

## Priests and Levites:

1. **LEVI** was the 3<sup>rd</sup> son in chronological order of Jacob. The 3<sup>rd</sup> child of Jacob and Leah. (see Levi immediate family handout)
  - a. Levi's name means "Joined"
  - b. Gen. 29:34 "And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be **joined** unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi."
  - c. Levi had three sons – Gershon, Kohath and Merari. (Gen. 46:11 "And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.")
    - i. Gershon means "A Stranger There" or "Exile"
    - ii. Kohath = "Obedience" or "Congregation"
    - iii. Merari = "Bitterness"
2. **Why was Levi Chosen?**
  - a. When Israel went out of Egypt, The Lord told Moses to make the Tabernacle.
  - b. Who should care for, service, take down and put up the Tabernacle?
  - c. Out of Egypt it seems The Lord might make it the first born of every family.
  - d. But instead, He passed the duties over to the Levites.
  - e. See Numbers 3:1-13 and 40-51.
  - f. NOTE: Perhaps? Levi was chosen because they alone gathered themselves to Moses after the idolatry of the golden calf? Ex. 32:26-28
3. **Four Divisions of Levities:**
  - a. Levi had three sons, but there are four groups of Levites, because Aaron and his descendants were selected to be the Priests. (See chart #2 with lineage down to Moses and Aaron, Lev. 8)
  - b. NOTE Moses is an exception, and he makes a sacrifice in Ex. 24:6
4. **What duties did the non-priest Levites(Gershonites, Kohathites, Merarites) perform?**
  - a. Anything other than the duties of the Priests.
  - b. When the Tabernacle was in the wilderness...
    - i. Gershonites – took care of the curtains, hangings and ropes. (Num. 3:25-26)
    - ii. Kohathites – carried the vessels and objects of the Sanctuary. The Ark of the Covenant(they died if they looked upon), the Menorah, tables of showbread. (Num. 3:31-32).
    - iii. Merarites – carried the framework of the tabernacle. Posts, crossbars, courtyard, tent pegs, etc. (Num. 3:36-37).
  - c. After entering the Promised Land...
    - i. They administered the cities of refuge
    - ii. Did maintenance work on the tabernacle, later the temple.
    - iii. Assisted the Priests as needed.
    - iv. Worked as educators(Theological)
    - v. Did the Kosher slaughtering.
  - d. At the time of David, he set them up in four categories:
    - i. Assistants to the priests.
    - ii. Judges and Scribes
    - iii. Gate keepers
    - iv. Musicians.
5. **Duties of the Aaronic Priests...**
  - a. NOTE: Aaronic Priests could help in any other Levitical duties, since they too are Levites.
  - b. All of the sacrifices
  - c. Door keepers
  - d. Judges

e. Certain Administrations

**6. Term of Service:**

- a. Priests began service (in Priestly duties) at age 30. (Num. 4:3, I Chron. 23:3-5)
- b. However, we find age 25 in Num. 8:24 and age 20 in I Chron. 23:24 & 27.
- c. What appears to be very likely is that an Aaronic priest began at 20 (King David made this the age, which corresponded to those drafted into military service as non-Levites) to learn the ropes, not necessarily in just priestly duties, but any Levitical duties.
- d. Priests retired from full time service at 50, but could still help in priestly duties when needed. (Num. 8:25-26)
- e. NOTE: The priests were paid via the tithe and The 5 shekel annual fee of the firstborn. To the Jew the "first tithe" was the name given for the tithe to the Levites.

**7. Levite Cities:**

- a. We have seen the Cities of Refuge, six cities, 3 E of Jordan, 3 W.
- b. There were 42 more Levitical cities, which we'll get to in Ch. 21.
- c. NOTE: The Aaronic priests were located in the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin.
- d. David established a rotation of 24 courses (cycles) for the non-priest Levites. One week every 24<sup>th</sup> week they went to Jerusalem and worked on the temple and assisted the priests.
- e. We'll see the placement detailed in Ch. 21. As with the territories, just because the city was assigned to the Levites doesn't mean it was actually occupied by them. Some cities may never have been in Levite or Israeli hands. Others were in Israeli hands some of the time, but not continually.

**8. Miscellany:**

- a. The Hebrew word for "Priest" is KOHEN, "Priests" KOHANIM. You will see in the literature them occasionally called by their Hebrew name. That word is used for priests of idolatrous gods in the OT as well.
- b. The FIRST priest mentioned in Scripture is MELCHIZEDEK (Gen. 14:18-20).
- c. The High Priest is a special selection. Lev. 21:10
- d. Even though the non-Aaronic men were Levites, they could not, under penalty of death, perform sacrifices.