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The Levitical Priesthood

Exodus 28:1 to 29:46 and 39:1-31, Leviticus 8:1 to 9:24



Worship is the appropriate human response to divine redemption. Therefore, after concentrating on the Tabernacle (the place where **God** met **His** chosen people), we now focus on **the** Levitical **priesthood** (the people especially chosen to minister in it). Only those men from the tribe of Levi could become priests and minister in the Tabernacle. We continue to teach this section topically in order to comment on all the **Exodus** material concerning **the priest**. It is hoped that this will enable you to have a clearer picture of **the priestly office** and its functions than would be possible otherwise.⁶¹⁴

The idea of a professional **priesthood** naturally implies an awareness of sin and the need for a mediator. The building of the Tabernacle was only the first step to restore complete fellowship with **God**. While Moses was the mediator of **the Torah** and the Covenant, **Aaron** and his sons were the mediators of the blood sacrifice (**to see link click Fv - The Selection of Aaron and His Sons as Priests**). The concept of the priest, of course, was not new with Moses. Before Moses, the office of **priest** was occupied by the father of a family (**Job 1:5**), or the head of a tribe. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars, offered sacrifices, purified and consecrated themselves and their households (**Genesis 12:7, 13:18, 26:25, 33:20 and 35:1-2**). Among the peoples that surrounded Isra'el, however, a professional **priesthood** had already been established and was functioning. Melchizedek combined kingship and **priesthood** in one person (**Genesis 14:18**). Jethro was referred to as the priest of Midian (**2:16, 3:1**). The Egyptians had a well-defined and well-organized **priesthood** long before the time of Moses as indicated by the story of Joseph (**Genesis 47:22 and 26**). For Isra'el, however, the creation of an official **priesthood** was something new and unique.⁶¹⁵



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There were *five key responsibilities* of **the priesthood**. First, was to *administer the burnt offering* twice daily (**Exodus 29:39**). Secondly, they were to *burn incense* at the altar in the Holy Place (**Exodus 30:7-8**). Thirdly, they were to *inspect the animals* that were brought to the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and to make sure they were without defect (**Leviticus 27:11-12**). Fourthly, they were to *keep the golden lampstand burning* in the Holy Place (**Leviticus 24:1-4**). And lastly, they were to *teach Isra'el* the Word of **God**. In those days, not everyone had his or her own copy of the Scriptures as have available to us today. So the Levites, who did have the Scriptures, had the responsibility to teach its contents to the people of Isra'el (**Deuteronomy 17:8-13, 19:15-20, 21:5**).

The priests of the Levitical system had to offer sacrifices for **their** own sins. That is why **their** ministry on behalf of **Isra'el**, was always imperfect. **They** were sinful dying men. The superiority of **the priesthood** of **Christ** is that **His** ministry on behalf of **Isra'el**, was sinless, and because of the resurrection, **He** lives forever (**Hebrews 9:25-26**).