

Numbers 8:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:

Analysis

Thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD (וְהִנְצַבֵּת אֶת-לְבִנֵּים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) vehiqravta et-haleviyyim lifney YHWH)—Presented not merely to Moses or the congregation, but lifney YHWH (before Yahweh Himself). Ultimate accountability is vertical. **The children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites** (וְסִמְכּוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-יְדֵיכֶם עַל-לְבִנֵּים) vesamchu veney-yisra'el et-yedeyhem al-haleviyyim)—Samach (to lay hands on) signifies identification and transfer.

This is the only instance where the congregation lays hands on ministers (usually ministers lay hands on offerings). The gesture symbolizes:

1. Israel's identification with the Levites as their representatives,
2. transfer of responsibility—the Levites now bear Israel's service obligations.

This prefigures Christ as our substitute (Isaiah 53:6, 'the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all') and the church's mutual identification in the body (Romans 12:4-5).

Historical Context

Practically, representatives from each tribe likely performed the hand-laying, as 600,000+ individuals couldn't physically touch 22,000 Levites. The symbolic act established the Levites as substitutes for Israel's firstborn (Numbers 3:12-13), who belonged to God after the Passover. This substitutionary principle undergirds all of Scripture's redemptive theology.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's laying hands on the Levites illustrate both identification and substitution—principles central to atonement theology?
2. In what ways should churches view their ministers as 'representatives' who bear corporate responsibility for spiritual service?

Interlinear Text

וְשַׁמַּךְ תִּבְרֹךְ	תְּפִלָּה	לִפְנֵי	הָרָבָּה	אֶת	יְהִי	וְשַׁמַּךְ
And thou shalt bring	H853	the Levites	before	the LORD	shall put	
H7126		H3881	H6440	H3068	H5564	
בְּנֵי	עַל	יָדֵיכֶם	פְּלִימָה			
and the children	of Israel	H853	their hands	H5921	the Levites	
H1121	H3478		H3027		H3881	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 6:6 (Parallel theme): Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Leviticus 1:4 (Parallel theme): And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.