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The Change of the Priesthood

Under the New Covenant

- The Priesthood of The Firstborn -

*Compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, June, 2020
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Scripture from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

Hebrews 7:12 “For **the priesthood being changed**,
of necessity there is also a change of the law.”

The Letter to the Hebrews is all about Yeshua the Christ being made High Priest of Israel, to mediate for us in “the true Tabernacle,” which is Heaven itself. The Tabernacle on earth with its priesthood and ceremonies, was a copy - a representation, of the work which Christ would perform in Heaven (*Heb 8:5*). It was an acted prophecy of Christ. Each sacrifice represented Him. Each priest represented Him. Each Feast Day and Sabbath told His story. The manna from Heaven, the smitten Rock, the sweet smoke of the incense, the covering pillar of fire, the Law carried in the golden Ark, all told His story.

How could Jesus - Yeshua the Messiah, become High Priest of Israel? He was not descended from Aaron or Levi (*Heb 7:11*). He was descended from Judah.

Our study must begin with Ancient Israel, at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Exodus 13:2 [Yehovah speaking] “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal” (NIV).

Exodus 22:29 [Yehovah speaking] “**The firstborn** of your sons you shall give to me” (NRS).

Every firstborn of Israel would have died in Egypt during the 10th plague, if the LORD had not protected them, therefore the firstborn of Israel belonged to Him. Going forward, a “**redemption price**” to honor this deliverance, was to be paid at the Tabernacle, for every firstborn Israelite male.

Exodus 13:15 “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, [*all male animals from domestic flocks and herds*] but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.” [*I pay the redemption price for them, to the Tabernacle.*]

The “redemption price” was a prophecy. It pointed to Messiah - who was the “firstborn” of God. His life was the “price” that would be paid for our redemption.

Every adult male was to “give a ransom for himself” - one half shekel, to be paid for the support of the Tabernacle (Exo 30:11-16). This “ransom” was in addition to the “redemption price” for the firstborn.

NOTE: The LORD always takes the responsibility for what He allows Satan to do. Satan - “the destroyer” killed the firstborn of Egypt.

NOTE: Firstborn male donkeys and camels were also “redeemed,” but they were not sacrificed. Only animals that could be eaten (“clean” animals - Leviticus Chapter 11) were sacrificed. If the redemption price was not paid for an animal, it was to be destroyed, symbolizing that all those who are not “redeemed” with the blood of Christ, will be destroyed.

THE PRIESTHOOD - BEFORE MOUNT SINAI

Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Job, all built altars to Yehovah and offered sacrifices. These men were acting as priests. They were also “firstborn,” except for Jacob. (He was not a firstborn, but Esau his “older” brother, sold his firstborn birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. **The priesthood was part of that “birthright.”**)

Melchizedek was the priest and king of Salem (*Gen 14:18*). Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. **Salem later became Jerusalem under King David**, and will one day become the City of Messiah’s reign.

Melchizedek was BOTH king and priest of Salem. Yeshua Messiah was appointed “a priest after the order of Melchizedek” (*Ps 110:4, Heb Chaps 5,6,7*). Like *that* king/priest, Christ will be BOTH King of Kings and High Priest of Ezekiel’s Temple, in His coming kingdom.

He was appointed a priest forever. He will reign on the earth, as King. He will be like Melchizedek - the king/priest.
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Jesus the Christ was not born into the Tribe of Levi. He was born into the Tribe of Judah. How could He become High Priest? This would mean that “the priesthood” has been “changed.”

NOTE: Just a note here. There are several Messianic or Hebrew Roots teachers who are saying that Yeshua was descended from the Tribe of Levi though His mother Mary, and even descended from Zadok. These teachers are sitting this lineage (from Levi) as Messiah's right to the Zadok high priesthood. To agree with this, we would need to exclude the Letter to the Hebrews from the New Testament. Hebrews 7:11 and 7:14 state clearly that Yeshua was NOT “called according to the order of Aaron,” the ancestor of both Levi and Zadok. Hebrews 7:5-6 says that Melchizedek did not share ancestry with Levi.

REBELLIOUS PRIESTS at MOUNT SINAI

Exodus 19:22&24 [Yehovah speaking to Moses - before the golden calf rebellion] “And also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.” (NAS)

Here Yehovah directs Moses to communicate specifically with “the priests” - men who “come near to the LORD.” **Who were these priests?**

Notice. This is before the golden calf rebellion. This is before the Tabernacle was erected. I believe **these men were “the firstborn”** of each tribe and clan. In the Hebrew culture, the firstborn male became the head and the priest of family, clan or tribe. He offered the sacrifices. He represented the tribe or clan before the LORD.

At the foot of Mount Sinai, **these (firstborn) “priests” led Israel in the worship of the golden calf idol**, while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. They broke the covenant they had entered into with Yehovah, just weeks before.

These are the “priests” whom the LORD chose to replace.

In place of the “firstborn,” the LORD chose the tribe of Levi to serve the Tabernacle. He chose the male descendants of Aaron (the older brother of Moses) to be the priests. These men would be the new priesthood. They stood with Moses, against those who rebelled, in the worship of the golden calf idol (*Exo 32:26*).

Numbers 8:17-18 “I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn
of the children of Israel.”

This was a change of the priesthood!

While Moses was on the Mountain, receiving the hard copy of the Ten Commandments, (along with instruction concerning the Tabernacle, the priesthood and other laws) Israel was in full blown rebellion at the foot of the Mountain.

Review:

The priesthood before the golden calf rebellion = The Firstborn
The priesthood after the rebellion = Aaron and his male descendants

THIS WAS A CHANGE!

I see the LORD's foreknowledge in His instruction to Moses. He knew the Levites would stand with Moses against the rebels. On the mountain, He commanded Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons to the priesthood (*Exo 28:1-Chapter 29*). He commanded this knowing that Nadab and Abihu would very soon be consumed by His fire, for their sin of presumption.

NOTE: Aaron supervised the making of the idol. He was probably drafted because he was the older brother of their leader, Moses. Exodus 32:35 calls it "the calf which Aaron made." Yet the LORD made Aaron the first High Priest of Israel under the Levite/Aaronic order. How could that be? Answer: He was forgiven, after Moses prayed for him (Deut. 9:20, 25) and for Israel. Moses spent 40 days and nights on his face, pleading with the LORD, for Israel. Aaron's repentance and remorse must have been heartfelt.

GOD'S FIRSTBORN

Exodus 4:22 [The LORD said to Moses] "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn."'"

NOTE: Israel today consists of those who serve God the Father and His Son, with heart and mind. Believing non-Hebrews have been "grafted in," to Israel. Unbelievers are "broken off" from Israel, regardless of Israelite descent. See our study: "[Who are Israel?](#)"

Hebrews 12:22-24 [Speaking to New Covenant believers] "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Believers **have come** to “the congregation of the firstborn” (*Heb 12:22 NET*). The firstborn are “registered in heaven” (in the Book of Life). **A “redemption price” has been paid for these “firstborn.”** God the Father paid that redemption price, with the life and death of His only Son. We now belong to Him.

PRIESTS FOR HIS KINGDOM

Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but **they will be priests of God and of Christ** and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” (NAS)

Believers *are* Israelites, “grafted in.” Believers *are* “firstborn” - in Christ. All of “the dead in Christ” will be raised at His glorious return (*1Cor. 15:23*). Those who are part of this “first resurrection” will become “priests of God and of Christ” (*Rev 20:6*). They will become the priesthood, to reign with Christ over “the nations.”

The role of priesthood in Ancient Israel, encompassed more than offering sacrifices. The priests taught the Law. They were the arbiters of civil disputes. They were the court of last resort. In other words, they were the GOVERNMENT of Israel, at least until the Israelites demanded a king so they could be like all the other nations. I believe the “firstborn” priests of the New Covenant, will govern the nations under Christ, during His coming millennial reign.

Question: How can all those “in Christ” become priests?

Question: How could Jesus Christ become High Priest?

Answer: **The priesthood has been CHANGED BACK - to “the firstborn.”**

The priesthood is no longer exclusively Aaronic or Levite.

Hebrews 7:12 “For **the priesthood being changed**,
of necessity there is also a change of the law.”

Note: Many Hebrew Roots and Messianic congregations teach that the “change” of the priesthood involved only a relocation of the priesthood to the heavenly realm. I disagree! What about the “change of the Torah” which is mentioned in the same verse? Has the Torah been relocated to the heavenly realm, so that it no longer has any authority on this earth. No!

SIN - FORGIVEN

Hebrews 9:15 "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

When God's own firstborn was sacrificed, the past sin of Israel was washed away, for those who sincerely repented, and brought sin offerings. This forgiveness washed away the sin of the golden calf rebellion, the rebellion which caused the first change of the priesthood in the first place.

I am making the case that **God could then return the priesthood to "the firstborn."**

Jesus the Christ is God's firstborn.

He was the firstborn of Mary. He is the ultimate "firstborn." Paul calls Him "the firstborn over all creation" (*Col. 1:15*). With the priesthood restored to "the firstborn," it is logical that THE "firstborn" would become High Priest. The Letter to the Hebrews makes the case for Yeshua as the new High Priest of Israel - in "the true Tabernacle" which is Heaven itself (*Hebrews 8:2*).

The "change" of the priesthood explains HOW Jesus became High Priest over Israel.
He was the Firstborn.

<p>The LORD <u>changed</u> the priesthood at Mount Sinai. He has <u>changed it BACK</u>, to the "firstborn." Jesus Christ is THE "Firstborn." We are Israel - God's Firstborn. We will be "priests of God and of Christ."</p>

YESHUA MESSIAH - THE FIRSTBORN OF GOD

Colossians 1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."

Psalms 89:27 "Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."

Romans 8:29 "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Zechariah 12:10 “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

God's only Son IS the “firstborn.” He is therefore High Priest over Israel - His own people.

HONOR AND SHAME

For those of you who study the very strong place of honor and shame in the culture of the ancient Middle East, I want to make a point here. At the foot of Mount Sinai, eleven of the tribes were shamed when the LORD rejected their firstborn, and confined the special service of the Tabernacle to the tribe of Levi. When the sin of Israel was washed away by the death of Messiah, the honor of Israel was restored!

This New Covenant “change” was not a shaming of the Levite priesthood. It was a restoration of honor, for the whole house of Israel. Faithful Levite priests *will continue* as priests, in the kingdom of Messiah. They will serve with priests redeemed from every nation, kindred, tongue and people (*Revelation 5:8-9*).

PRIESTS WHO INHERIT A DOUBLE PORTION

Isaiah 61:4-9

“They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. And you will be called **priests** of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.”

“Instead of your shame you will receive a **double portion**, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a **double portion** in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.” (NIV)

The Levites were given “no inheritance” in the land (Num 18:20).

*The future priests described in this prophecy, cannot be Levite/Aaronic priests. They are “firstborn” priests. They will receive **the “double portion”** which **was the inheritance of “the firstborn.”***

Yeshua quoted the first part of this passage (See Luke Chapter 4). His hearers were very familiar with the entire passage. In so doing, Jesus was claiming to be One sent of God to restore the honor of Israel.

I'm quoting the next verse, only to show that the “double portion” is “the right of the firstborn.”

Deuteronomy 21:17 “But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.”

If a man had two wives, he was to recognize the first male born to either of his wives, as his “firstborn.” He was not to pass over the son born to a less-loved wife, in favor of the son born later, to his favorite wife. Jacob made this mistake, when he elevated Joseph to the status of “firstborn.” The “coat of many colors” signified Jacob’s choice of Joseph. But Ruben was his firstborn - born to Leah. Jacob might have recognized Joseph’s strength of character, and Ruben’s weakness, but it was not for Jacob to play favorites. The jealousy and hatred resulting from Jacob’s choice, cost him and his family a great deal. Only a miracle of God finally brought things right.

ARE YOU CONNECTING THE DOTS?

1. All those who believe in Yeshua Messiah, *are* Israel.
(Unbelievers are “broken off” *from* Israel, and believers are “grafted in” *to* Israel.)
2. Israel *is* God’s firstborn. He said so (Exo 4:22).
3. The redemption price was paid for the firstborn (Exo. 13:13, 15).
That “redemption price was paid” - for us.
4. Those who are thus redeemed *are* God’s “firstborn,” *are* Israel,
and *will become* “priests of God and of Christ” (Rev. 20:6).
5. The “right of the firstborn” is the “double portion.” The priests referenced in Isaiah 61:4-9 receive this “double portion.” These future priests *are* the LORD’s “firstborn.”

6. Jesus the Christ is literally God's firstborn - "the firstborn over all creation" (*Eph. 1:15*). He is therefore High Priest, over the House of God. He is the "one mediator" standing between God and man (*1Timothy 2:5*).
7. Those who are Christ's will rise in the "resurrection" at His return (*1Thes. 4:16-17*). All those from this "first resurrection" will become "priests of God and of Christ" (*Rev. 20:6*).

The "second" resurrection (*1000 years later*) will be for "the rest of the dead." The priesthood of Messiah's reign will serve to win many of those human beings for the kingdom of God. See our studies: "[A Kingdom of Priests](#)" and "[The 8th Day - Messiah Reigns](#)."

DOUBLE DESTRUCTION

Jeremiah 16:18 "And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols."

I find it most interesting that the faithful of Israel receive a double blessing, while the unfaithful of Israel, and especially the unfaithful priests, receive "double" punishment. The LORD holds those who received more "light" to a higher standard. His judgment reflects that.

Malachi 2:1-9 "And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart. 3 "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants And spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it. 4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue,' Says the LORD of hosts. 5 'My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. 7 For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. **You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,**' Says the LORD of hosts. 9 'Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law.'"

NEITHER MALE - NOR FEMALE

Galatians 3:28 "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Luke 20:35-36 "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels . . ."

It is my belief that there will be no sexual orientation within the kingdom of God, for those made immortal in the new "spiritual body." Those within the redeemed, who lived as females in their physical/mortal life, will *also* become "priests of God and of Christ."

Jesus said the last will be first in His kingdom. Certainly females have been regarded as "second" or "last," through all of history since the curse of Genesis.

I was the firstborn of my own mother. I am a firstborn, in Christ.
Here's looking forward!

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
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