

TORAHSCOPE:
Tetzaveh (You shall command)

by Mark Huey posted 06 March, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

Exodus 27:20-30:10
Ezekiel 43:10-27

“Set-Apart Unto Him”

“Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, **to minister as priest to Me**—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. **You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me.** These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, **that he may minister as priest to Me**” (Exodus 28:1-4).

This week's Torah portion, *Tetzaveh*, is in many respects a continuation of the previous reading, *Terumah*, where the willing heart contributions for materials required for the construction of the Tabernacle and its accouterments were required. Now that the various elements have been offered and gathered, certain individuals gifted with “the spirit of wisdom” begin the construction of different aspects of what the Lord required for the people to approach Him in worship:

“You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that **he may minister as priest to Me**” (Exodus 28:3).

As you read the minute details of the garments required for the high priest, one theme continues to present itself as the various instructions unfold. It is apparent that the Holy One of Israel desires to have a specific group of people who are called to be consecrated unto Him as priests. The verb *kahan* (כָּהֵן), used in the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), means to “**perform the duties of a priest**” (*CHALOT*).¹ It is employed six times in this Torah portion:

“You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, **that they may serve Me as priests [kahan]**” (Exodus 28:41).

“Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them **to minister as priests [kahan] to Me**: take one young bull and two rams without blemish” (Exodus 29:1).

“I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons **to minister as priests [kahan] to Me**. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God” (Exodus 29:44-46).

While considering this portion throughout the week, many thoughts came to my mind about our role as Believers, functioning as priests set-apart for specialized service to the Lord. The author of Hebrews writes that the Mosaic Tabernacle in the wilderness is a replica of what exists in Heaven:

“Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a **high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man**. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; **who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘SEE,’ He says,**

¹ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 152.

“THAT YOU MAKE **all things** ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN” (Hebrews 8:1-5).

In the admonition given by God to Moses in Exodus 25:40, he is told to “make all things according to the pattern which was shown on the mountain.” This is confirmed by the author of Hebrews. God is very serious about His people honoring Him and fulfilling His will for proper worship. Consequently, the descriptions of what the Heavenly Tabernacle and accouterments looked like, and the role, duties, and obligations of the high priest, are significant for us to consider. As Believers in Yeshua, we constitute a kingdom of priests and a holy nation among the nations (Exodus 19:6), and have a unique call to minister unto Him and serve others.

Interestingly, the Jewish people over the centuries have actually taken these references to the *kohanim* or priests and attributed them to the sons of the first high priest, Aaron, and his descendants. It is generally believed today that if one has the last name of Cohen or Levi (and the many derivatives), that one is probably a descendant of Aaron. However, many Rabbis are quick to point out that being a “priest” or someone descended from Aaron and the tribe of Levi does not necessarily automatically make one a “rabbi” or “teacher.” But this does not preclude some rabbis coming from the priestly line of Cohens and Levis. There have been some recent attempts to differentiate genetic characteristics using the male Y chromosome to determine one’s authentic link to Aaron. What all of this means is beyond my understanding, but it is obvious that many common physical traits have been passed down from generation to generation. What this means in terms of the spiritual dynamics is difficult to determine. Suffice it to say, the Lord is allowing certain Jewish *kohanim* to be preparing themselves to re-establish the Levitical priesthood when He deems it appropriate in fulfillment of prophecy. The Temple Mount Faithful is a modern-day manifestation of this, and it will only be a matter of time before the Temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem.

A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation

As to my knowledge, I am not a Cohen or a Levi, and most of you reading this probably are also not as well. But this does not mean that these texts have no relevance for us. Many of us ask ourselves about the role of a Believer who is called out to “minister unto Him,” and how this applies to the great majority of followers of the Messiah of Israel. After all, as stated earlier, we are still part of kingdom of priests who is to serve the masses of humanity. The Apostle Peter attests to this reality:

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Peter testifies to the fact that we are all part of “a chosen people” (NIV) that has been designated to testify to the world about the God of Israel. It does matter whether you are named Cohen or Levi. **What truly matters is that you have been “born from above” into the priestly service.**

As I considered these texts and read the Haftarah portion from Ezekiel, I was reminded of a book that I read several years ago that addressed the very topic we were considering this week:

“You shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,” declares the Lord GOD, ‘a young bull for a sin offering” (Ezekiel 43:19).

When I read the reference “to the levitical priests who are of the stock of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to Me” (NJPS), I was reminded of the book *The Sons of Zadok* by C.R. Oliver. His insights clarified many things through his study of this topic. I remembered Oliver concluding

that it was a much higher privilege to be “called out” to minister unto the Lord, as opposed to simply ministering unto the needs of humanity. This distinction was something I had never considered before, but upon reflection and considering the Scriptural references, I was convinced that his conclusions had merit. What was notable, of course, is that these conclusions came from a “churchman” who was certainly not proclaiming any knowledge of the Messianic movement. And yet, as a servant of the most high, he was clearly articulating the differences.

The emphasis of Oliver’s conclusions came through his study on the life of the Prophet Ezekiel, and specifically from the text of Ezekiel 44:15-16:

“But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. It shall be that when they enter at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and wool shall not be on them while they are ministering in the gates of the inner court and in the house. Linen turbans shall be on their heads and linen undergarments shall be on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with *anything which makes them* sweat. When they go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their garments. Also they shall not shave their heads, yet they shall not let their locks grow long; they shall only trim *the hair of* their heads. Nor shall any of the priests drink wine when they enter the inner court. And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman but shall take virgins from the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. Moreover, they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances. They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths. They shall not go to a dead person to defile *themselves*; however, for father, for mother, for son, for daughter, for brother, or for a sister who has not had a husband, they may defile themselves. After he is cleansed, seven days shall elapse for him. On the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering,” declares the Lord GOD. And it shall be with regard to an inheritance for them, *that* I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel—I am their possession. They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. The first of all the first fruits of every kind and every contribution of every kind, from all your contributions, shall be for the priests; you shall also give to the priest the first of your dough to cause a blessing to rest on your house. The priests shall not eat any bird or beast that has died a natural death or has been torn to pieces” (Ezekiel 44:15-31).

As I read these verses, and then followed the context of what Ezekiel was prophesying, I realized that he was describing the final Temple and the service of the priests that will be called out to serve. These priests will serve in the same capacity that was originally described in much of this week’s Torah portion.

The Messianic Movement

Much of this causes me to remember a time when I had just spent a week in Dallas attempting to minister to the Lord through work being accomplished on the campus of a junior Bible college. While I was there I had the opportunity of telling its chairman about some of the things that were happening around the globe with the advent of the Messianic movement. Recognizing that his theology and my theology were different, I was still not deterred from sharing with him what I believed. I told him that years ago when I was born again in Dallas (1978), I understood the basic concept that the world was divided into two distinct camps: those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who did not. **I was taught that you were either a**

Believer or not. It was just that black and white, and there was no room for shades of gray in between.

I told this individual that now as I have grown in my understanding of who I am in the Messiah Yeshua, I have also come to another elementary conclusion. According to the Scriptures, based on the “adoption,” “grafting in,” and joining as part of the “commonwealth of Israel”—all New Testament terms that he could understand—I had come to the conclusion that I was **now a part of Israel**. I went on to explain that this reality was also true for anyone who believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the work accomplished by His Son at Golgotha (Calvary). All of God’s covenants were established with the people destined to be a light to the other nations, as explained clearly by the Prophet Isaiah:

“I am the LORD, I have called you [Israel] in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a **light to the nations**, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you” (Isaiah 42:6-9).

“He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, to the despised One, to the One abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you”” (Isaiah 49:6-7).

I was really trying to make the point that “we are Israel” to this individual because I knew that his parents had established this school of discipleship in 1948 when the State of Israel had just been formed. I also knew that they were noted then—and to this very day—to be ardent supporters of almost anything that had to do with the State of Israel. The prophetic fulfillment of Israel’s reestablishment and its connection to the Christian faith has been a major teaching of the over 30,000 graduates of this school, who have been commissioned as ministers and missionaries to the Lord.

But here I was, a Believer in the Messiah Yeshua, and convinced that I am a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, who was presenting a perspective that did not necessarily align with all of the teaching that this (then) 58 year old had received for nearly six decades. My goal was to minister unto the Lord and simply declare my convictions as best as I could, without any preconceptions or expectations about what would occur from this unique meeting.

Of course prayers preceded our encounter, and we were hoping that his heart would be open to consider some of the things that are occurring with the advent of the Messianic movement. But as the meeting evolved into a “get to know one another session,” any thoughts of trying to persuade or argue points of theology never surfaced. Instead, the *shalom* of the Messiah was present throughout the discussion. My prayer was that something that I said might have been used to open some doors that can impact a great number of students from nations all over the world. Whether or not this happens, only God knows, but I was faithful to present what I believed and I leave it all in His capable hands.

Minister Unto Him

Our job as “ministers unto Him” is to continually be a light of the burning oil of beaten olives that points to Him as the Source of all things. We are to be praying unceasingly as He presents all sorts of opportunities for us to share who He is and what He has done for us through His salvation and saving grace. The Scriptures speak constantly of what it means to be “called out” unto Him. Consider some of the words of admonition that Paul gives to the saints of Thessalonica:

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Messiah Yeshua. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But

examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-23).

Here, Paul encourages the saints to rejoice always, and pray without ceasing while giving thanks for all things. When you think about these comments, they are not just directed to the “priests” in the crowd, but instead to all who had the ears to hear. Paul himself was of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). These words are directed to all who have the privilege of ministering unto Him—all who claim to be a part of Israel. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul makes some strong recommendations about rejoicing, and how we should guard our thoughts:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:4-9).

These are some important instructions about how we should conduct our lives—and even our thoughts. When Paul comments about rejoicing always, and in letting one’s prayers and requests made known toward God *always*, I believe he is describing the life, thoughts, and actions of a person who has been called into the priesthood as exemplified as a son of Zadok. I believe that God is calling all of His children to that level of commitment to His ways.

I also believe that many in the Messianic movement today are called to that very purpose. Having spent almost eleven years among the growing Messianic community (as of 2005), I can clearly declare that He is bringing His people into a priestly service with a passion that rivals the zeal of some of the ancient sons of Zadok. The Lord knows that when you come into the Messianic perspective that you will be challenged, and that we each have to make some critical decisions. Are you going to choose to minister unto Him, or are you going to fall into some of the old traps of conformity that your family and friends may want you to pursue?

Dwelling Among His People

We all have to choose who we will minister to. This week we can be reminded that the pattern has been established in the Heavenly realm and replicated in the wilderness. At the appropriate time, Solomon was blessed with the opportunity to build a more permanent dwelling for the Lord on the Temple Mount. Centuries later, after the Messiah Himself took on human flesh, He became our perfect sacrifice and now functions as our High Priest in Heaven before God the Father. The Apostle Paul writes how each one of us functions as a temporary tabernacle for the Spirit of God, appropriating some of the concepts that are stated in the end of this week’s Torah portion:

“Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

“Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: **two one year old lambs each day**, continuously. The **one lamb** you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and there *shall be* one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering with one lamb. The **other lamb** you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering and the same drink offering as in the morning, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also

consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God” (Exodus 29:38-46).

Paul considers the concept of the continually burning sacrifices of the evening and morning oblation. Just like at the beginning of this portion, when we see a reference to the continually burning *menorah* with oil from the beaten olive tree, now the continually burning sacrifice of the lamb is emphasized. As Moses repeats the requirements, do you see the concept of “minister as priests to Me” being mentioned? Why is this stated again? It was stated again because as the Lord concludes these commands, He wants us to understand that He wants to dwell among His people, within the hearts of human beings. As Believers, we have become the living sacrifices that can serve God through careful service and devotion unto Him:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2).

Israel has become the beaten olive tree whose oil has been used as a fuel to be a light unto the nations, pointing them to the One True God. As we come to the end of this portion, we shown the image of the continual need for the sacrificial lambs to be a living sacrifice unto Him. This should point to the Lamb of God, Messiah Yeshua, who “takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Finally, we are told to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices. We are to be constantly ministering unto Him, which Paul says is “your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1, NIV). I believe that when you truly do this that you will be ministering unto Him, and He will accomplished His perfect will. When this occurs, we can be an impact on other people who can likewise be used to further the Kingdom of God here on Earth, and we can be acceptable in His sight.

May we all be called into that place of service as He dwells among us and in us, as we are set-apart unto Him!

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