–Save This Page as a PDF–

The Salt Covenant
18: 8-18

The salt covenant DIG: How might material concerns damage the ability of the priests and Levites to adequately compensate them for this calling? Why do you think God allowed priests and Levites to eat the sacrifices offered to Him? What does this teach us about the worth of priests and Levites in God's eyes?

REFLECT: Your Messianic rabbi and pastor work like salty priests, to preserve the spiritual health of your place of worship. How faithful are you in your giving to the Lord? Does He get the leftovers, or the best? The first, or the last? Does the Bible demand that you give ten percent as your tithe? Why? Why not?

I am your portion and inheritance among the people of Isra'el.

The most holy offerings, that were only eaten by the priests in the Tabernacle courtyard (18:8-10): ADONAI, for the second time **(18:1)**, **spoke to Aaron,** saying: **I Myself have put you in charge of the offerings given to Me. The priests** were to receive parts of **the sacrifices**, **firstfruits** of **the harvest** and **first-born animals**. Most of those rights had already been mentioned in **Leviticus 6:14** to **7:36**, and **27:6-33**.[354] **All the holy offerings the Israelites give Me, I give to you and your sons as your portion, your perpetual mitzvah** (literally, *a mitzvah for an age or dispensation*)**. This shall be yours from the most holy gifts reserved from the fire,** that **portion** that was NOT burned on the bronze altar. Something was regarded as **holy,** not because of some mysterious inner quality, but because it had been presented to **ADONAI** for **His** use. **He** then transferred the use of some of **His holy** things to **the priests**.[355] There were **three** kinds of **most holy offerings** for **the priesthood**:

Every grain offering (see **Leviticus, to see link click Aj – The Grain Offerings: Dedicated to God**)**,** was an unleavened mixture of **fine flour**, **oil**, and **incense**. **A memorial portion** was burned on **the bronze altar** as **a sweet**

smelling aroma to ADONAI, and the remainder was eaten by **the priests** in **the Tabernacle** courtyard, **every purification offering** (see **Leviticus Al – The Purification Offering: Purified by the Blood**) was specified according to one's ranking within the Levitical society. **They** ranged from **a bull** for **the high priest**, as that which was **sacrificed** by **the high priest** for **himself** and **his family** on **Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16:3-14)**, to **the two turtle doves** or **pigeons** brought by **the poor (Lev 5:7-10)**, or even **a tenth of an ephah** or two quarts **of fine flour** for a destitute individual **(Lev 5:11-13)**, **and every guilt offering** (see **Leviticus Am – The Guilt Offering: Evidence of Repentance**) brought as a result of the violation of someone's property or the inadvertent breaking of a covenant stipulation, usually consisted of **a ram** or its equivalent in **silver shekels**, plus a penalty of **one-fifth of the value of the animal (5:14-19)**.[356] **Every male may eat it in an especially holy place,** meaning the Tabernacle courtyard**; it will be set apart for you (18:8-10).** Only men could be **priests**, so naturally, only men could be inside the Tabernacle courtyard to eat **the priestly portion**. Because **the priesthood** was set apart as **holy** to **YHVH**, the food that **they ate** was likewise to be **holy** and set apart.

The holy gifts, which could be eaten by the priests and their families at their homes (18:11-13): Also, yours is the wave offerings that the people of Isra'el give (see the commentary on **Leviticus Au – The Wave Offering and Priestly Portion**)**. I have given these to you, your sons and your daughters with you. They** could take these **holy gifts** home and share **them** with **their families**. **This** was **a perpetual mitzvah.** The food remained **holy** and was not to be violated by any unclean person. **Everyone in your family who is ritually clean may eat it** (see **Leviticus Bk – Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals**)**.** Since **the best items** of produce were to be given **to the LORD, they** became the special food of **the priests and their families**. **All the best of the olive oil, wine and grain, the firstfruits of what they give to ADONAI, I have given to you. The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to ADONAI, is to be yours.**

The concept that **God** gets "the best of the first" is a constant theme in the Bible. **The olive oil** and **wine** mentioned here were not the dregs, but the finest of **the first ripe fruits**. In giving the first and best to **Ha'Shem,** believers were affirming with confidence that there would be something left over for their own needs. And if not, faithful believers still bless **the Lord**. As of today, believers don't worship **ADONAI** just to fill their stomachs. But they (then, and we now) expect that the

giving of the first and best to **God** will often result in enjoying more abundance than ever for themselves and for their family. **Tithing** in the Dispensation of Torah was about 25 percent (see **Cz – A Tenth of the Tithe**), but that is not the standard for us today in the Dispensation of Grace (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do – When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others: To guide us, the Bible teaches seven principles of scriptural giving**).

In addition, on the basis of the provisions **YHVH** intended for **the priests** in the Torah, the writers of the B'rit Chadashah argued that those who minister **the Word of God** in the present Dispensation of Grace (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp – The Dispensation of Grace**) should also be paid appropriately for their ministry (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bo – Laying Aside Rights**).[357]

Redeeming the firstborn (18:14-18): The mitzvah of **the redemption of the firstborn males** has already been discussed in **Ap – Redeeming the Firstborn** and **As – The Census and the Redemption of the Firstborn**. **Everything in Isra'el which has been devoted** (Hebrew: *cherem*) **unconditionally** belonged to **the priests** (unless, of course, such things were destroyed, as in the story of Jericho)**. Everything that comes first out of the womb, of all living things which they offer to ADONAI, whether human or animal, will be yours (Exodus 13:2).** Now we learn that **the firstborn** was a means of supporting **the priests**. **However, the firstborn of a human being you must redeem** because **God** does not allow human **sacrifice, and the firstborn of an unclean beast you are to redeem** because **they** could not be **sacrificed** either**. The sum to be paid for redeeming anyone a month old or over is to be five shekels of silver [two ounces], as you value it, using the sanctuary shekel (this is the same as twenty gerahs) (18:14-16). The priests** were to take **the redemption** price in exchange for **the firstborn** of **the people**.

Seemingly, the reason for paying a redemption price for the firstborn humans and unclean animals and **the sacrifice** of **the firstborn** of clean **animals** was to provide a perpetual reminder that conception, birth, and life are **gifts** of **YHVH**. Thus, **Exodus 22:29-30** reads: **You must give Me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep.** As we think of these rituals throughout the biblical record, we realize that they extended to the life of **the Savior**. Since **Yeshua** was **the firstborn** of **Mary**, **He** had to be **redeemed** (see **The Life of Christ Au – Jesus Presented in the Temple**); then **He** became **the Redeemer** of all.[358]

But the firstborn of the clean animals, **an ox, sheep or goat,** were **not to be redeemed; they are holy,** devoted to **ADONAI**. **They** were to be **sacrificed** in the usual manner**. You are to** offer them up and **splash their blood against the bronze altar and make their fat go up in smoke as an offering made by fire, as a fragrant aroma for ADONAI. Their meat will be yours, like the breast that is waved and the right thigh – they will be yours (18:17-18).**

The salt covenant with the priesthood (18:19): All the contributions of holy furnishings which the people of Isra'el offer to ADONAI I have given to you, Aaron, your sons and your daughters with you; this is a perpetual mitzvah, an eternal covenant of salt before ADONAI for you and your descendants with you. In the ancient world, **salt** was chiefly employed as a perspective. In the days before chemical additives and refrigeration, **salt** came to represent a state of permanence. **A covenant of salt** was **a covenant** of perpetual obligation. In the comments on **Leviticus 2:13**, we learned that all **the sacrifices** placed on **the bronze altar** were **salted** as a symbol of **the covenant of salt** between **God** and **Isra'el**. In **Second Chronicles 13:5**, the **Davidic** right to the throne of **Isra'el** is spoken of as **a covenant of salt**. **Do you not know that ADONAI has given the kingship of Isra'el to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt?**

When explaining the symbolism of **a salt covenant**, the operative words are **eternal** and **forever. Salt** is a symbol of permanence. It is by this **eternal covenant**, that **the throne of David** belongs to **the house of David**. Similarly, it was by way of **a salt covenant** that the **sacrifices** of **Isra'el** belong to **the house of Aaron**. How ironic that these two institutions, both bestowed as **eternal**, remain in ruins today. The holy Temple has been in ruins for 2,000 years, and **the sons of Aaron** have no share in the terumah. The **Davidic** throne in Jerusalem has not been occupied by a son of **David** since the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC (see **The Life of Christ Mt – The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Remembered on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD**). Does this mean that **the salt covenant** has failed? Has **God's** promise of an **eternal** inheritance come up short in both instances? No. The right to **the gifts** and **sacrifices** of **the Israelites** still belong exclusively to **the sons of Aaron**. If there were a Temple today, **the descendants of Aaron** would be entitled to those privileges. The right to the throne of **Isra'el** still belongs exclusively to **the house of David**. If there were a place for a sovereign monarch to rule over all **Isra'el** today, only **a descendant of David** would have the right to that throne.

But the prophet **Hosea** foresaw a long exile in which **the children of Isra'el** would be without a king, **prince**, or **sacrifice**. At the end of this exile, **the children of Isra'el** will repent, returning to **ADONAI** and the rightful **Davidic King**. **For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household idols. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek ADONAI their God and David their king. They will come trembling to ADONAI and to His blessings in the last days (Hosea 3:4-5).** As believers, we are confident that we have identified **the man** who will one day (and now occupies!) the throne of **David**. As **the Son of David**, **He** will satisfy **the eternal salt covenant** of the kingship made with **the house of David** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fi – The Government of the Messianic Kingdom**). We also read in the prophets that **the Aaronic priesthood** will one day be restored to **their** position of service and prestige during the Messianic Kingdom (see **Jeremiah Gs – God Shows a Vision of the Messianic Temple**).[359]



I am your portion (18:20): The priests were landless. **They** had no means of procuring an income aside from **the priesthood**. **ADONAI said to Aaron, "You are not to have any inheritance or portion in their land; I am your portion and inheritance among the people of Isra'el."** The prophet **Ezeki'el** says the same thing: **Their inheritance is to be this: I Myself am their inheritance. You are not to grant them any possession in Isra'el – I Myself am their possession (Ezeki'el 44:28).** Therefore, **YHVH** assures **the sons of Aaron** that, although **they** are landless and without inheritance in **Isra'el**, **He** is **their portion**; **He** is **their inheritance**. This is a rich heritage indeed!

For **the priesthood**, the concept of having **God** alone as one's **portion** resonates with our own position in the world today. It is the reality of our daily lives. Aside from the provision secured for Messianic rabbis and pastors ministering for **the Lord**, we have no **portion**. It is the same for those disciples who heed **the Master's** call to forsake all and follow after **Him**: **Yes! I tell you that there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or fields, for My sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundred times over, now, in the present age, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands — with persecutions! — and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).**[360]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are our **portion** forever! How very wonderful that when I chose to follow **You** as my **Lord and Savior**, that **You** came to live within me! **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23). You** are always near! **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13; 5b).** Peace reigns within my heart for **You** are always with me.*

*How wonderful **You** are my **portion**. I don't have to seek after riches or fame (which both disappear), but only to rest in the joy of pleasing **You**! **You** are a wonderful **Father**! **You** are always completely Holy, Loving, Wonderful, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent . . . What a joy to have such as Awesome Heavenly **Father** who is always watching over me, and waiting patiently for me to come to **Him** in prayer. **Habakkuk** came to **You** with a troubling question, 'Why would **You** use a more evil nation, Babylon, to punish **Israel**?' **Habakkuk** wisely realized that he could trust in **the God of Salvation (Hab 3:13). But the righteous will live by faith. Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there is no yield on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, the flock is cut off from the fold, and there are no cattle in the stalls. Yet will I triumph in ADONAIi, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! ADONAI my Lord, is my strength. He has made my feet like a deers, and will make me walk on my high places (Hab 2:4c, 3:17-19).***

*We can see clearer now to trust in the **God** of Salvation. **Habakkuk** lived several hundred years before **Messiah** appeared. We have seen come true the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies, such as **Isaiah 53** and **Micah 5:2**. **God's children** can see **God's** great love in **Messiah Yeshua's** willingness to bear the sins of the world, that all who chose to love and follow him would receive **Messiah's***

righteousness (Second Corinthians 5:21), *be saved and go to live forever in heaven. How fantastic that* ***You*** *are the portion for* ***Your children*** *and that nothing can separate them* ***from Your love****!* ***But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.*** *In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*