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Aaron's Staff Budded

17: 1-13

Aaron's staff budded DIG: How is this chapter related to the previous one? Why might questions about Aaron's leadership persist? How does God address such concerns this time? Why do you think ADONAI asked for twelve staff, rather than just Aaron's? Why are the almonds significant and what should that mean for us as believers today?

REFLECT: Why do some people seem to be pursued by persistent critics? When are you most likely to become dissatisfied with your Messianic rabbi or pastor? How do you handle it? Ask the Lord to give you the ability to honor those He has placed over you. In what way are we carrying the staff today? How are you using that privilege?

Aaron's staff confirmed a chosen priesthood.

The story of **Aaron's staff** that **budded** is the last mention of **the Exodus generation** in **Numbers**. By the time we return to the narrative in the next parashah in **Chapter 19**, the entire generation that came out of **Egypt** will have **died**. **The staff that budded** is a picture of life that springs forth from lifelessness. Thus, from **the generation** that **died in the wilderness** arose **the generation** that would cross the Jordan River and enter **the Promised Land**.³³⁸



The command (17:1-5): ADONAI said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff (Hebrew: *matteh*, which is the same word that can be translated *tribe*). On the staff of Levi write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the Most Holy Place, in front of the ark of the testimony, referring to the Ten Words (see the commentary on Deuteronomy, [to see link click Bk - The Ten Words](#)), where I meet with you.” The test of legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood needed to be unmistakable. The symbolism is that those staffs were placed, as it were, in “the lap” of the LORD. “The staff belonging to the man I choose will bud, and I will rid myself of this constant rebellion against you by the Exodus generation.”

The obedience (17:6-7): So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh being counted as one tribe), and Aaron’s staff was among them. Moses placed the staffs before ADONAI and the ark of the covenant (see the commentary on Exodus [Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)).

The budding (8-9): The next day a miracle happened when Moses entered the Most Holy Place, which had no window, no natural light coming into it. There, he saw that Aaron’s staff which had budded and represented the tribe of Levi. When Moshe brought all the staff’s outside of the Tabernacle and showed them to the tribal leaders, Aaron’s staff had not only budded, but also blossomed and produced almonds.



What is the significance of **the almonds**? They point to the election of **Isra'el** and the Church. There are three places in the Bible that mention **almonds**. First, in **the Menorah in Holy Place** (see [Exodus Fn - The Menorah in the Sanctuary: Christ, the Light of the World](#)), which spoke of the service of **the priesthood**; second, which we also see here in **Numbers 17**, and thirdly, we see the vision of **the almond tree** in the book of **Jeremiah**. As if out on a walk, **the word of ADONAI** came to **Jeremiah** and said: **What do you see, Jeremiah?** "I see the branch of an almond tree," he replied. **ADONAI** said to him, "You have seen correctly, for I **AM** watching to see that My word is fulfilled" (1:11-12). **The almond tree** is the first **tree** to blossom in **Isra'el** in the spring. When the white blossoms of **the almond tree** appear, the people know that spring is near. There is a word play, or pun, in the original language. The Hebrew word for **watching** sounds like the Hebrew word for **almond tree**. *Shaqed* means **almond**. The root of this word means *to be awake, to be watchful, or to be alert*. It became the name for **the almond tree** because it is the first shrub to awaken from the winter's nap (but the last to bear fruit). The pink buds come out as early as January, with the fruit appearing in March. By that time **the white almond blossoms** fall like snow all over **Isra'el**.³³⁹ So here, the fact that **Aaron** and **his sons** would be **the priests of Isra'el** show that **God's word was fulfilled**.

The word **blossomed** (Hebrew: *tsits*) can also be seen in the word *tsitsith*, or **the tassels** that **the Israelites** were to wear all the time (see [Cl - Tzit-tzit and Blue Thread](#)). Therefore, all the stages of development of an **almond tree** - the **budding**, the **blossoming**, and the making of **almonds** - happened over night. **Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each of the leaders took his own staff** showing that **they** had no claim to **the priesthood**. It must have been humbling for the men from **the other tribes** to take back **their staffs**. But only **those** who aspired to an office that was not **theirs** would feel shame.

Moses' actions in having **each** of **the men** take back **his staff** allowed **them** to give silent agreement to the decision of the miracle of **God**, and the choice of **Aaron** as **His priest**.³⁴⁰

The sign (17:10-11): **Aaron's staff**, however, was not returned to **him**. **ADONAI** said to **Moses**, "**Put back Aaron's staff in front of the ark of the covenant, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious.**" It was to be a perpetual reminder of **God's** choice of **His priest**. It is remarkable, however, that the placement of **Aaron's staff** should be in **the Most Holy Place** where no one, except **the high priest**, would ever see **it**. But we must remember that **the leaders** of **each tribe** and many other people saw **the budded staff** and could bear witness that **Aaron's** was the only **one** that produced life. And each day, when **the tribal leaders** took up **their staffs**, **they** would be reminded that **YHVH** had chosen **Aaron's sons** to serve as **priests**. Furthermore, **the high priest** could always bring out **the staff of Levi** as unchanging evidence that **Aaron's family** alone was chosen for **the priesthood**.³⁴¹

Sometime later, the writer to the **Hebrews** tells us that **a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the Covenant** were placed inside **the ark (Hebrews 9:4)**. **This will** be a reminder and **put an end to their rebellion against Me, so that they will not die.**" There was to be only one **priestly tribe**, the family of **Aaron** (see [Cx](#) - **The Salt Covenant**). **Moshe did just as ADONAI commanded.**

The rabbis have come up with many fanciful stories of Aaron's staff. For example, first, they teach that this staff originally belonged to Judah (Genesis 38:18 and 49:10). Secondly, they teach that it became the staff of Moshe (Exodus 4:1-5). Thirdly, this staff was held by every king of Jerusalem until the Temple was destroyed. Fourthly, the staff was divinely hidden away in Galilee. And fifthly, this staff will be held by King Messiah in the Messianic Kingdom (Psalm 110:2).

Thus, two visual aids were set up in **the Tabernacle** for future remembrance by succeeding generations of the danger and blessing associated with approaching **God's** presence: first, **Aaron's staff**, and, secondly, **the bronze covering of the bronze altar** made from charred **censers**. **The 250 rebels who** had used **bronze censers** to offer unauthorized incense on **fiery burning coles to God**, died in a **fiery** holocaust (see [Cr](#) - **The Response of God**). Those **censers** were hammered flat and used to overlay **the** already **bronze altar**, symbolizing death. The other visual aid, **Aaron's staff** that had **budded, flowered**, and grown **almonds**, symbolizing life. Those visual aids capture both the potential power of death and the power of life that flow from **God's** presence among **His** people.³⁴²

The response (17:12-13): The trauma of the previous two days must have been overwhelming. There were **the 250 laymen** who had been burned alive outside the gate of

the Tabernacle; there was the earth opening up and swallowing the tents of **Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families**; and there was the plague in which **14,700 Israelites** had been struck down dead by a plague. For **the children of Isra'el**, the sanctity of **the Tabernacle** was no longer theoretical. **They** had finally realized that **God's** presence in **their** midst constituted a very real danger. **His Tabernacle** could be dangerous. This realization brought with it a fresh wave of despair. **The Exodus generation said to Moshe, "We will die! We are dying, we are all dying. Their** faulty conclusion was that **anyone who even came near the Tabernacle of ADONAI would die.** Of course, that wasn't true. **They died** because of **their** rebellion. Were **they all going to die?** Yes, but not immediately. **They would all die** in the wilderness because of **their** sin at **Kadesh-barnea** (see [By - The Sin of Kadesh-barnea](#)).³⁴³ At last they grasped the contradiction of drawing near to **YHVH**. **They** realized **their** vulnerability and inadequacy. To try to reach **God** was foolish. To try to draw near to **Him** was certain death. An infinite chasm of distance lies between mankind and **God**. Though **He** is ever near, **He** is, at the same time, far beyond us.

It is not at all uncommon for people to mistake **ADONAI's** omnipresence for accessibility. **God** is always nearby. **He** seems to be generally agreeable. It is easy to imagine that **He** thinks I'm a pretty good guy. Sure, I have a few faults, but **He** made me, right? Sometimes it takes a traumatic encounter with the sheer terror that is **the Most High** to shock us out of our comfortable deception. **The Exodus generation** had suffered several such shocks. **They** had come to understand the utter futility in trying to approach **ADONAI** on **their** own. And like **them**, only when we reach a place of understanding our own inability to approach **Ha'Shem**, do we fully grasp the need for **a priest**, a mediator between us and **God**.³⁴⁴

Thus, the groundwork in **Numbers** is being laid. The culmination will come in **Chapter 21** when we see **Yeshua Messiah** and salvation by faith alone (see [Di - The Healing Snake](#)). This will not be **the Aaronic priesthood**, for **he** is **dead**. The Temple is no more. But an eternal **priesthood** has existed before the Torah was even written, it is **the priesthood of Melchizedek** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bl - Yeshua the Melchizedek Priest**). A **priesthood** that was established at the creation of mankind. For when sin entered the world, redemption began (see the commentary on **Genesis Be - He Will Crush Your Head, and You Will Strike His Heel**), and continues today (see **Hebrews Bk - The New Priesthood Lasts Forever**). Now this is the main point, we have such a **High Priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in heaven (Hebrew 8:1)**. And because of our faith in **Him**, we are **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that we may declare His praises (First Peter 2:9)**, so, in many ways, we are carrying **the staff** to the world and showing it life in **the**

Messiah.³⁴⁵

Dear **Heavenly Father**, Praise **You** for being so **Holy** and **Loving** and allowing me to call **You** my "**Heavenly Father**". It is such a treasure to have **You** as my **father**! **You** are **the father** of all in the sense that **You** created everyone; but **the fatherhood** of creation is not enough to get people into heaven. What is needed is a heart that believes in **God** with a faith like **Abraham's faith**. For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness**" (**Romans 4:3 quoted from Genesis 15:6**).

You are **the Almighty Holy Sovereign** of the universe and we bow in worship of **You**, as do those in heaven bow in worship of you. **The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes all around and within. They do not rest day or night, chanting, "Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh Adonai Elohei-Tzva'ot, asher haya v hoveh v'yavo! Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts, who was and who is and who is to come!"** And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the **One seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. And they throw their crowns down before the throne, chanting, "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, For You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created"** (**Revelation 4:8-11**)! I love and worship **You** my dear **Heavenly Father**, and I rejoice in giving **You** honor and glory! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen