



# The Exodus

## Lesson 11: The Priesthood

(Exodus 28-29, 39-40; Leviticus 8-10, 21-22;  
Numbers 3-4)

While the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, God chose the tribe of Levi for the work of the priesthood. Remember that when God brought the last plague on Egypt (the death of the firstborn), He said that every firstborn of the Israelites was to be made special to Him. But, instead of requiring all the firstborn, God made the tribe of Levi special.

The work of the priests was to take care of the tabernacle, the tabernacle's furniture, and to offer the sacrifices to God. So, it was very important that the Levites be holy, as God is holy. They were to keep themselves away from everything that was evil and obey God's rules about things that were unclean.

When God established the priesthood, He told Moses to make special clothes for them. Even more special clothes were made for the high priest. Aaron was the first high priest. These clothes were holy and would be for glory and for beauty, and are described in Exodus 28 and 39.

These are the clothes that were made only for the high priest: The ephod was made of finely spun linen, with gold, and with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. Two onyx stones were put on the shoulders with the names of the twelve sons of Israel engraved on them. The breastplate was made similar to the ephod, but was square (about nine inches each direction) with twelve stones (for Israel's twelve sons) on it. Urim and Thummin were also to be placed in the breastplate (these would be used to make decisions). The robe was made of blue yarn, with pomegranates made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and gold bells around the bottom. The turban had a golden medallion on the front of it (attached to a cord of blue yarn). This medallion was engraved with the words: "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:37).

Then, these are the clothes made for all the priests: A tunic made from fine linen, an embroidered sash, and a hat. These clothes were for glory and beauty for Aaron and his sons. Then, they were also given linen undergarments that covered the waist to the thighs. All these clothes had to be worn by the priests whenever they came near the tabernacle. If they did not, they would die.

After the tabernacle was built and the clothes for the priests were made, Aaron and his sons were dedicated for service. They were washed, had offerings made for

them, were clothed with the holy garments, and were anointed. This all worked to establish the priesthood.

Now, the priests were given specific rules concerning their service in the tabernacle and the sacrifices that they were to make. But, one day, two of Aaron's sons (Nadab and Abihu) did not obey God. They tried to offer incense to God using fire that was not approved by God. Because of this, God sent fire and killed them!

Now, Aaron only had two sons still alive. These were Eleazar and Ithamar. God reminded Aaron that he and his sons were to be holy to Him. There were even special rules God gave to the Levites who would serve Him as priests. And, they were also to teach the Israelites what God had commanded at Mount Sinai. For their service, God would bless and take care of them. They would eat food from the sacrifices they offered. And, they would live among the Israelites rather than having land of their own.

Finally, God separated the Levites into groups and divided the work between them. Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The Gershonites were responsible for the tabernacle, the tent, its covering, the screen at the entrance to the tabernacle and the courtyard, the hangings of the courtyard, the tent ropes, and everything relating to this work. The Kohathites were responsible for the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils, the screen in front of the Most Holy Place, and all the work relating to these. The Merarites were responsible for the tabernacle's supports, crossbars, pillars, bases, all the equipment, posts, tent pegs, ropes, and all the work relating to these.

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# Study Questions:

1) When did God choose the Levites to serve as priests?

2) What was the priests' job?

3) Why was it important for the priests to be holy?

4) What clothes were made for the high priest?

5) What clothes were made for all the priests?

6) Why were Nadab and Abihu killed?

7) How did God take care of the Levites?

8) Who were Levi's three sons?

## Memory Verse:

“At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the Lord’s covenant, to stand before the Lord to serve him, and to pronounce blessings in his name, as it is today.” (Deuteronomy 10:8).

**Draw a picture of the lesson you learned about:**