

Deuteronomy 10:6-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-10/deuteronomy-106-9/>

A narrator now breaks in and provides some historical details regarding the responsibilities of the Levites to carry the ark, serve before the Lord, and to bless in His name.

After Moses' successful intercession on behalf of the Israelites regarding the molten calf incident (9:25-29), he introduced the LORD's reaffirmation of His covenant with Israel (10:1-5). Moses' speech now appears to be interrupted by a parenthetical note, apparently spoken by a narrator, and consisting of a geographical comment regarding various stages in Israel's journey through the wilderness and a description of the role of the Levites in this covenant relationship.

The narrator tells us that *the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah*. Beeroth Bene-jaakan can literally be translated as "wells of the sons of Jaakan," one of the sons of Ezer, according to [1 Chro. 1:42](#). The exact location of these wells is uncertain, but some think they might be located about 12 miles north of Kadesh-Barnea. The exact location of Moserah is not certain either. But some suggest that perhaps Mount Hor, the place where Aaron died ([Numbers 33:38](#)) was in a region known as Moserah. That might explain why the narrator tells us that *there Aaron died and there he was buried*.

Aaron died some forty years after the molten calf incident at Mount Sinai. He was "one hundred twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor" ([Numbers 33:38-39](#)). After the molten calf incident, Moses prayed, asking the LORD for mercy and forgiveness, not only for the people of Israel, but also for Aaron, the one who represented Moses in his absence and the one who made the molten calf ([Exodus 32:2-5, 21-24](#)). The LORD heard Moses' prayer and spared the lives of the people. So, Aaron lived about forty more years after the molten calf incident, which suggests that the LORD had mercy on him and on the Israelites. However, along with Moses, Aaron would not enter the Promised Land, because they "rebelled against" God's command "at the waters of Meribah" ([Numbers 20:24](#)).

After Aaron's death, *Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place*, a note that clearly demonstrates that not only did the Suzerain Yahweh restore His

covenant relationship with His vassals (Israel), He also restored Aaron's priesthood, despite Aaron's sin at Mount Sinai. As the narrator continued with the parenthesis, he said that from Moserah the Israelites *set out to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water*. In [Numbers 33:32-33](#), *Gudgodah* is called Hor Haggidgad. *Jotbathah* is said to be a *land of brooks of water*. Neither *Gudgodah* or *Jotbathah* have been successfully identified by modern scholars, but some think these places are near the Gulf of Elath.

It appears the specific time referred to deals with Israel's presence at these particular locations. [Numbers 33](#) cites a large number of geographic stopping points where the people of Israel camped en route from Egypt to the plains of Moab east of the Jordan river, where they are hearing this speech from Moses, preparing them to enter the Promised Land. Apparently it was not disclosed in other accounts of this journey that it was at *that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day*.

Moses made it clear that the ark was to be carried with poles ([Exodus 25:14-15](#)). This is the first time we are told explicitly that the Levites were *set apart to carry the ark*. The narrator chose to insert this bit of information at this point in the historical account. He adds an additional explanation, that it was because the Levites were *set apart to stand before the LORD to serve Him* that *Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the Lord is his inheritance, just as the Lord your God spoke to him*. After this setting apart of the Levites occurred at *Jotbathah* in [Numbers 33](#), God instructed Israel to "give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in" ([Numbers 35:2](#)). This is because in [Numbers 18](#), God stated that the Levites would have no inheritance of land. Instead they would have the tithe offering as an inheritance:

For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the LORD I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, 'They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel ([Numbers 18:24](#)).

Accordingly, the other tribes were directed to "give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities." ([Numbers 35:2](#)). The narrator also informs us that *the LORD* would be the *inheritance* of the Levites. This is a picture of believers in the New Testament; every believer has God as an unconditional inheritance ([Romans 8:16-17](#)) and is appointed to serve a priestly function to the glory of God ([Revelation 1:6](#)).

The sons of Levi were also to *stand before the LORD to serve Him*. [Numbers 3:7](#) describes the duty of the Levites is “to do the service of the tabernacle.” [Numbers 7:24](#) says the Levites performed service in the tent of meeting, and [Numbers 8:19](#) says the Levites were to make atonement for the children of Israel. It is not clear if this command added or reconfirmed duties for the sons of Levi, who were assigned to *stand before the LORD to serve Him*. In [2 Chronicles 29:11](#), the sons of Levi are said to stand before the LORD when they burned incense in the Temple. In [Ezekiel 44:15](#) they are said to stand before the LORD when offering sacrifices on behalf of the people.

The sons of Levi were also “to bless in [the LORD’s] name until this day”, which means they were to pronounce blessings such as the priestly benediction upon the people ([Numbers 6:24-26](#)). The sons of Levi were carrying out these priestly duties until the day Moses was speaking.

Because of such a priestly role and function, *Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers*. All the other tribes received a portion in the share of territory of the land of Canaan. However, the whole tribe of Levi received none. They were to “eat the LORD’s offering by fire and His portion” ([Numbers 18:1-2](#)). Because the life of Levi was dependent upon the offerings and dues of the other tribes, *the LORD was his inheritance, just as the LORD his God spoke to him*. In [Numbers 18:21-24](#), the LORD commanded the sons of Levi not to have any territory as their portion in the Promised Land because He Himself was their inheritance.

Biblical Text:

⁶(Now the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place. ⁷From there they set out to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water. ⁸At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day. ⁹Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the Lord is his inheritance, just as the Lord your God spoke to him.)