

## Handout: Numbers Lesson 4

Chronological time line for Chapters 1-10:

<b>Tribal Gifts</b>	<b>Levites dedicated</b>	<b>Passover</b>	<b>Census of tribes</b>	<b>Departure from Sinai</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> /mo 1/yr 2	(2 <sup>nd</sup> week)*	14 <sup>th</sup> /mo 1/yr 2	1 <sup>st</sup> /mo 2/yr 2	20 <sup>th</sup> /mo 2/ yr 2
<b>Num 7:1</b>	<b>Num 8</b>	<b>Num 9:1</b>	<b>Num 1:1</b>	<b>Num 10:11</b>

\*Sanctuary dedication 1/1/01(Ex 40:17-33); priestly ordination 1<sup>st</sup> week (Lev 8), dedication of Levites between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

The instructions for the dedication of the Levites are divided into three parts:

1. Yahweh's divine commands (Num 8:5-13).
2. The historical reasons for the dedication of the Levites (Num 8:14-19).
3. An obedience formula and summary (Num 8:20-22).

In the Bible, the laying of hands upon a person or an animal denotes a transfer:

1. In the essence of the offerer to the life of the animal offered in sacrifice (Lev 1:4).
2. In communicating the power of a spiritual gift in the act of a blessing (Gen 48:13-14; Mt 19:13-15).
3. In communicating the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17ff; 19:6).
4. In the act of consecration to a theological or ecclesiastical office (Num 27:18; Dt 34:9; Acts 6:6; 1 Tim 5:22).
5. In healing by Jesus and the Apostles (Mt 9:18; Mk 6:5; Lk 13:13; Acts 9:12, 17).
6. In the selection of a substitute or successor (Num 8:10; 27:18; Dt 34:9).
7. In sentencing a criminal to death (Lev 24:14).

The Levites were substitutes for the first-born sons of the Israelite families, who were intended to be the representative of their people (Num 3:12-13; 8:16). For the laying-on-of-hands in the sacramental rites of the Church today, see CCC 699, 1150, 1288, 1504, 1538, 1558, and 1573.

Verses 12-19 are arranged in a chiasmic pattern; such patterns serve as a key to understanding a passage:

- A. To make expiation for the Levites (Num 8:12)
  - B. To do the work of the Sanctuary (Num 8:15)
    - C. The Levites are given to God (Num 8:16a)
      - D. Dedicated in place of the first-born sons (Num 8:16b)
        - E. Recalling the events of the first Passover (Num 8:17)
          - D\*. Dedicated in place of the first-born sons (Num 8:18)
            - C\*. The Levites are given to Aaron (Num 8:19a)
              - B\*. To do the work of the Sanctuary (Num 8:19b)
- A\*. To make expiation for Israel (Num 8:19c)

The chiasmic pattern helps to reveal:

1. The two bulls offered in expiation for the Levites (verse 8) are compared with the Levites being offered to make expiation for the Israelites (verse 19c). The animal sacrifices atone for the Levites by purifying the Sanctuary (the first bull) and by being the ransom price (the second bull), so that the Levites themselves become a substitute/ransom price for the Israelites.
2. The center point of the pattern in item "E" (verse 17) recalls the historical event that from the time of the tenth plague in Egypt, God owned every first-born Israelite male (Ex 13:2; 22:29-30a; 34:19-20).
3. The historical recall is linked to D and D\* in the reason why the Levites are dedicated to God in place of the first-born sons to do the work of the Sanctuary (verses 8:15 and 19b).