

# Numbers 3:45

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

---

God's command to take the Levites 'instead of all the firstborn' establishes the principle of substitutionary consecration. The firstborn belonged to God by right of the Passover deliverance, but He graciously accepted the Levitical tribe as substitutes, allowing the other tribes' firstborn to remain with their families. This foreshadows Christ's substitutionary atonement, where He takes the place of those who deserved judgment. The phrase 'I am the LORD' grounds this provision in God's sovereign authority to determine the terms of redemption.

## Historical Context

---

This substitution arrangement dated to the Exodus Passover, when God claimed all Israel's firstborn as His own (Exodus 13:2). Rather than requiring permanent temple service from every family's eldest son, God graciously concentrated this duty in one tribe. This allowed other tribes to focus on agriculture, military service, and civic life while the Levites devoted themselves entirely to sacred ministry.

## Related Passages

---

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

---

1. How does God's acceptance of substitutes demonstrate both His justice (firstborn belong to Him) and mercy (providing a substitute)?
2. In what ways does the Levitical substitution help you better understand and appreciate Christ's substitutionary work?

## Interlinear Text

---

חָקַקְתָּ	אֶת	הַלְוִיִּם	בְּכֹרֹת	כָּל	בְּתַחַת
<b>Take</b>	H853	<b>and the Levites</b>	H8478	H3605	<b>instead of all the firstborn</b>
H3947		H3881			H1060
בְּבָנָי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאֶת	בְּהֵמַת	הַלְוִיִּם	בְּתַחַת
<b>among the children</b>	<b>of Israel</b>	H853	<b>and the cattle</b>	<b>and the Levites</b>	H8478
H1121	H3478		H929	H3881	
בְּהֵמַת	וְהָיוּ	לִי	הַלְוִיִּם	אֲנִי	יְהוָה:
<b>and the cattle</b>	H1961	H0	<b>and the Levites</b>	H589	<b>shall be mine I am the LORD</b>
H929			H3881		H3068

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Numbers 3:12** (References Israel): 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;