

# Aaron, Father of the Levitical Priesthood

Compiled and written by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Topics		
Aaron's Genealogy	The Meaning of Aaron's Name	Aaron in the Pentateuch
Aaron in the Psalms	Aaron in the Prophets	Aaron in the New Testament
	The Royal Priesthood Today	
Charts, Maps and Doctrines		
The Genealogy to Aaron	The Genealogy from Aaron	

**Preface:** I must admit to being surprised as to how many times Aaron is mentioned in the psalms. For this reason, I think we should examine Aaron first, and then his many mentions in the Psalms.

Aaron is Moses' brother. Whereas, Moses is the father of nation Israel; Aaron is the father of the Levitical Priesthood (better labeled the *Aaronic priesthood*).

**Aside:** I tend to list each and every passage where Aaron's name is found, and say something about that passage, even if it is very general. In teaching a group, obviously,  $\frac{3}{4}$ <sup>ths</sup> of these points could be eliminated. As part of my own psychological makeup, I would like to be thorough, even to the point of great repetition.

I. What is completely surprising is that Aaron is mentioned a remarkable 353 times in 333 verses. I don't know that I would have ever expected him to occur that often. Where Aaron is found in Scripture:

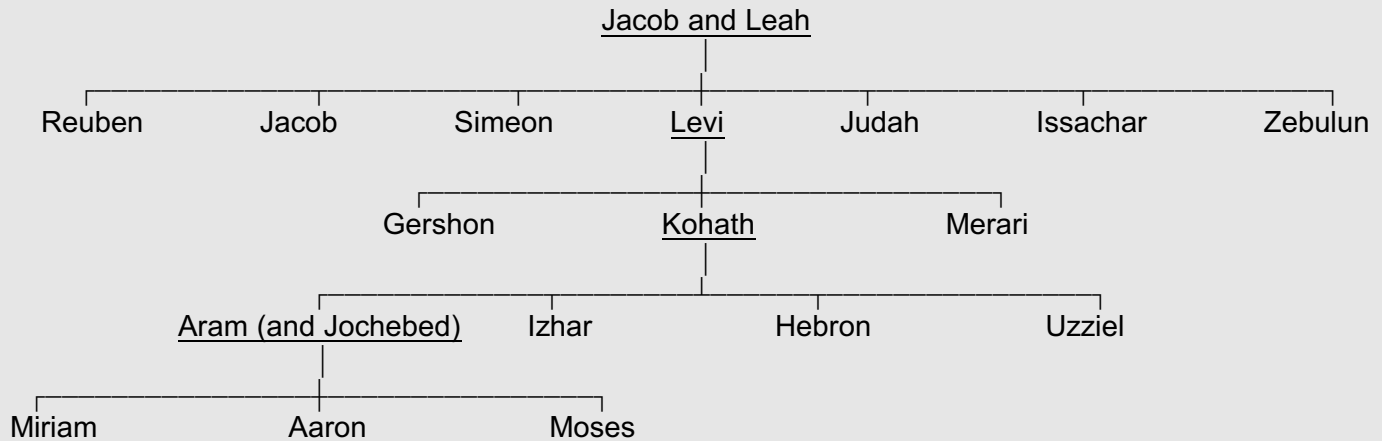
1. Historical mentions:
  - (1) As the events of his life unfolded: Ex. 4:14, 16, 27–30 5:1, 4, 20 6:13, 26–27 (these, and the passages which follow, are listed below in the doctrine itself):
  - (2) Authors look back and mention Aaron by name:
2. Genealogical mentions: Ex. 6:20, 23, 25 Num. 3:1–3 26:59–61 1Chron. 6, 50 23:13a
3. Aaron's name is mentioned incidentally, e.g., [Eleazar, son of Aaron](#). Num. 4:16 7:8 16:37 25:7, 11 26:1 Joshua 24:33 Judges 20:28 1Chron. 6:57
4. Aaron in the psalms.
5. Aaron named in prophecy:
6. Aaron named in the New Testament:
7. Passages which really tell us nothing about Aaron, even though he is named: Ex. 15:20

II. We should first note just who Aaron is:

1. Aaron’s genealogy is first presented in Ex. 6:14–25 (and vv. 26–27 confirm that this is the same Aaron who is named as going to Pharaoh with Moses to demand the release of the Jewish slaves).
2. Aaron’s sons are named in Num. 3:1–4.

I have always found a chart which shows a bloodline to be more effective than a mess of words, so, what follows is...

### The Genealogy to Aaron



Now, of course, this does not account for each and every generation. Many of the generations who lived in Egypt are not accounted for here. For a better understanding, a greater picture of all the generations of Levi, and for Scriptural confirmation, see my exegesis of 1Chron. 6. Furthermore, many of the generations of those who lived in Egypt appear to be passed over in the twelve tribes of Israel.

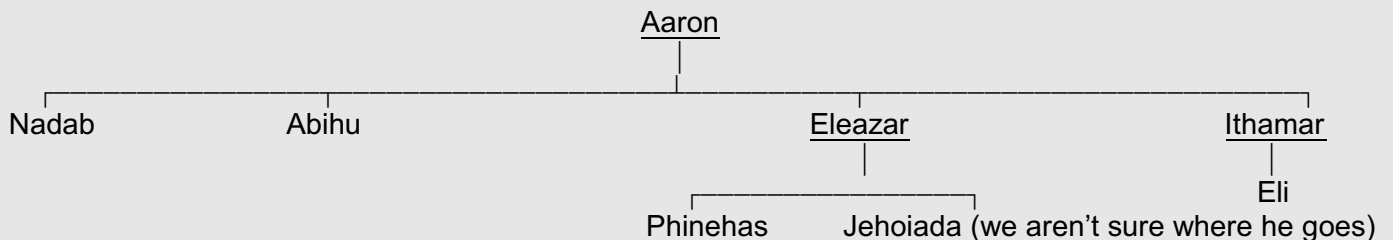
Miriam was the eldest, and several author’s present this gingerly with such words as *probably, likely*.<sup>1</sup> Aaron was three years older than Moses (Ex. 7:7), and Miriam followed the baby Moses as he floated along the Nile River (Ex. 2:1–9). Now, unless Miriam was an exceptionally precocious two-year-old who was able to set up an arrangement with the Pharaoh’s daughter for Moses to nurse with his true mother, we can pretty well be assured that Miriam is the oldest, followed by Aaron and Moses.

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And now, another genealogical chart:

### The Genealogy from Aaron



Now, of course, this does not account for each and every generation. Many of the generations who lived in Egypt are not accounted for here. For a better understanding, a greater picture of all the generations of Levi, and for Scriptural confirmation, see my exegesis of 1Chron. 6.

<sup>1</sup> See *The New Bible Dictionary*; editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.1. ISBE also presented it the same way.

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3. The mother of Moses and Aaron is Jochebed, which means *Jehovah is glorious*. It is unusual for an early Hebrew name to be combined with *Jehovah*. This should indicate to us that Jochebed was an unusual mother with parents who were spiritually strong.
4. We are not sure exactly what Aaron's name means.
  - (1) Gesenius suggests *mountaineer*; Furst suggests *enlightened*. Apparently others have suggested *rich, fluent*.<sup>2</sup>
  - (2) Aaron's name is `ahārôn (אַהֲרֹן) [pronounced *ah-huh-ROHM*], which really matches no Hebrew word and therefore possibly means nothing and is transliterated *Aaron*. Strong's #175 BDB #14.
  - (3) I wonder if this may be a form of `achar (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *after, following*. In reference to *place*, this can mean *behind*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. I have not seen anyone else suggest this meaning, but it would be very apropos. Aaron, even though he was the firstborn and Moses was the last, Aaron was the one to follow after Moses. It is only a theory, and the words are not exactly the same; but, many words are built from `achar (אַחַר), and all of them have the connotation of *following behind*. Given the other suggestions, I believe mine to be the most accurate. It is common for Hebrew names to end with *ôn*.
  - (4) however, bear in mind that, Moses' name has meaning, which is explicitly stated in Scripture (Ex. 2:10). No such meaning is ever attached to Aaron's name, indicating, possibly, that there is no specific interpretation that we should attach to his name.
  - (5) Aaron's name is unique; no one else in Scripture has his name.

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### III. Aaron is named many times in the Law:

1. God told Moses that he was going to speak to the Pharaoh of Egypt directly and make demands of him. Moses balks at this idea, saying that he is not a very good public speaker. God will then allow Aaron, Moses' brother, to speak on his behalf. [Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I'm not a good speaker. I've never been a good speaker, and I'm not now, even though you've spoken to me. I speak slowly, and I become tongue-tied easily." The LORD asked him, "Who gave humans their mouths? Who makes humans unable to talk or hear? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? It is I, the LORD! Now go, and I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." But Moses said, "Please, Lord, send someone else." Then the LORD became angry with Moses and asked, "What about your brother Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He's already on his way to meet you, and he will be very glad to see you. You will speak to him and tell him what to say. I will help both of you speak, and I will teach you both what to do. Aaron will speak to the people for you. He will be your spokesman, and you will be like God](#) (Ex. 4:10–16). This was not God's idea nor was it Aaron's; Moses balked at what God wanted him to do, so God drafted Aaron to do the speaking.
2. This arrangement worked well, at first; Aaron presented God's plan to the heads of Israel in Ex. 4:27–31. It appears as though Aaron also did the signs that God told Moses to perform (although it is difficult to determine who actually did) before the elders in order to convince them. It may have appeared at that time that Aaron would be the spokesman, both to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel.
3. The first time the Moses and Aaron go to speak to Pharaoh, Pharaoh laughs them off and increases the workload of the Jewish slaves by decreased their resources (they had to build bricks without straw). In this chapter, it reads that *they* spoke to the Pharaoh. Given the next chapter and the next, it is very likely that Aaron was the one to speak directly to Pharaoh. Ex. 5
4. God is going to send Moses back, and Moses asks for Aaron's help again. Ex. 6:1–13, 26–30

<sup>2</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I; p. 1.

5. God tells Moses that he will be like God to Pharaoh and that Aaron would be like his personal prophet, who communicates to Pharaoh. Moses is 80 and Aaron 83 when they speak to Pharaoh. Ex. 7:1–7
6. God does warm Moses up to the idea of speaking to Pharaoh by telling Moses to tell Aaron to perform a sign for Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8–10). The miracle of Moses and Aaron was greater than a similar trick performed by Pharaoh’s magicians (Ex. 7:11–12).
7. Because Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, God tells Moses to tell Aaron to lift his staff and turn the Nile into blood (Ex. 7:19–21). Similarly, Aaron brings the frogs into Egypt (Ex. 8:1–8).
8. After the frog incident, Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron into his chambers, and Moses begins speaking directly to Pharaoh, instead of through Aaron, and he causes the frogs to die (Ex. 8:8–15).
9. God still humors Moses, and tells Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his staff and bring gnats into the land. As before, the Pharaoh softened for a bit, then hardened his heart; and Moses and Pharaoh again spoke man to man. Ex. 8:16–32
10. Aaron’s roll decreases even more in Ex. 9. He and Moses act in concert to perform a miracle. Moses also apparently speaks directly to Pharaoh. Aaron’s name is only found thrice in this chapter.
11. Although Moses and Aaron speak directly to Pharaoh in Ex. 10, in the final paragraph, it is Moses who performs the miracle—the second to the last plague.
12. In Ex. 11, when the threat of the final plague is delivered to Pharaoh, Aaron is mentioned but once, and in retrospect. As I review these incidents, I think of the words of John the Baptizer: **“I must decrease and He must increase.”** (John 3:30).
13. Ex. 12 is the first Passover; God speaks to Moses and Aaron together (vv. 1, 28, 31, 43, 50). By this time, there is no doubt in our minds that Moses is a great man and Aaron is his brother. However, with regards to dying for our sins, Jesus Christ died for each and every one of us. Our relative greatness or lack thereof is not an issue. Therefore, in this regard, Moses and Aaron are equal and so treated here in this book. Moses is mentioned by himself in vv. 21 and 35 when he speaks to the elders about preparations for the Passover and the obedience of the people to the orders of Moses.
14. In Ex. 16, with regards to the people of Israel, Moses and Aaron are treated pretty much as a unit, although it is clear that Moses is the one in charge. This is the manna incident when the people began to bitch and complain to Moses and Aaron and God gives manna to the people. We begin to see a clear division of labor between Moses and Aaron in this chapter. Whenever Moses had some order for the people to obey (to gather or whatever, Aaron often delivered that order (Ex. 16:9–10). However, when it came to giving the people the Word of God, this was Moses responsibility (Ex. 16:22–27). It was clear to Moses and Aaron that Moses was the authority (Ex. 16:9–10, 33–34 19:24). By the way, Ex. 16:9 is the second time that God speaks to Aaron alone (although, one may argue that God spoke to both Moses and Aaron on this occasion, but gave them slightly different things to say to the people of Israel—compare with Ex. 16:11).
15. The latter half of Ex. 17 deals with the battle between Israel and Amalek. Joshua led the men in battle, and God allowed him to win, as long as Moses’ hands were in the air. Aaron helped to support Moses’s arms, which grew tired. What we have here is, even though Moses is a spiritual giant and Aaron is less so (much less so), Moses cannot do this without Aaron’s help. Billy Graham, the greatest evangelist of my generation, could not lead one crusade on his own. He must have the support of thousands of people. Furthermore, do not discount the prayer support which he receives (which is similar to the support that Moses and Aaron gave Joshua during this battle). Ex. 17:8–16
16. Aaron seemed to often lead the people. He was not usurping Moses’ authority; this was his position. Ex. 18:10.
17. Moses, Aaron and a number of other men went to the foot of Mount Sinai; only Moses went up. This was where Moses was there for 40 days and 40 nights. Aaron and Hur were left in charge. Ex. 24
  - (1) In this passage, we have a rather remarkable statement: Ex. 24:9–11: **Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet their appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet, He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God and they ate and drank.** Here, Moses, Aaron, Aaron’s two sons, and 70 elders actually see a manifestation of God.

- (2) I want to remind you as well that Aaron, along with all of the people, actually heard the audible voice of God deliver the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–21).
  - (3) What is most remarkable is that a very short time later, Aaron will join with the people in making and worshiping a golden calf idol (Ex. 32). Many believers often remark or think how cool it would be for God to tell them exactly what to do, or for them to see God perform some great miracle before their eyes. They seem to think that, if they could just claim this great experience, their faith would never fail them. I am here to tell you that is a load of crap. You can see one mind-bending miracle after another, and a short while later, turn your back on Jesus Christ.
  - (4) Aaron did not even own up to his part of idolatry. He blamed the golden calf incident on the people and said that he threw the gold into the fire and out jumped a golden calf (Lev. 32:22–24). However, it is clear that Aaron fashioned this himself into a calf (Ex. 32:4, 35). In fact, God would have killed Aaron had Moses not interceded on his behalf (Deut. 9:12, 16, 20).
18. God tells Moses that Aaron and his sons will be priests to God, in charge of the Tabernacle and its fixtures (Ex. 27:21).
  19. Let's discuss Ex. 28–32 in points:
    - (1) God gives Moses instructions about the Aaronic priesthood; how they would be consecrated, what they would wear, what they would eat.
    - (2) Ironically, as God gave these instructions to Moses, the people of Israel convince Aaron that Moses may not be coming back and that they should make a golden calf to worship (Ex. 32).
    - (3) The psychology of this is quite interesting; the people convince Aaron to do this, but Aaron actually was the one to gather their gold in order to make this golden calf—in other words, Aaron is manipulated to do this as their leader. E. J. Young correctly evaluates Aaron's character as *weak and pliable*.<sup>3</sup>
    - (4) This marks one of the two great failings of Aaron as recorded in the Bible (the other is in the book of Numbers).
    - (5) In this same chapter, Moses stood in the gap between God and the people, mediating on behalf of the people. The idea is, here is a people who are totally undeserving—an abomination to God—and one man stands between God's perfect justice and these reprobates, mediating on their behalf—a picture, of course, of Jesus Christ. Like me, I am sure when you read through this chapter, you are thoroughly disgusted with the Israelites—how could they possibly be this screwed up? When you think this, realize, this is exactly how God sees us. His perfect nature cannot perceive us in any other way. His perfect justice demands that we be punished for our evil. Our evil before God is much greater than we could possibly imagine. We certainly look at ourselves and think, "Aw, we're not too bad." But we are—we are an abomination to God. A holy and righteous God can see us in no other way. Personally, I know that my own appreciation for what Christ has done for me is so inadequate relative to what He did on my behalf. It is as if Donald Trump gave me his entire fortune, and I give him the finger point and say, "Hey, thanks, dude" and move on, his bank books, stock portfolio and mortgages in hand. Moses recounts Aaron's mistake here in Deut. 9:20, noting that God was willing to kill Aaron at that time.
    - (6) Just so you understand; I don't know how much Moses cared about the Jews that he pleaded for. However, bear in mind that he knew, whatever fate would befall the Jews would also befall his own brother Aaron. This may give you a better view into why Moses argued so strongly on behalf of the Jews under his command.
    - (7) This gives me a smattering of confidence. I can understand why God would save Moses or Samuel or David; but when I look at me and my life, I think, "Why would God really have any interest in preserving me?" However, I know that the same blood which washes away the few sins of Moses also washes away my thousands upon thousands of sins. Jesus Christ is my advocate because I am in Him. There is no merit in me that causes Jesus to stand up on my behalf. I criticize Aaron, but, quite frankly, I am no Aaron either. I am lucky that God extends his grace to people like me. That's somewhat of an understatement, is it not?

<sup>3</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*; ed. J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p. 1.

20. In the events named in the previous point, Moses destroyed the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. Therefore, he went back up the mountain, leaving Moses and the elders behind. When he returned, he face was shining. Ex. 34:30–31.
21. Aaron is mentioned in conjunction with the priesthood and with the clothing that would be worn, sacrifices that would be offered, and duties that he and his sons would attend to in Ex. 28:1–43 35:19 38:21 39:1, 26, 27, 41 40:12, 13, 41 Lev. 1:5, 7, 8, 11 3:2, 5, 8, 13 6:9, 14, 20, 25 7:10. The appearance of the clothing and its meaning are not a part of this study.
- (1) However, it is important to point out that neither Aaron nor his sons had nothing to do with the construction of the Tabernacle of God, or of his clothing (or the clothing of his sons), or the Ark of any of the sacred furniture. Even though they were intimately involved with all of these things, Bezaleel of Judah and Aholiab of Dan (Ex 31:1–6) and other willing participants (Ex. 35:21–35) built the Tabernacle and all of its furnishings and sewed the priestly garments. I would reasonably guess that Bezaleel and Aholiab both supervised the work that was done and probably participated in much of it as well.
  - (2) Although there is a division of labor in the Old Testament, we find this to even a greater extent in the New. In fact, since we are all filled with the Holy Spirit (potentially), we all play a part in God's plan (see, for instance, 1Cor. 3:6–10 12:3–30).
22. Aaron and the other priests were given a portion of the grain offering and other offerings (Lev. 22, 3, 10 6:17–19 7:31–35).
23. Most of the sacrifices were animal sacrifices, which all spoke of Jesus Christ dying for our sins on the cross. This is illustrated well in Lev. 3.
24. Lev. 8 deals with the consecration of Aaron and his sons.
25. Aaron makes atonement sacrifices for himself and the people in Lev. 9.
26. Lev. 10 primarily deals with the four sons of Aaron. Now, Aaron has been a screw up, as we have already seen, so it is does not take us by surprise that his kids are screw ups as well. His first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, do not make a proper offering, and—because these are next in line for the office of High Priest—God takes them out of this life.
27. Lev. 11:1 is one of those passages I almost skipped over. [God speaks again to Moses and to Aaron](#). What God then gives are a list of laws concerning clean and unclean animals. Here is what is remarkable: God is dictating these laws to both Moses and Aaron. We can understand why God would speak to Moses when giving a list of laws (even though these are dietary laws), but it is encouraging to see God speaking with Aaron in this regard. Aaron, as we have seen, has been pretty much a loser with regards to his spiritual life. God even executed his two oldest sons, suggesting that Aaron's training of his sons was inadequate. However, God still gives Aaron another chance (and don't think this is the last time that Aaron will fail). What I should discuss is, *why is God speaking directly to Aaron?*
- (1) Aaron was ceremonially consecrated for the position of High Priest. His sons were similarly consecrated.
  - (2) Aaron and his sons then offered up sacrifices for themselves and for the people of Israel, all of whom had rebelled against God.
  - (3) God had cleansed Aaron's family of the two sons who really did not take God's laws and their position as priests seriously.
  - (4) Therefore, Aaron has a legitimate position of spiritually leadership, despite his many failings.
28. God then speaks to Moses and Aaron about leprosy—both identifying it and cleansing it (Lev. 13–14); about unclean bodily discharges—blood, pus, whatever (Lev. 15);
29. In Lev. 16, God sets up specific responsibilities for Aaron as the High Priest with respect to the Holy of Holies. Then, God enumerates what will be done on the great Day of Atonement, known as Yom Kippur, the one day that Aaron will enter into the Holy of Holies. In this chapter, God speaks directly to Moses. In Lev. 17, again, there are ceremonies that the priests will perform, and God speaks directly to Moses. In, fact, throughout the rest of the book of Leviticus, God speaks directly to Moses. There is nothing to indicate any additional failings of Aaron; however, the laws tend to be of a moral nature rather than ceremonial. We do find Aaron's name several times—that is, Moses is to relay the

- words of God to Aaron and the people (Lev. 17:2); to the sons of Aaron (Lev. 21:1); or to Aaron directly (Lev. 21:17); which Moses does (Lev. 21:24).
30. We find this repeated (God speaking to Moses, instructing Moses to speak to Aaron, and/or his sons and/or the people) in Lev. 22:2, 4, 18 (this is about the priesthood and the animal sacrifices from the people). More Tabernacle responsibilities are covered in Lev. 24:1–9.
  31. God requires Moses and Aaron to take a census, primarily of the young men who are available for war (Num. 1:1–44). The Levites were exempt from military service (Num. 1:47–54).
  32. God speaks to Moses and Aaron about how the men of Israel are to cluster (Num. 2);
  33. God speaks to Moses about the Levites who are to help the priesthood (so, of course, Aaron is mentioned—Num. 3:5–37).
  34. Moses and Aaron number the Levites in Num. 3:38–39.
  35. Moses and Aaron deal with paying a redemption price for all the firstborn of the Levites in Num. 3:44–51.
  36. God spoke to Aaron and Moses about taking a census of the Levites and then about the duties for the various branches of the Levites in Num. 4. Aaron's son, Eleazar also received specific duties as well.
  37. God tells Moses what Aaron's benediction would be in Num. 6:22–27.
  38. God commands Moses about Aaron's duties with respect to the lampstands in Num. 8:1–4 and about the cleansing of the Levites in Num. 8:5–22 (Aaron has several specific duties in this ceremonial cleansing).
  39. When Israel was going to celebrate Passover the second year after leaving Egypt, men who were unclean came and stood before Moses and Aaron.
  40. Num. 12:
    - (1) Miriam and Aaron both speak against Moses partially because he marries a Cushite woman. They also take undo credit upon themselves: "[Has Jehovah spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?](#)" (Num. 12:2b).
    - (2) For the first time, God speaks directly to Aaron and Miriam (there is nothing about God speaking to Miriam anywhere else). And what God does is chew them out. God leaves Miriam leprous, but does not do anything to Aaron, who apologizes to Moses and begs him to fix everything.
    - (3) Miriam, by the way, was shut out of the camp for 7 days, a terrible humiliation, as this indicated that she was unclean.
    - (4) This was Aaron's second great failure. Note how similar it is to his first recorded failure. He is easily influenced and manipulated. The people first got Aaron to guide them into making a golden calf; and here, Miriam talks Aaron into standing up to Moses because he—gasp!!—married a Cushite woman. By way of application, what you do not want is a leader who can be manipulated into doing anything. For both of Aaron's mistakes, he was manipulated by others.
  41. The spies who went into the Land of Promise came to Moses and Aaron to give their report (Num. 13:26).
    - (1) Because ten of the spies are afraid and lobby against going into the land, the men of Israel grumble against Moses and Aaron, saying they should have been left in the land of Egypt. They even decide to appoint a leader to lead them back to Egypt, back to their certain deaths. Moses and Aaron fall down before them and are joined by the two spies who want to go into the land. Num. 14:1–10. In the remainder of this chapter, by the way, Moses pleads to God for the lives of these idiots (making Moses again a shadow of Jesus, our Great Intercessor, Who would come).
    - (2) It is significant that Aaron does not side with the majority of the spies; nor does he side with the grumbling people. Aaron stands with Moses on this issue of entering the land. In fact, after Aaron was guilty of making the golden calf for the people to worship, the first time that Moses went up the mountain to speak to God, all other rebellions are said to be against Moses and Aaron (Num. 14:2 16:3, 41–42 20:2 26:9). Since Moses went back up the mountain at least one more time (and possibly two more times—Ex. 32:20 34:28), there is no repeat of the golden calf incident. Therefore, even though I am pretty hard on Aaron over that particular incident, he

does not lead the people against Moses when Moses returns to God upon the mountain; and Aaron does not ever side with the people against Moses after that.

- (3) Aaron will side against Moses one more time however, under the influence of his sister Miriam, which we will discuss.
  - (4) Also, Aaron will do nothing to attempt to correct the mistakes which Moses makes during the second *no-water* test, which we will also discuss later on.
42. Moses and Aaron were the leaders of Israel, so those who broke the Sabbath were brought to them (Num. 15:33).
  43. In Korah's rebellion, the rebels stood up against Moses and Aaron. They were Levites and they wanted to be priests. Interestingly enough, Moses presents an argument to them which sounds like an argument from Paul the Apostle. Aaron does not really play much of a part in this until the middle of the chapter, when he stands with Moses to protect Israel from being destroyed by God. Num. 16:1–35
  44. In Lev. 16:40, it is made very clear that only those from the family of Aaron (and not just any Levite) could be a priest to God.
  45. When God destroys Korah and his household, the people of Israel, the people Moses and Aaron stood up for (Num. 16:22), grumbled against Moses and Aaron. At the end of this chapter, Moses has Aaron make atonement for the people, who God began to strike down with the plague. Num. 16:41–50
  46. In Num. 17, God wanted to make sure that no other tribe would again attempt to take away Aaron's place as father of the priests, so from each tribe, a leader brought a staff or rod to Moses, with their name written on the rod and these twelve rods were placed inside the Tent of Testimony (the Tabernacle). The next day, when Moses brought out the rods, Aaron's rod **had sprouted, put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds** (Num. 17:8b). It apparently had done all of this overnight, because the next day, each man took his rod back, but Aaron's was to be put back before the testimony as a sign against the rebels (Num. 17:10).
  47. After this, I am somewhat surprised, because it suddenly reads, **So Jehovah spoke to Aaron...** (Num. 18:1, 8, 20). God spoke to Aaron alone only one time (possibly twice) prior to this: Ex. 4:27, when He sent Aaron into the desert to meet Moses (and possibly alone again in Ex. 16:9). In this passage, we have a summation of what the sons of Aaron and what the tribe of Levites are responsible for. It also lets them know that they will not get a land grant as did the other tribes of Israel. The fact that God finally spoke directly to Aaron twice is a great honor to Aaron.
  48. Num. 19 is the final chapter before there are 38 silent years while Israel cools its heels in the desert. God speaks to both Moses and Aaron about the red heifer sacrifice in that chapter.
  49. 38 years later, at the beginning of Num. 20, Miriam dies. Again, the congregation gathers against Moses and Aaron because they lacked water. This is the second generation of Israel, the generation of promise. Gen X, the previous generation, had all died out, marked specifically by Miriam's death. Moses and Aaron do provide water for the children of Israel via a miracle from God, but they botch the job, which keeps Moses from going into the land with the generation of promise (the responsibility is really upon Moses here; there does not appear to be anything that Aaron could have done to fix things). At the end of this chapter, Aaron dies, at age 123, 40 years after he and Moses stood before Pharaoh of Egypt. His death came as a result of not following God's exact directions (Num. 20:24), even though it is not clear that Aaron actually did anything wrong himself. It is reasonably suggested that Aaron, the High Priest, died on this occasion as a (shadow) sacrifice for his people. There are 30 days of mourning for him. Aaron's son Eleazar (his third son, but his oldest living son) assumes the duties of the High Priest. The transference of authority apparently took place while Aaron was still alive. Moses recounts Aaron's death and the transference of priestly power in Deut. 10:6.
  50. When a census is done of this new generation, the sons of Dathan and Abiram are mentioned, and Dathan and Abiram are recalled as those who stood with Korah against Moses and Aaron (Num. 26:9–11). We find out that this new census no longer includes anyone from Gen. X, those that Moses and Aaron had numbered earlier (Num. 26:63–65).
  51. Num. 33 is a travelogue/summation of where Israel had been. Aaron is mentioned thrice (vv. 1, 38, 39). Aaron's death (Num. 20:24–29) is mentioned in those final two verses. Moses alludes again to his death in Deut. 10:6.



52. Moses is told to go to the top of Mount Nebo to die, just as Aaron climbed to the top of Mount Hor to die (Deut. 32:49–50).
53. As an odd addendum, I have mentioned in the past the JEPD theory, that the Pentateuch was written by four different men (or groups of men) and different times and woven together. Beside this being utter nonsense to begin with,<sup>4</sup> some even conjecture that Aaron was a later addition—that is, someone just made him up. Let me explain their reasoning: Aaron is mostly missing from the Jehovist portions (this is the guys who supposedly used Jehovah's name the most often. However, the phrase *and Aaron* is found ten times in the Jehovist portions.<sup>5</sup> "Well," the theorist explains, "someone must have added his name later." See, it is easy to make a theory work—you start with the basic assumption that the theory is correct and all facts which oppose this are then changed, interpreted or twisted to fit the theory. You may ask, "Just what is their motivation? Why is it important to prove that Aaron did not really exist?" They assert that in order to prove their theory. Part of the insidious attack of the JEPD theory is that the Aaronic priesthood is a post-exilic invention, to form a priesthood and to give them religious power and authority. This means that Aaron can't be found in the portions of the Pentateuch which were written prior to the Jewish exile (as per their theory). So again, they start by assuming their theory is true, and then they twist, change or interpret contrary evidence in order to support their theory. Most believers have never hear of this theory and many pastors who adhere to this theory do not make mention of it (since there are many seminaries which teach the JEPD theory as fact). Let me add one more thing: these theorists point out that Aaron's name most often occurs in the *priestly* portions of the Pentateuch. Well, *DUH!* Aaron is the first High Priest and his sons were priests after him, so we would expect to find his name mentioned when Moses or God speak of the Aaronic priesthood. I mention this evil theory because you may, in personal study, come across this popular point of view (among liberal theologians, primarily).

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- IV. Aaron is named by Old Testament authors who look back to his life or speak of his sons, the priests:
1. Aaron is mentioned when his progeny receive a grant to live in certain cities among the other Israelites in Joshua 21:4, 10, 13, 19. Essentially, we are speaking of the *sons of Aaron* in these verses.
  2. Joshua speaks of Aaron and Moses plaguing Egypt in his marvelous speech in Joshua 24:5.
  3. Samuel speaks to Israel and looked back the Moses and Aaron as the men of God who led Israel out from Egypt (1Sam. 12:6–8).
  4. Although the first few chapters of Chronicles seem to be nothing but genealogies, the basic duties of Aaron and his sons are stated in 1Chron. 6:49 23:13b and their settlements are named in 1Chron. 6:57–59.
  5. The line of Aaron continues to be separated from the Levites in general (1Chron. 12:26–27 15:4). Their duties are also related but separate (1Chron. 23:13, 28–32). In each of these verses, the idea is that they are standing with or assisting Aaron's sons in these various activities. They are not themselves offering burnt offerings (v. 31), but standing with Aaron's sons for these ceremonies. In some translations, it is easy to mistakenly interpret their duties in v. 31.<sup>6</sup> See also 2Chron. 29:21 31:19 35:14 Ezra 7:5 Neh. 10:38 12:47. These latter passages indicate that there continues to be a formal separation of the family of Aaron out of the tribe of Levi.

<sup>4</sup> Let me refer you to Josh McDowell, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; ©1975 by Campus Crusade for Christ.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 4. ZPEB treats the JEPD theory differently throughout, as there are over 150 authors of this encyclopedia. Allis, who wrote this section on Aaron, speaks of how arbitrary JEPD theorists are when it comes to claiming that Aaron should be removed from some passages, yet left in others, in order to serve their theory. Allis remarks: *This handling of the text requires a remarkable disregard of the consistency, to say the least, and is forthrightly rejected by conservative scholarship.*

<sup>6</sup> The general tenor of the passage must be considered, as well as what has come before in the books of the Law when it comes to interpreting this verse. It is extremely important not to interpret one verse by itself, without thought to its context and without consideration given to previous teachings on the same topic. Some translators gently *fudge* the translation of this verse in order that it fall in line with the surrounding verses and with related Scriptures.

6. The descendants of Aaron (and Levi) are divided into household groups in 1Chron. 24. Aaron is mentioned essentially as their father in vv. 1, 19, 31.
  7. Abijah, an early king of Judah, before warring against Israel in the north, gives a short history lesson to his brother-enemies. One of their mistakes was establishing priests other than the sons of Aaron (2Chron. 13:9–12).
  8. Uzziah, a king of Judah, usurped the duties of the sons of Aaron and offered up animal sacrifices (2Chron. 26:18–21).
- V. Aaron as found in the Psalms and in other literature:
1. First of all, we would not expect to find Aaron named in the book of Esther because these are the Jews who chose not to return to the Land of Promise. Therefore, certain aspects of the Laws of Moses would not necessarily have been observed, including the specialized priesthood.
  2. The book of Job probably predates Moses and Aaron, if not the patriarch Abraham; therefore, we should not expect to find any references to the Mosaic Law in Job. However, animal sacrifices which have pointed forward to Jesus since the dawn of time (see Gen. 4:4) would be expected in the book of Job (see Job 42:8).
  3. Aaron is given essentially equal status with Moses in some psalms when speaking of them leading Israel (Psalm 77:20).
  4. A very interesting statement is found in Psalm 99:6: **Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel among those who called on His name; they called on Jehovah, and He answered them.** I have made it a point to differentiate between the sons of Aaron, who are priests, and the sons of Levi, who assist the priests throughout this doctrine. Moses is not a son of Aaron; what's up with that? Here's the deal:
    - (1) A priest is one who represents man to God—Moses again and again stood in the gap between God and God's desire to destroy the Jews.
    - (2) The Jews failed again and again. Their continual rebellion against God cried out for their destruction. We are hard-pressed to find anyone less deserving of redemption than the Jews who left Egypt with Moses and Aaron. They bitched, they moaned, they complained; they were unreasonable; they set up idols; they manipulated Aaron; they rebelled against God, Moses and Aaron. You cannot find a less likeable group of people. They were hard-headed and faithless. They deserved to be destroyed.
    - (3) Moses stood between them and their destruction. Moses petitioned again and again on their behalf. There are times you want to yell at Moses and say, "Let God kill these worthless sons of bitches!"
    - (4) Now, do you recognize the analogy God has set up? We are the Jews. We are the rebellious, unlovable, corrupt, pig-headed Jews. In God's sight, even our righteousnesses are as menstuous rags. God should have struck us down years ago. However, we have an Advocate, One Who stands in the gap, just as Moses stood in the gap. **Our High Priest ever makes intercession on our behalf** (Heb. 7:25–26 condensed).
    - (5) Again and again, God sets up analogies and events which shadow that which was to come; Moses pleading with God on behalf of the Jews foretells of our own Great High Priest Who ever lives to make intercession on our behalf. In this respect, Moses is a priest of God. I digress, but it is an important digression.
  5. Psalm 105 recounts what God has done for Israel in the book of the Law. The writer goes as far back as God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and speaks of God's provisions for the Jews in the desert. Therefore, we should expect to find Moses and Aaron mentioned as well as those whom God has chosen (Psalm 105:26).
  6. Psalm 106 is also a look back; in this psalm, the exodus generations are treated critically, pointing out that they became envious of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 106:16).
  7. Psalm 115 is one of the few places where Aaron is mentioned, but Moses is not. However, to be accurate, it is really Aaron's descendants to whom this psalm speaks. The psalmist urges the house of Aaron and the children of Israel to trust in Jehovah Elohim, and promises that He will bless them (Psalm 115:10–13).

8. Psalm 118 is a psalm of thanksgiving. Israel is to give thanks and the sons of Aaron are to give thanks, calling out that His grace is everlasting (Psalm 118:2–3). For those of you who think God no longer will use Israel, I guess this should have read, “His grace lasts for a thousand years.”
9. Aaron is mentioned in Psalm 133, a very short psalm. David is musing how good it is for brothers to live together in unity, and then says that this is like the precious oil which has been poured upon the head and which comes down the beard, even Aaron’s beard; and which oil drips then upon his clothing. The oil speaks of God the Holy Spirit and this speaks of Aaron, the High Priest, being anointed with oil and by God the Holy Spirit. The idea is, the Holy Spirit gives us true unity. I can go to church and think to myself, “You know, I don’t really want to spend eternity in heaven with this people.” And some, no doubt, feel similarly about me. However, there will be perfect unity by means of God the Holy Spirit (and, of course, the removal of our old sin natures).
10. Psalm 135 is a song of praise, praising the water cycle (which is absolutely necessary to our lives) and praising that which God has done on behalf of Israel. Once again, we find Aaron and Israel both mentioned together. [House of Israel, bless Jehovah; House of Aaron, bless Jehovah](#) (Psalm 135:19).

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- VI. Aaron is only mentioned once by the prophets. Micah is repeating what God said, and God is indicting Israel for her unfaithfulness. [“My people, what have I done to you and how have I wearied you? Answer Me! Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and I ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam before you.”](#) (Micah 6:3–4). God is speaking to the present generation of Israel (during Micah’s time), and how He prepared the land for them. Sending Moses, Aaron and Miriam before them simply meant that they were the leaders of Israel, and they led Israel to the Land of Promise.
  1. As an aside, Miriam is rarely mentioned beyond her death in Scripture. We find her in this passage and in 1Chron. 6:3 where she is simply named one time in her genealogical line.
- VII. Aaron in the New Testament:
  1. John the Baptizer was from the line of Aaron. His father was a priest (from the family of Abijah) and his mother was said to be from the daughters of Aaron. The family of Abijah could mean that he was descended from Samuel rather than from Aaron (1Chron. 6:28). However, his is probably descended from one of the divisions of Eleazar, Aaron’s son (1Chron. 24:4, 10). There is another Abijah in Scripture—a son of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon—but that is highly unlikely, as John’s father was a priest. And there is another priest who signed a document in Neh. 10:7, who could be John’s ancestor; and another who returned with Zerubbabel (possibly the same guy—Neh. 12:4, 17).
  2. Saint Stephen recounts one of Aaron’s less glorious moments in Acts 7:40, when Aaron led the people of Israel in making a golden calf to worship.
  3. The final mentions of Aaron in the New Testament are with reference to Jesus Christ is our True High Priest. Aaron is not glorified in any way, but the shortcomings of his priesthood are in view.
    - (1) Heb 5:4–5: [And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called of God, as Aaron was, so also Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest, but He who said to Him, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."](#) No one chooses to become High Priest, but God chooses him. What is really more in view is, God chose Jesus Christ as High Priest, to give Himself for our sins.
    - (2) Heb 7:11: [Therefore if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood \(for under it the people received the Law\), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?](#) Obviously, the Aaronic priesthood is wanting, as God brings to us a High Priest from the order of Melchizedek.
    - (3) Heb 9:3–4: [And after the second veil was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid all around with gold, in which was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.](#) In this final passage of the New Testament, it is actually Aaron’s rod which is mentioned, and not Aaron. God caused this staff to blossom and produce almonds overnight, as we observed in Num. 17:8.

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VIII. Addendum: the Royal Priesthood today:

1. The book of Hebrews deals with, among other things, the defunct specialized priesthood of the Old Testament and how the earthly office of High Priest properly belongs to Jesus Christ, Who is our High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek rather than after Aaron (Heb. 4:14–15 5:4–6).
2. In fact, some of the primary activity of the priesthood, the offering of animal sacrifices, is not only no longer performed, but it is forbidden because these animal sacrifices were simply a shadow of what was to come and cannot take away sin (Heb. 6:6 9:8–15 10:1–14).
3. Although we have one High Priest, we are all royal priests, which means we are able to represent ourselves before God because we are in Christ Jesus (1Peter 2:5, 9).
4. The Catholic church has confused and distorted this completely.
  - (1) Whereas, the priests came by familial succession in the line of Aaron, their priests are celibate and there is no familial succession.
  - (2) There was but one priest who was from outside the line of Aaron—Samuel—and he represents Jesus Christ in that way; he was a shadow of our Lord to come. On the other hand, there is probably no one in the Catholic priesthood that is related to Aaron in any way (unless his name is Coen or Cohen).
  - (3) Since even that Catholics realized it would be presumptuous to call someone the High Priest, because the book of Hebrews clearly points to Jesus Christ as our true High Priest, the Catholic church had to come up with a different name for the Catholic High Priest; he is therefore, called *pope* (or, *father*).
  - (4) Although celibacy is a big thing on the part of the priests (some of whom choose this life as their interest in women is limited), this choice is at best a footnote in the New Testament (Paul was a celibate because he devoted his life to God's work). Peter, from whom the Catholic church claims to have its authority, was married.
  - (5) What the Catholic priest does is in no way comparable to what the Apostle Paul does. Paul went on missionary journeys; he established churches all over the Roman empire, he wrote letters to keep the churches in line, which letters became part of our canon of Scripture.
  - (6) In fact, the pope in the Catholic church is seen as more as a successor to the Apostles, rather than a successor to the priesthood; despite the name he has taken and the different offices he has held.
  - (7) Although the pope is elected, the only election by the Apostles was a mistake. This election was held prior to their being filled with God the Holy Spirit and Matthias, the man they elected, is never heard from again (Acts 1). I think even a precursory reading of the book of Acts should indicate to anyone that Paul, who was elected by God and not by man, is the true 12<sup>th</sup> Apostle (1Cor. 1:1 Eph. 1:1 2Tim. 1:1).
  - (8) What the Catholic church did is, it took a little from here, a little from there, added some of their own nomenclature and ceremonies and procedures, and developed a religious hierarchy which resembles only slightly similarly named offices in the Old and New Testaments.
5. So, to sum up, the only priesthood extant today is the royal priesthood of the family of God, which includes all believers. There is no such thing as a specialized priesthood in the New Testament.

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