
Pearl Seeking

TREASURING HIS WORD

Let's do a quick overview of the entire Torah portion:

Monday:	Num. 16:1-22	The rebellion of Qorah, Dathan and Abiram and the 250 tribal leaders
Tuesday:	Num. 16:23-50	The punishment of the rebels; The plague upon Yisra'el for grumbling
Wednesday:	Num. 17	The budding of Aharon's rod
Thursday:	Num. 18:1-19	The duties of the priesthood and Lewites; The offerings for the priests
Friday:	Num. 18:20-32	The Torah regarding land inheritance; Tithes for the priests and Lewites

In this week's Parsha Pearls lesson, we will see how Yahweh confirmed His choice of High Priest by causing Aharon's rod to bud and bear fruit, and so put a stop to the grumbling of the children of Yisra'el. We will also learn about the responsibilities and duties of the priests and the Lewites, and how Yahweh arranged to take care of them through the portions (gifts, contributions, first-fruits and tithes) that Yahweh wanted the children of Yisra'el and the Lewites to present to the priests. Now, let's read Num. 17-18.

PARSHA POINTS

- Once and for all Yahweh wanted to end the grumbings of the tribes regarding His choice of who would serve Him as priests. Yahweh told Mosheh to call for a leader from each of the 12 (**shtem esre**) tribes. Each leader was to bring Mosheh a rod (**matteh**), and Mosheh was to write each man's name (**shem**) on his rod - 17:1-2, 5
- As representative of the tribe of Lewi, Aharon was also to bring a rod, and Mosheh was to write his name on that rod as well - 17:3
- The 12 rods were to be placed inside the Tent of Meeting in front of the ark of the Witness, where Yahweh always met with Mosheh - 17:4
- Mosheh gave each tribal leader his rod, with Aharon's rod among them, then took and placed them in the Tent of the Witness - 17:6-7
- The next day, Mosheh went into the tent and beheld that only Aharon's rod had budded; it had brought forth buds (**parach**) and had blossomed with ripe almonds (**shaged**) - 17:8
- He then brought all the rods out to be examined by the children of Yisra'el, and gave to each leader his rod - 17:9

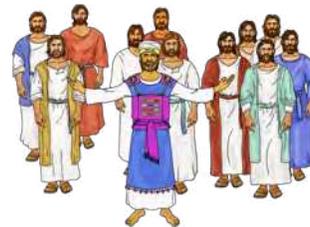


- Yahweh instructed Mosheh to take Aharon's rod that budded and to place it before the ark of the Witness as a sign against all the rebels, so that the grumbings of the people would stop and they would not die - 17:10
- After Mosheh did as Yahweh instructed, the children of Yisra'el feared that if they were to come near the Dwelling Place, they would all die - 17:11-13



Responsibilities of the Priesthood and the Lewites

- Yahweh no longer wanted the children of Yisra'el to come near the Tent of Meeting - 18:22
- Yahweh told Aharon and his sons that from now on they were to bear the crookedness (the accountability) against (18:1):
 - the Set-apart Place
 - the priesthood
- The whole tribe of Lewi were Yahweh's chosen helpers to come alongside the priests in their service before the Tent of the Witness - 18:2
- The Lewites were to follow orders from the priests as well as to perform the duties of all the Tent, but they were told that they were not to come near the furnishings of the Set-apart Place or the bronze altar in the courtyard - 18:3
- The priests were to be held responsible and accountable for the Lewites following the rules, or else both of them would die - 18:3 (also 4:20)
- Both the priests and the Lewites were to 'guard' the duty of the Tent of Meeting; no stranger was to come near it - 18:4 (also 1:51; 3:10, 38)
- The priests were to 'guard' the duty of the Set-apart Place and the duty of the bronze altar so that wrath would no longer be on the children of Yisra'el - 18:5
- The Lewites were a gift from Yahweh to the priesthood, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting and to share in their burdens - 18:6 (also 8:19)
- Yahweh reiterated that the priests alone were to perform the offerings and the duties behind the (outer) veil, while the Lewites were assigned other duties. The stranger (someone who is not authorized for clearance) who came to do any of these things would die - 18:7



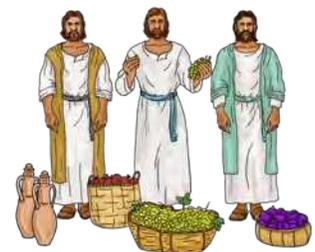
Gifts for the Priests and the Levites

- Yahweh told Aharon what set-apart gifts He wanted the priesthood (their whole family; including the daughters) to receive from the children of Yisra'el (18:8-20):

- contributions - a covenant of salt forever
- offerings
 - grain
 - sin
 - guilt
 - peace (wave) - the breast and the right thigh
- the best of the oil
- first-fruits of the new wine and grain
- flesh of the offerings
- all that was dedicated in Yisra'el
- first-born of man or beast



- Only those who were clean could eat of these - 18:11, 13
- The first-born of man or unclean beast could be ransomed at one (**achat**) month old, according to the valuation of the sheqel of the Set-apart Place; 20 (**esrim**) gerahs - 18:16
- The first-born of a cow, sheep or goat were not to be ransomed - they would be set-apart for offerings to Yahweh - 18:17
- Their blood was to be sprinkled on the altar and their fat was to be an offering made by fire - a sweet fragrance to Yahweh - 18:17
- Yahweh told Aharon that the priests were not to have an inheritance in the land, for He Himself was to be their portion and their inheritance among the children of Yisra'el - 18:20
- In return for their service, the Levites were to receive tithes from the children of Yisra'el. The the Levites in turn were to give a 10th of the tithe they received to the priesthood - 8:21, 26-28
- The Levites were also to have no land inheritance - 18:23-2
- The Levites were to give the priesthood the best from their tithes (the wine press and the threshing-floor) and keep the rest for themselves - 18:29-30
- After they gave their tithe to the priests, the Levites were able to eat their portion any place they wanted, to so that they would bear no sin by profaning the set-apart gifts and die - a trespass for which they must die - 18:31-32



DIGGING DEEPER

Parents/Teachers may choose to use these prompts for further discussion of the Torah portion.

- The budding of Aharon's rod did not represent a new decision by Yahweh, but rather a reaffirmation of the selection and ordination of Aharon and his sons that had already taken place. Find passages to support this. Do you think the leaders of the 12 tribes now understood and accepted Yahweh's decision through the sign Yahweh had given them?
- Where else do we see imagery of almond blossoms in Yahweh's furnishings? Research which tree is the first to blossom in the land of Yisra'el after winter. What color are the almond blossoms?
- The children of Yisra'el went from confronting leadership in Chapter 16 to being terrified to go near the Dwelling Place at the end of Chapter 17, lest they die. That's quite a leap. Do you think that they finally understood that they shouldn't go against Yahweh's authority again?
- The regular priests were to keep an eye out to make sure that the Lewites performed their specific service so that they would not die. In turn, the Lewites were responsible for preventing the children of Yisra'el from encroaching on activities reserved only for Lewites. Discuss accountability and hierarchy of duties.
- The Lewites were not allowed to do what the priests did. They had jobs that were supportive, but different. In the same way, the Brit Chadasha says we are all different parts of the body, each with particular gifts and callings (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Discuss what this means. Find the verses regarding the job description of the Gershonites, Merarites and Qehathites (the Lewites).
- The other tribes were to live normal lives farming and raising animals, etc. Discuss why it was so important that they were honest in their tithes and offerings, which were for the purpose of taking care of the priests and Lewites.
- What is the covenant of salt? What is the significance of salt? What are its qualities and its cost? Back in the Scriptures time it was considered to be pure, enduring and valuable. Discuss how this relates to our relationship with Yahweh.
- Discuss the first tithe and find Scriptural support for its continuation, even though at this time we do not have a temple or Lewites per se.

