

Priesthood Order

Part 5

II. The South Side

- A. Kohath = “Assembly” or, “to ally/join oneself;” Second Son of Levi & Jochebed
 - 1. Izhar = “shining oil”
 - a. Korah = “bald”
 - b. Nepheg = “sprout;” or, “to spring forth”
 - c. Zichri = “memorable”
 - 2. Hebron = “association,” meaning, “A body of people organized for a joint purpose.”
 - 3. Uzziel = “My strength is God”
 - a.) Elizaphan = “my God has protected;” Chief of the Kohathites
 - b.) Mishael = “who is what God is”
 - c.) Zithri = “protection of Jehovah,” or, “to carefully conceal”
 - 4. The Kohathites, which also include the first order of priests on the Eastern side, numbered 8,600, from one month old and upward, who performed their duties in/at the sanctuary.

However, when they were numbered the second time, before crossing Jordan, there were 8,580
 - 5. from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting. Their numbered men by their families were 2,750.

Now their duties *involved* the ark, the table, the lampstand, the **altars**, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen/curtain, and all the service concerning them; and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *was* the chief of the leaders of Levi, *and had* the oversight of those who perform the duties of the sanctuary. (Num 3:31-32)

“This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, *concerning* the most holy things. "When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it; and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over *it* a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles. "Over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall also spread a cloth of blue and put on it the dishes and the pans and the sacrificial bowls and the jars for the drink offering, and the continual bread shall be on it. "They shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet *material*, and cover the same with a covering of porpoise skin, and they shall insert its poles. "Then they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for the light, along with its lamps and its snuffers, and its trays and all its oil vessels, by which they serve it; and they shall put it and all its utensils in a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put it on the carrying bars. "Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth and cover it with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall insert its poles; and they shall take all the utensils of service, with which they serve in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth and cover them with a covering of porpoise skin, and put them on the carrying bars. "Then they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. "They shall also put on it all its utensils by which they serve in connection with it: the firepans, the forks and shovels and the basins, all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread a cover of porpoise skin over it and insert its poles.” “When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy *objects* and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*, so that they will not touch the holy *objects* and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.” (Num 4:4-15)

It is interesting that the *objects* which the sons of Kohath were to bear upon their shoulders were not limited to the Holy Place and Most Holy Place articles, and worth emphasizing that the brazen altar, firepans, forks, shovels, basins, (for catching the blood but may include the laver ?), and all the utensils of the altar were among the furnishings to be carried upon their shoulders. This is one of the “particulars” that is often omitted in many of the tabernacle “books” that have been written in the past. It is also interesting that the brazen laver was not “specified” among these furnishings and is not mentioned as being one of the objects that Gershon Merari, or Kohath were responsible for.

6. The Kohathites were the final families of Levites, in their order of travel. This puts them close to the middle of the caravan as they followed Ruben, Simeon and Gad, who are the Sons of Israel who camped on the South Side of the Tabernacle, along with the Kohathites, and journeyed in their place behind the Gershonites and Merarites. To complete the marching order, those who followed the sons of Kohath, are Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, taking their position next in line; then, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali taking up the rear, or becoming the “rear guard.”

Note: As a reminder, and of some significance; the first order of priests, those with the “high calling”, and all of the tribes that camped on the Eastern Side were descendants of Jacob and Leah. The Levitical priests at the opposite end of the tabernacle, the Western Side were descendants of Jacob and Leah, however the tribes were from Jacob and Rachel. The Levites on the Southern Side descended from Jacob and Leah, and the tribes descended as follows: Ruben _ Jacob and Leah; Gad _ Jacob and Zilpha, Leah’s handmaid; and Simeon _ Jacob and Leah. On the Northern Side the Levites were descendants of Jacob and Leah but none of the tribes were from either Leah or Rachel, who were both daughters of Laban. They are: Dan _ Jacob and Bilhah; Rachel’s handmaid; Asher _ Jacob and Zilpha; and Naphtali _ Jacob and Bilhah. More may be shared concerning their placement in the order they traveled as we progress.

7. “Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "Do not let the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be cut off from among the Levites. "But do this to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy *objects*: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load; but they shall not go in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die.” (Num 4:17-20)

8. These are those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites. These are the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. Kohath became the father of Amram. The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam. To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered strange fire before the LORD. Those who were numbered of them were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward, for they were not numbered among the sons of Israel since no inheritance was given to them among the sons of Israel. These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. (Num 26:57-63)

Israel’s forty years of wilderness wandering resulted in their complete transformation as a “nation.” With the exception of Joshua and Caleb all of the “sons” of Jacob died without receiving the promise. Those who were numbered at Mt. Sinai were different people from the ones numbered this second time, after they traveled from Mt. Hor, where Aaron died. Moses and Eleazar numbered them in the plains of Moab before they “descended,” (crossed Jordan), and “ascended” to a new life in Canaan.

Initially, the land was given to Abraham and became the inheritance of Jacob through Isaac; but Israel,

who went into exile and became slaves in Egypt did not apprehend the promise. It was the Sons of Israel who entered the land, inhabited the land, conquered the land, subdued the land, possessed the land and ruled the land. This accomplishment was only possible after all of the sons of Israel were circumcised near Jericho, where they faced their first tests of faith and obedience to God's voice after they crossed Jordan. The "way" to reigning began with "suffering," and not putting their confidence in the "flesh."

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Php 3:3-14)

The first to be numbered by Moses and Eleazar were the priesthood orders and afterward the tribes were numbered. Earlier in this series it was noted that each of the "orders," i.e., Moses, Aaron and his sons, then the Levites, and afterwards the tribes of Israel could be counted as "first fruits." Moses could be considered the first of the firstfruits of the priesthood orders. Aaron and his sons were the first fruits of the Aaronic order, and the Levites were a kind of first fruits of the Levitical priesthood, or could be considered as the first fruits of the tribes/clans of Israel, because they were taken and became God's own possession instead of every firstborn from the womb, whether they were from man, or animals. How then would Israel be considered as first fruits? They were God's Sovereign choice from among the nations, being called, My son, My firstborn, and the apple of His eye.

"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he **divided all mankind**, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob/Israel his allotted inheritance. In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye." (Deu 32:8-10 from NIV)

I know the word translated "apple," in the above verses, is more literally "pupil" in some of the modern translations but it was refreshing to see the NIV render it "apple." Sometimes it happens that words used "metaphorically" give more of a sense of being "spiritual words," given by the Spirit, instead of "by the letter." It sure helps our understanding when we read "Books" such as the Song of Solomon or the parables Jesus taught. In some ways, this study on the Priesthood Orders is a parable. Although the facts relate to the actual experiences of Israel, in relation to them being tested and tried — processed in the wilderness — we are reminded that everything happened to them as examples for those who came after them. They are examples, to everyone in our generation and those who will be here at the end of the age, that we may abstain from evil.

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.” (1Co 10:1-9)

This concludes this portion of our look at the priesthood but it surely doesn't cover everything that ought to be considered. There isn't any end to what we can learn and what may be revealed from these things because the Levitical Order of Priests is still being perpetuated by today's religious leaders, who have embraced and are intimately involved with the “type” in what we mistakenly call Christianity. Some may only perceive the connection as it relates to the “Jews,” especially those who are “Rabbis” who teach in the Synagogues and try to keep the traditions of their fathers, who officiate at the many rituals and feasts, try their best to remain “Kosher,” i.e., *Kodesh*, and recite the many “Laws” of the Talmud; but, how many realize that much of what we call “Church” and “Ministry” is conducted after the very same pattern ___ which, again, is only the “TYPE”?

One of the very real problems is, “Most of the ministers in the visible church, who claim to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers have not even experienced coming before the High Priest and his sons, (cloud of witnesses), and being offered as a “wave offering,” thus becoming qualified to enter the Outer Court dimension where they are to serve the “tent of meeting” and minister the atonement to those who are being drawn out of their bondage in Egypt. They have no concept of belonging to God, being given as a gift to their High Priest and becoming his disciple. Many are content to receive the tithes and hope to stand before the Lord and hear him say, “ Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.” That may sound all well and good but if that's the vision we have, we, at best, can only lay claim to being, “the rest of the sons of Kohath.” That was what they received for their possession in Canaan, ten cities. We have been called to “BETTER THINGS”!!!! The only city we should be looking for is the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD!

This “sour note,” (not the most desirable way to end), concludes this portion of our study which will resume on the “other side of Jordan” where the priesthood is brought to a new level of faith and service as “Ministers of GOD” and the tabernacle eventually becomes the “tabernacle of David,” and Solomon's Temple, after the priesthood order goes through a metamorphosis at Shiloh.

(To be continued...)

