

# Numbers 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.

## Analysis

**The Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks** (וְשִׁמְךָוּ כָלֵיכֶם, vesamkhu)—this semikha (hand-laying) transfers identity and guilt to the sacrifice. One bullock becomes a **sin offering** (chattat), the other a **burnt offering** (olah), covering both cleansing from defilement and total consecration to God. **To make an atonement for the Levites** (לְכַפֵּר עַל-כָלֵיכֶם, lekhaper) uses the root meaning 'to cover'—their sins must be atoned before they can minister.

Even those set apart for holy service require blood atonement. The dual sacrifice—sin and burnt offering together—establishes the pattern: forgiveness first, then dedication. This foreshadows Christ's single sacrifice accomplishing both purposes (Hebrews 10:10-14).

## Historical Context

The Levitical consecration occurred in the second year after the Exodus (Numbers 1:1). Hand-laying on sacrifices was a standard ritual transferring the offerer's sins to the victim, but here the Levites themselves had already been presented as living offerings (v.11).

## Related Passages

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

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. Why must even those called to ministry first receive atonement through sacrifice?
2. How do the twin offerings of cleansing and dedication apply to your Christian calling?
3. What does it mean that the Levites laid hands on the sacrifice after being offered themselves?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּלָוִם:	רַאשָׁה	עַל	יָדֵי	מִ	אֶת	יִסְמַכְתָּ	וְ	בְּלָוִם:
<b>And the Levites</b>	<b>shall lay</b>	H853	<b>their hands</b>	H5921	<b>upon the heads</b>	<b>of the bullocks</b>		
H3881	H5564		H3027		H7218		H6499	
תְּשַׁעַשֵּׂה	אֶת	תְּ	בַּעַד	מִתְּ	אֶת	בַּעַד		
<b>and thou shalt offer</b>	H853	<b>and the other</b>	H259	<b>for a sin offering</b>	H2403	H853	<b>and the other</b>	
H6213						H259		
עַלְהָה	לִיהְיוֹת	הָ	לְכַפֵּר	רְ	עַלְ		בְּלָוִם:	
<b>for a burnt offering</b>	<b>unto the LORD</b>	<b>to make an atonement</b>	H3722		H5921	<b>And the Levites</b>		
H5930	H3068					H3881		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 29:10** (Parallel theme): And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.

**Hebrews 9:22** (Parallel theme): And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

**Leviticus 8:14** (Sin): And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering.

**Leviticus 1:4** (Sacrifice): 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.

**Numbers 8:8** (Sin): Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.

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