

Exegetical Analysis — Numbers 31:40

□□□□□□□□□□

■ Numbers 31:40 NASB

and the human beings were 16,000, from whom the LORD'S levy was 32 persons.

וַיִּפְּשׂ אֲדָם שְׂשֵׁה עֶשֶׂר אֶלֶף וּמִכְסָם לַיהוָה שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים נַפְשׁ:

□□□□□□□□□□

➤ The phrase that is used here is actually a "heave offering", which means that it is an offering or sacrifice given to the priests.

Exodus 29:27-28 NASB You shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering which was waved and which was offered from the ram of ordination, from the one which was for Aaron and from the one which was for his sons. [28] It shall be for Aaron and his sons as their portion forever from the sons of Israel, for it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, even their heave offering to the LORD. These offerings were usually given in conjunction with tithing. The priests usually didn't have what they needed because they have land to grow that which they needed, so this was provided by the Lord.

Numbers 18:24,29 NASB

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." [29] Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the sacred part from them.' In the passage that you quoted from [Numbers 31:40], it is clear that the offering—in the proceeding passage—speaks directly to this. This heave offering was given to the Eleazar the priest.

Numbers 31:41 NASB

Moses gave the levy which was the LORD'S offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. This was common practice in the Old Testament.

Leviticus 7:14 NASB

Of this he shall present one of every offering as a contribution to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings.

Leviticus 7:32-34 NASB

You shall give the right thigh to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. [33] The one among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat, the right thigh shall be his as his portion. [34] For I have taken the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their due forever from the sons of Israel.

As we can see from our exegetical analysis, this goes right along with the passage, dividing the spoils of war and providing provision for the Levites. The people mentioned here were certainly not sacrificed, but most likely became servants directly to the priest. This also aligns with the fact that these women were to be "holy" and set apart from the nations.