

Numbers 8:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more:

Analysis

From the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof—The retirement age (חַמִּישִׁים שָׁנָה chamishim shanah) acknowledges physical demands of Levitical labor—dismantling, carrying, and reassembling the 13-ton tabernacle structure through wilderness terrain. The verb **cease** (יָשׁוּב yashuv, return/withdraw) is not dismissal but dignified transition from active to advisory roles.

Shall serve no more—The phrase (לֹא יַעֲבֹד עֹד lo ya'avod od) specifically prohibits heavy labor, not all contribution (see verse 26). God's law honored elderly wisdom while protecting aging bodies, contrasting sharply with cultures that discarded unproductive individuals. The principle appears in Paul's instruction to honor widows and elders (1 Timothy 5:3-20).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern societies often lacked provisions for elderly workers. Israel's structured retirement at 50 (extended from the earlier 45-year proposal in some traditions) demonstrated covenant care for servants of God, ensuring dignity and continued usefulness without physical exploitation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does mandatory retirement from heavy labor demonstrate God's compassion while still valuing ongoing contribution?
2. What modern ministry practices might 'burn out' faithful servants by ignoring physical limitations?
3. How can churches honor the wisdom of retired ministers while respecting their need for rest?

Interlinear Text

וּמִבֶּן	חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים	שָׁנָה	יֵשׁ וְ	מְצַב־	הָעֶבֶד הַ
And from the age	of fifty	years	they shall cease	waiting	upon the service
H1121	H2572	H8141	H7725	H6635	H5656
אֵל	יַעֲבֹד	עוֹד:			
H3808	thereof and shall serve	H5750			
	H5647				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 4:23 (Parallel theme): From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.