Refreshed IN THE WORD
For thy word hath quickened me
PSALM 119:50

Torah Studies

Connecting the Torah and Jesus

STUDY 31

Everyone Has a Part

Numbers · Lesson 3 · Chapter 3

Learning to Walk with Our Father. Learn to serve with care and discover how Jesus' rescue leads us to grateful, loving service.

For personal reading and study with friends

King James Version · Complete Scripture passages

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Scripture and sources

Read one section at a time. Take turns reading the verses aloud, discuss the questions, and choose one practical response. Every passage referenced in the teaching is included in full.

Let’s begin together

Father, thank You for the people who care for us. Help us understand Your Word and notice the ways we can help. Teach us to serve with gratitude for Jesus. In His name, amen.

Numbers 3 brings us closer to the work of the tabernacle. Aaron and his sons serve as priests. Other Levites help with the care of the sacred tent and its furnishings. They belong to the same tribe, but they do not all have the same duties.

A caring father teaches children how to handle what has been placed in their care. Some jobs are easy to notice. Others happen quietly. A family needs both. In this lesson, we will learn about careful service and a Bible word called redemption, which means being released through a provided price or substitute.

Main truth: Jesus gave Himself to rescue us. We respond with gratitude, humility, and willing service.

1. Service calls for care

Numbers 3:1-4

1 These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that the LORD spake with Moses in mount Sinai.

2 And these are the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.

4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

The chapter remembers Nadab and Abihu, who died after offering fire God had not authorized. Eleazar and Ithamar continued serving as priests. This serious history shows that a title does not make a person free to ignore God's instructions. Holy service called for care and obedience.

Numbers 3:5-10

5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

The Levites helped Aaron and his sons. All priests in this arrangement came from Aaron's family, but not every Levite was a priest. The severe warning about an unauthorized person belongs to Israel's sanctuary under the Sinai covenant. It is not an instruction for families or churches to harm people today.

2. Belonging came before the task

Numbers 3:11-13

11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine;

13 Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.

“Firstborn” means the first child born; here the passage concerns firstborn males. God connects His claim on them to what happened when He rescued Israel from Egypt. He takes the Levites in their place for this special service. The repeated message is that they belong to Him.

Numbers 3:14-20

14 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying,

15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them.

16 And Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded.

17 And these were the sons of Levi by their names; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari.

18 And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families; Libni, and Shimei.

19 And the sons of Kohath by their families; Amram, and Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

20 And the sons of Merari by their families; Mahli, and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to the house of their fathers.

This census counts Levite males from one month old. That is different from the military census, which began at age twenty. Counting a baby identified him with the family group; it did not assign a baby the work of carrying the tabernacle. Always notice whom a passage is counting and why.

3. Quiet work still matters

Numbers 3:21-26

21 Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites.

22 Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred.

23 The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward.

24 And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael.

25 And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,

26 And the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof.

The family of Gershon cared for coverings, curtains, and cords. These items might seem less important than the things inside the sanctuary. Yet the tent needed them. Practical work is a real part of caring for a community.

Numbers 3:27-32

27 And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izeharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites.

28 In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

29 The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle southward.

30 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.

31 And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof.

32 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be chief over the chief of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary.

The family of Kohath cared for the ark, table, lampstand, altars, and other sacred items. Eleazar helped oversee the work. Clear responsibilities helped people know what they should handle and how to serve with care.

Numbers 3:33-38

33 Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites: these are the families of Merari.

34 And those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand and two hundred.

35 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail: these shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle northward.

36 And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto,

37 And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords.

38 But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

The family of Merari cared for boards, bars, pillars, bases, and other supports. Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons camped on the east. The visible parts and the supporting parts all mattered. At home, do not overlook the person who washes, repairs, carries, or cleans.

4. Understanding redemption

Numbers 3:39-45

39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

40 And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names.

41 And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel.

42 And Moses numbered, as the LORD commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel.

43 And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.

44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD.

Here the text gives 22,000 Levites and 22,273 firstborn males. It uses the Levites in place of the firstborn. There are 273 more firstborn than the stated total of Levites, and the next verses explain what to do about them.

A careful reading note: the family numbers in verses 22, 28, and 34 add up to 22,300, while verse 39 states 22,000. The chapter does not explain the difference. We keep the numbers as printed and follow the stated total of 22,000 in the calculation that follows.

Numbers 3:46-51

46 And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites;

47 Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:)

48 And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.

49 And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites:

50 Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary:

51 And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

God required five shekels for each of the additional 273 firstborn. A shekel was a measure of weight used here for the payment. Five times 273 equals 1,365 shekels. Moses gave this redemption money to Aaron and his sons as commanded.

This was a particular arrangement for Israel. We should not turn its numbers into a secret code or say that the amount predicts the price of Jesus' death. To understand how Jesus rescues us, we will listen to what He and His apostle actually say.

5. Jesus shows us how to serve

Mark 10:42-45

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus says greatness among His followers means serving others. He came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. A ransom is a price paid for someone's release. Numbers describes one redemption arrangement; Jesus speaks of giving His own life to rescue others.

1 Peter 1:18-21

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Peter explains that believers were redeemed through Christ's precious blood, not silver or gold. God raised Jesus from the dead. Our faith and hope rest in God. We do not do good deeds to buy His love. We serve with gratitude because Jesus has given Himself for us.

A father might say, "You do not need the biggest job to show love. Be faithful with the good you can do today." Jesus gives us a greater example: He uses His greatness to serve. We can follow Him by caring for people without needing praise.

Talk it over together

1. How were the priests' duties different from the work of the other Levites?

2. Which tasks in our home or community are important but easy to overlook?

3. What does Mark 10:45 tell us about why Jesus came?

4. Why can our service be a response to Jesus' love instead of a way to buy it?

Practice it this week

Choose one useful task that someone else usually does. Ask how to do it safely and well, then help without expecting praise. Thank that person for their care. As a family or group, name one way Jesus has taught you to serve during these first three lessons.

A verse to carry with you

Mark 10:45

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The One who rescued us also shows us how to serve.

Let’s pray together

Father, thank You for Jesus, who gave His life and rose again. Teach us to serve with careful hands and grateful hearts. Help us notice quiet acts of love and do our part without pride. May our families and friendships grow in the kindness of Jesus. In His name, amen.

I love you, my friends.

Scripture and sources

Scripture text was checked against the King James Version published by eBible.org. The complete verses are reproduced with their historical wording. Verse numbers and layout are adapted for reading; editorial footnotes are omitted. Tap any Scripture reference to view its source.

Bible edition and text