviticus 8 is sanctifying Aaron and his sons through this ritual. One of the things I found interesting is that there were sacrifices and there was blood. One of the things they do with the blood is wipe the blood on the earlobe and on the thumb and on the big toe of Aaron and then this is repeated for his sons. Then they get the holy oil and the holy oil is applied on top of the earlobe and on top of the blood that's on the thumb and on top of the blood that's on the big toe. This is an interesting ritual. It is also repeated, as we'll see in a few minutes, outside of the priesthood, with the cleansing of lepers. What I found interesting is the process of our conversion—we have to repent and we have to become clean. We go through the ritual of baptism where we're buried, the blood of Christ is applied and then we go through the ritual of the laying on hands for the Holy Spirit. The blood pictures the sacrifice of Christ and the oil is picturing the Holy Spirit. It seems interesting that it is the same order that we go through for the same purpose. It's for cleansing and consecration and setting apart to do something. Leviticus 8:22, just think of the symbolism of the blood and the oil.

Leviticus 8:22 *And he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration. Then Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram,*

23) and Moses killed it. Also he took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

24) Then he brought Aaron's sons. And Moses put some of the blood on the tips of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood all around on the altar.

25) Then he took the fat and the fat tail, all the fat that was on the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh;
26) and from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD he took one unleavened cake, a cake of bread anointed with oil, and one wafer, and put them on the fat and on the right thigh;

27) and he put all these in Aaron's hands and in his sons' hands, and waved them as a wave offering before the LORD.

28) Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar, on the burnt offering. They were consecration offerings for a sweet aroma. That was an offering made by fire to the LORD.

29) And Moses took the breast and waved it as a wave offering before the LORD. It was Moses' part of the ram of consecration, [meaning setting ap[art for holy use] as the LORD had commanded Moses.

30) Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him; and he consecrated Aaron, his garments, his sons, and the garments of his sons with him. (NKJV)

Once again, the oil was applied on top of the blood, which is just like the sacrifice of Christ being applied to us precedes our receiving of the Holy Spirit. Leviticus 9 covers the eighth day ceremony of the priest. Look at verse 18. This is a weeklong ceremony for the sons of Aaron.

Leviticus 9:18 *He also killed the bull and the ram as sacrifices of peace offerings, which were for the people. And Aaron's sons presented to him the blood, which he sprinkled all around on the altar,*

19) *and the fat from the bull and the ram—the fatty tail, what covers the entrails and the kidneys, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver;*

20) *and they put the fat on the breasts. Then he burned the fat on the altar;*

21) *but the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved as a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded. (NKJV)*

In Leviticus 10 we see the sad story of when the tabernacle was being inaugurated that Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, in their enthusiasm, took their censers, put fire in them, put incense in them and they offered fire before Yehovah that was not commanded and God struck them dead. What God said about that is important.

Leviticus 10:3 *And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace. (NKJV)*

Greater access to God gives greater responsibility to us. Leviticus 14 is the cleansing of the leper ritual. Very, very similar to the ritual involved in consecrating the priest. This first of all involves the priest verifying that they don't have leprosy any more. Then they shave their heads, shave their body and so they go through a cleansing ritual. There is a sacrifice of a couple of birds which is kind of interesting. Let me just read this.

Leviticus 14:1 *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*

- 2) *"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.*
- 3) *And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper,*
- 4) *then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.*
- 5) *And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water.*
- 6) *As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water.*
- 7) *And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.*
- 8) *He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. (NKJV)*

This is something the sons of Aaron had to do; they had to stay outside the tent for seven days.

- 9) *But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.*
- 10) *And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil.*
- 11) *Then the priest who makes him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*
- 12) *And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.*
- 13) *Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place; for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy.*
- 14) *The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.*

15) *And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand.*

16) *Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD.*

17) *And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering. (NKJV)*

You see the similarities between the ritual of consecrating a priest to be able to work and the ritual of cleansing a person to be able to be a part of the congregation of Israel. The blood is followed by the oil then verse 25.

25) *Then he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. (NKJV)*

It's that same series of things that are done. The right ear—what does that signify? What we “hear”. The right thumb is what we “do”. Our right toe, where we “go”. Cleansed and consecrated for a purpose. In Leviticus 23, there is another wave offering that we know.

Leviticus 23:9 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*

10) *“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.*

11) *He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. (NKJV)*

In verse 17 you have the wave loaves and this is where I discovered something that I didn't know. I always pictured that there were two loaves and the priest took the two loaves and put them up, waved them, elevated them and came back down. But that's not exactly what scripture says happened.

15) *And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.*

16) *Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.*

17) *You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.*

18) *And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD.*

- 19) *Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering.*
- 20) *The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. (NKJV)*

So, these loaves are waved with a sacrifice. You will see wave offerings are a part of the Nazarite vow. They are a part of ordaining a priest or ordaining the High Priest, cleansing a leper—but there is only one wave offering that isn't combined with a sin offering and trespass offering and that wave offering is the *wave sheaf*. Every other wave offering in the Bible is accompanied by a sin offering. I think we all know that Christ, our wave sheaf, led a sinfree life and did not need a sacrifice for his sins.

Numbers 6 covers the Nazarite vow—we're not going to cover that—but you'll see the wave sheaf offering is the same there. Numbers 18:1.

- Numbers 18:1** *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.*
- 2) *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.*
- 3) *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.*
- 4) *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.*
- 5) *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.*
- 6) *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.*
- 7) *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."* (NKJV)

Offerings that support the Levite priests; devoted things are a wave offering. Yehovah is their inheritance. So think of Christ as the High Priest. Now think of what we're reading was Aaron's job and that has been transferred to our High Priest and how we are given to our High Priest to serve, just like the Levites are given to the sons of Aaron—the Kohen (Hebrew for *priest*).

- 8) *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.*
- 9) *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.*
- 10) *In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.*
- 11) *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.*
- 12) *"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.*
- 13) *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.*
- 14) *"Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.*
- 15) *"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.*
- 16) *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.*
- 17) *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*
- 18) *And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours.*
- 19) *"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."*
- 20) *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*
- 21) *"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.*
- 22) *Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die.*
- 23) *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.*
- 24) *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.' '(NKJV)*

What does the *wave offering* signify? It signifies “cleansing”, we see its consecration—setting apart, cleansing, making atonement for—you have the cleansing of the leper, cleansing, fulfilling a Nazarite vow, the Levites were a wave offering. There was a lot more to the wave offering than I thought initially.

I want to make a quick comment about Korah. Korah was a Levite who challenged Moses and Aaron. Look at Numbers 16:8. Why did Yehovah wipe out Korah? Korah was not the first person to challenge Moses and Aaron. He wasn’t the first person to criticize or blame them and he wasn’t the last, but he was a Levite. Here we read how important that is.

Numbers 16:8 *Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9) Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; 10) and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? 11) Therefore, you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?”* (NKJV)

We know how that story ended. The earth opened up and made a spectacle. *To whom more is given, more is expected.* Along with our calling comes greater responsibility, comes greater judgment. 1 Peter 4:17 is the scripture that says *for the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.* If it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God? The main point is that we are called to a much higher standard and along with that comes a stricter judgment. But also, with that added responsibility comes more opportunity.

We’ve talked about the Levites, the firstborn and the wave offerings, now let’s look at a few things about the Firstfruits. I love to talk about the Firstfruits. The Firstfruits is first of all, just the term which implies, a future “ingathering”. Firstfruits and firstborn are the beginning, either in a field or with the birth the firstborn child. You bring the first and that first belongs to Yehovah. In tithing it’s just the opposite. When they were counting tithes, it was nine sheep would go through the trough and then the tenth one belongs to God. The first fruits—the first born—represent the beginning, while the tithes happened at the end. It’s the *first* and the *last*, it’s the bookends there. Exodus 34:23.

Exodus 34:23 *Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel.* (NKJV)

Deuteronomy 18:1 *The priests, the Levites—all the tribe of Levi—shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion.*

2) Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them.

3) *And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach.*

4) *The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him.*

5) *For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever. (NKJV)*

Once again, just reminding, our High Priest is Jesus Christ. These commands—just look at the symbolism there. Deuteronomy 26:1, repeats the command.

Deuteronomy 26:1 *"And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it,*

2) *that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. (NKJV)*

We know that everything we have comes from God, but we are to give of the first. James 1:16.

James 1:16 *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

17) *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

18) *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (NKJV)*

Revelation 14:1-4 is where you have the picture of the 144,000, having their Father's name.

Revelation 14:2 *And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.*

3) *They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.*

4) *These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (NKJV)*

We were chosen. We were prepared, just like the Levites and we were given to Christ just like the firstfruits are given to the priest. John 6:37.

John 6:37 *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me [that's us], and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (NKJV)*

We've seen some of the similarities. We're the firstborn, they're the firstborn. Wave offerings, proximity closeness yet scattered all around the world—called to a higher standard, special relationship, access to Yehovah. They had a greater access when they were clean and we have greater access when we are clean. If we aren't clean before God, we don't have access to Him until we repent. We don't focus on building wealth. We seek first the Kingdom of God. We live by faith and lately, with what's going on in the world, it requires more and more faith, more and more confidence. We are called to a higher standard; we are called to a stricter judgment with more irreversible consequences. The Levites had to be clean to enter the tabernacles complex to do the work but they had to go in there regularly to do their work, so they had to stay clean. They had to live by a better standard. James 5:16.

James 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* (NKJV)

If we are not living righteously, then we are not able to present sacrifices before Yehovah on behalf of the world and our brethren. So we have that same obligation to stay clean. The Levites were camped around the tabernacle on all sides. We also have greater proximity to God. The Levites put God before their relatives at the golden calf, in Luke 14:26.

Luke 14:26 *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.* (NKJV)

We have to put God first. Not even family comes before Yehovah. Matthew 10:34.

Matthew 10:34 *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*

35) For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

36) and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

37) He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (NKJV)

Deuteronomy 27:11 *And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying,*

12) These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin;

13) and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. (NKJV)

Verse 14 is what I wanted to get to.

- 14) *And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel:*
15) *Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image ... (NKJV)*

And then you go through the curses and the people reply, but it was the Levites who pronounced the curses. Jeremiah 33 talks about the permanence of this covenant.

Jeremiah 33:20 *“Thus says the LORD: If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season,*

21) *then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers.*

22) *As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me. (NKJV)*

Malachi 2:4 *Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue,” Says the LORD of hosts.*

5) *My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name.*

6) *The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. (NKJV)*

One more quick scripture—Deuteronomy 33 shows that what ties into our calling is all about us as a New Testament Levite.

Deuteronomy 33:8 *And of Levi he said: “Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, Whom You tested at Massah, And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,*

9) *Who says of his father and mother, ‘I have not seen them’; Nor did he acknowledge his brothers, Or know his own children; For they have observed Your word And kept Your covenant.*

10) *They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You, And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.*

11) *Bless his substance, LORD, And accept the work of his hands; Strike the loins of those who rise against him, And of those who hate him, that they rise not again.” (NKJV)*

So then, we are called to be teachers, we are called to have God’s Word in our mouths and to set that example and there are many more scriptures that support all of this. I wish I had had time to include them all. I hope now if you dig into learning about the Levites and reading these Levitical rituals that you will see what they did is symbolic and how that all applies to us.