

Numbers 18:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Analysis

Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift. God declares the priesthood a gift-service to Aaron's line. The phrase 'keep your priest's office' assigns exclusive priestly duties. The reference to 'altar and within the vail' encompasses the entire tabernacle service. The statement 'service of gift' (avodath mattanah, עֲבוֹדַת מַתָּנָה) indicates priesthood is gracious appointment, not earned right. This teaches that ministry is God's gift, not human achievement. The exclusive nature (Aaron's sons only) shows God determines who serves in particular roles. While all believers are priests (1 Peter 2:9), specific ministry callings come by divine appointment. The privilege of serving God is a grace-gift requiring faithful stewardship.

Historical Context

This declaration followed Korah's rebellion, reaffirming the Aaronic priesthood's exclusive rights. The 'stranger' (non-Aaronite) who approached holy things was to be put to death (Numbers 18:7), emphasizing the serious nature of priestly boundaries. The priests' exclusive access to altar and veil (Holy of Holies entrance) distinguished them from Levites who served but couldn't offer sacrifices. Ancient

Near Eastern priesthoods often claimed hereditary rights, but Israel's priesthood was explicitly God's gift-appointment. The service's description as 'gift' emphasized grace despite its demanding nature. Christ's unique priesthood (Hebrews 7) superseded the Aaronic line, opening access to God for all believers. The principle remains that specific ministry callings are divine gifts requiring grateful, faithful service.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the priesthood being called a 'service of gift' teach about viewing ministry as grace rather than earned right?
2. How should understanding ministry as divine gift affect our attitude toward service and calling?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה הִ	וּבְנֵי יִרְ	אֶתְךָ	תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְ	אֶת	
H859	Therefore thou and thy sons	H854	with thee shall keep	H853	
	H1121		H8104		
כְּהֹנֵתְךָ מִ	לְכֹל	דָּבָר	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וּלְמִי יֵת	לְפָנֶיךָ
your priest's office	H3605	for every thing	of the altar	and within	the veil
H3550		H1697	H4196	H1004	H6532
וְעַבְדֶּתְּ מִ	עֲבֹדְךָ	מִתְּנָה	אֶתֵּן	אֶת	
and ye shall serve	unto you as a service	of gift	I have given	H853	
H5647	H5656	H4979	H5414		
כְּהֹנֵתְךָ מִ	וְהַזָּר	הַקֹּרֵב	יוֹמָתִי:		
your priest's office	and the stranger	that cometh nigh	shall be put to death		
H3550	H2114	H7131	H4191		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 3:10 (Parallel theme): 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.

John 3:27 (Parallel theme): John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Numbers 18:20 (Parallel theme): And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

Numbers 16:40 (Parallel theme): To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.