

APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

for *Tetzaveh*

by Mark Huey posted 27 February, 2010 www.outreachisrael.net

Philippians 4:10-20

“A Perpetual Priesthood”

Our Torah portion for this week, *Tetzaveh* (Exodus 27:20-30:10), continues with a description of not only the materials, but also some of the specifics, of what the Lord required of the Israelites to worship Him. After the details of the Tabernacle and its accoutrements are completed, the need to bring pure beaten olive oil to light the *menorah* in the Tabernacle is recorded. In the opening verses of *Tetzaveh* it is stated that these requirements for communing with the Almighty will be done continually (from evening to morning) throughout the generations of the Israelites:

“You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel” (Exodus 27:20-21).

The Lord required the people of Israel to continually bring olive oil to those who would minister by the light of the *menorah*—somewhat reminiscent of what Zechariah envisioned when he saw the lampstand in Heaven (Zechariah 4:1-5, 11-14)—but He also specifically chose those who were to carry out the tasks of the continual ministry. At this particular time in the desert sojourn, Aaron and his sons are chosen for this role. Further clarification comes as the *parashah* turns to describing the priesthood and priestly vestments. We see not only the consecration and ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, but the need for the role of those in priestly service for perpetuity:

“Then you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of his sons' right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the *rest of the* blood around on the altar. Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons' garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons' garments with him. You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), and one cake of bread and one cake of bread *mixed with* oil and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread which is *set* before the LORD; and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. You shall take them from their hands, and offer them up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the LORD. Then you shall take the breast of Aaron's ram of ordination, and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion. You shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering which was waved and which was offered from the ram of ordination, from the one which was for Aaron and from the one which was for his sons. **It shall be for Aaron and his sons as *their* portion forever from the sons of Israel**, for it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, *even* their heave offering to the LORD. The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, that in them they may be anointed and ordained” (Exodus 29:19-29).

The need to continually offer up sacrifices before God is also described in *Tetzaveh*, as Aaron and his sons are designated to minister as priests to Him:

“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).

In the pre-resurrection era, the Levitical priesthood was specifically chosen to serve as the representative priests for Ancient Israel, maintaining the Tabernacle and Temple, offering the prescribed sacrifices, and making sure that the significant religious rituals of the people were honored. Yet, the Israelites themselves were called out to be a holy nation and *a kingdom of priests*, before receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai:

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; **and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6).

While the Levites had specific priestly duties to perform, all within Israel had a priestly service to accomplish in representing God to the nations of the Earth.

The Haftarah reading for *Tetzaveh*, Ezekiel 43:10-27, anticipates something very special for the long term future. Prophesying about the future Millennial Temple, Ezekiel describes how the sons of Zadok, who are connected to the priest loyal to King David (2 Samuel 15:24-29, 35, 17:15, 19:12) and King Solomon (1 Kings 1:8, 32), will be able to minister to the Lord:

“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).

“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” (Ezekiel 44:15-16).

By looking to the past Levitical priesthood guided by Aaron’s lineage, and then into this future priestly service with the sons of Zadok, one can understand that the priesthood of Israel is subject to some changes. This is buttressed by the fact that Israel itself is supposed to be a nation of priests. By extension, all those who acknowledge Israel’s God and Messiah are called into a kind of priestly service, in representing their faith to the Lord. Just as the *menorah* was to burn brightly in the Tabernacle and Temple, light is supposed to usher forth from Believers’ lives as they serve the interests of the gospel. The Messiah Himself serves humanity at large in Heaven, performing a priestly service modeled after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews chs. 5-7). Whether a “priesthood” is likened to be Levitical, Melchizedekian, or is rather general—the themes of serving as priests are quite important to the message of the Scriptures.

One of the most significant and influential figures in the Bible is the Apostle Paul, who was specifically called by the Lord for a unique ministry service (cf. Acts 9:15-20). After his Damascus Road experience, Paul’s unique background as a Pharisee and Roman citizen enabled him to have a special position as one who could minister to broad groups of First Century people. Reading through the Book of Acts, we see that Paul was not only used mightily to help proclaim the good news to his fellow Jews and those from the nations, but he was also able to help mentor many of the early congregations and fellowships of Messiah followers in the Mediterranean. Even though Paul had once tried to destroy the Messianic movement, he became one of the leading spokespersons for it. Paul’s letters were able to help guide the First Century *ekklēsia*, and they

remain at the forefront of anyone who hopes to really understand the trajectory of the Scriptures and God's plan for His people.

The suggested Apostolic Scriptures verses, to read along with *Tetzaveh*, come from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul is very thankful for the Philippians' financial support of his ministry efforts, as he certainly does have to fulfill a priestly-type of calling in the service of the Messiah Yeshua. Paul dedicated his time and his life to furthering the work of the Kingdom, declaring Yeshua to be the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world. As you consider Philippians 4:10-20, you may see a few parallels between the prescriptions regarding Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, or the role of the prophesied role of the Zadokites. Paul was totally dedicated to his role as a servant and minister of the Lord, without any complaining about his priestly-type duties, in spite of the challenges and suffering he endured:

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.** Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no [assembly] shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Messiah Yeshua. Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:10-20).

The Apostle Paul, as a fully dedicated servant of Yeshua, learned to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself. He understood that through his faith and confidence in Yeshua, he could do all things as he would be strengthened during the challenges of life. Paul was thankful for the heartfelt gifts that he received, recognizing that his Philippian friends who have contributed to his ministerial work, have sacrificed in order to support his efforts. He commended them for their generosity, comparing their gifts to being like a well-pleasing sacrifice offered to God. They enabled Paul to be the significant light that he was, even while in Roman imprisonment.

In Exodus 27:20-21, Ancient Israel was commanded to continually bring forth the beaten oil so that the *menorah* could continue to shine light. This depicts how the people themselves were to serve as God's light to the world at large. We know that not only is Yeshua the Messiah the light of the world (Luke 2:32), but that even Paul associated himself as being light (Acts 13:42)—as both had the Prophet Isaiah's descriptions of the *or goyim* (אֹרֵי גוֹיִם) applied to them:

"I am the LORD, I have called you 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" (Isaiah 42:6-7).

"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).

In the case of Paul, whether it was his ability to proclaim the good news to Jews, Greeks, and Romans—or write rhetorically packed epistles to diverse assemblies of Believers—he served as a light of God to the world. He continued in the kind of calling that the Levites originally had, and which Ancient Israel was commissioned by God to be. Countless others throughout history

have laid down their lives and their personal goals and ambitions, to spread the gospel to the world, or simply minister as beacons of God's goodness via acts of human service.

Today, we see that the need for God's people to serve in a priestly capacity continues—just like in the days of Aaron or Paul, or as it will be in the future with the Zadokites. While there are some who are specially called into the full time service of the Lord in ministry, *all of us* as Messiah followers are to function in some kind of priestly capacity. This is true whether we are prosperous, or have humble means. The need to shine God's light to the world at large—on whatever level—will always be the role of the priesthood of Believers.

It should be our prayer that everyone will serve in their priestly calling to the best of their abilities. In so doing, the Kingdom will come, and His will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. *To Him be all the glory!*

Until the restoration of all things...

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