

Numbers 8:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:

Analysis

From twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service—The minimum age עשרים ו חמיש שנה (esrim vechamesh shanah) for Levitical service balances physical maturity with spiritual readiness. The phrase **wait upon** לצבא tzava, literally 'to wage warfare') uses military terminology, revealing that tabernacle service constituted spiritual warfare requiring mature soldiers (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18).

This age requirement (25) differs from the 30-year threshold for priestly service (Numbers 4:3), suggesting graduated responsibility—Levites began apprenticeship at 25 before assuming full duties at 30. Paul's instruction that elders not be recent converts (1 Timothy 3:6) echoes this principle of seasoned maturity before spiritual leadership.

Historical Context

The Levitical minimum age of 25 provided five years of apprenticeship before the full service age of 30 (Numbers 4:3). This training period under experienced Levites ensured proper handling of sacred objects and accurate execution of complex tabernacle procedures.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why does God use military language ('wage warfare') to describe tabernacle service? What spiritual battles accompany sacred ministry?
2. How does the apprenticeship model (25-30) inform modern approaches to leadership development in churches?
3. What character qualities and life experiences make someone 'mature enough' for spiritual leadership?

Interlinear Text

אָשָׁר זֶה אַת	לְלִיּוֹם	שְׁמִינִי מִבְנֵי
H2063	H834	This is it that belongeth unto the Levites
		H3881
		old
		and five
		H1121
		H2568

מֵעֶשֶׂר יָמִין עַל שְׁנַת	יְבֹא אֶל אֶזְבֶּחָן
from twenty years and upward	they shall go in to wait
H6242	H8141
	H4605
	H935
	H6633
	H6635

בְּעֵבֶד תִּלְכָּד מַעַד:	אֶל כָּל	עַל כָּל
upon the service	of the tabernacle	of the congregation
H5656	H168	H4150

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 23:3 (Parallel theme): Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand.

Numbers 4:3 (Temple): From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

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