



Aaron

The First High Priest

The Brother and Helper of Moses

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Aaron, the first High Priest.

Overview:

Aaron's story is told in Deut. 10:6. He is also mentioned in Hebrews 7:11. Effective teamwork happens when each team member uses his or her special skills.

Ideally, each member's strengths will contribute something important to the team effort. In this way, members make up for one another's weaknesses.

Aaron made a good team with Moses. He provided Moses with one skill Moses lacked—effective public speaking.

But while Aaron was necessary to Moses, he needed Moses as well.

Without a guide, Aaron had little direction of his own. There was never any doubt as to who God's chosen and trained leader was.

The pliability that made Aaron a good follower made him a weak leader.

His major failures were caused by his inability to stand alone. His yielding to public pressure and making an idol was a good Exodus sample of this weakness.

Lineage of Aaron.

Exodus 6:16-20

These are the descendants of Levi, listed according to their family groups. In the first generation were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (Levi, their father, lived to be 137 years old.)

The descendants of Gershon included Libni and Shimei, each of whom is the ancestor of a clan.

The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. (Kohath lived to be 133 years old.)

The descendants of Merari included Mahli and Mushi.

These are the clans of the Levites, listed according to their genealogies.

Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses.

(Amram lived to be 137 years old.)

This genealogy or family tree was placed here to identify more firmly Moses and Aaron. Genealogies were used to establish credentials and authority as well as outlining the history of a family.

Marriage of Aaron

Exodus 6:23

And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Plans for the tabernacle

Exodus 26:23-25

And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

Divisions of the sons of Aaron

1 Chron. 24:1-2

Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office.

The temple service was highly structured, but this did not hinder the Spirit of God. Rather, it provided an orderly context for worship. (Compare 1 Cor. 14:40.) Sometimes we feel that planning and structure are unspiritual activities that may hinder spontaneity in worship. But order and structure can free us to respond to God. Order brings glory to God as we experience the joy, freedom, and calm that come when we have wisely prepared in advance.

Descendants of Aaron

Exodus 6:23-25

And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites.

And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.

The sons of Aaron

1 Chron. 6:50-53

And these are the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

The tribe of Levi was not given a specific area of land as were the other tribes. Instead, the Levites were to live throughout the land in order to aid the people of *every* tribe in their worship of God. Thus the Levites were given towns or pasturelands within the allotted areas of the other tribes (Joshua 13:14, 33).

Aaron meets, Moses in the wilderness and is made spokesman for Moses

Exodus 5:14-16

And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as heretofore?

Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, wherefore dealeth thou thus with thy servants?

There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.

The foremen were caught in the middle. First they tried to get the people to produce the same amount, then they complained to Pharaoh, finally they turned on

Moses. Perhaps you have felt caught in the middle at work, or in relationships in your family or church. Complaining or turning on the leadership does not solve the problem. In the case of these supervisors, God had a larger purpose in mind, just as he might in your situation. So rather than turning on the leadership when you feel pressured by both sides, turn to God to see what else he might be doing in this situation.

Aaron goes into the wilderness to meet Moses.

Exodus 4:27-31

And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

God made Moses “like God to Pharaoh”—in other words, a powerful person who deserved to be listened to. Pharaoh himself was considered a god, so he recognized Moses as one of his peers. His refusal to give in to Moses shows, however, that he did not feel inferior to Moses.

Moses was made as a God to Pharaoh

Exodus 7:1-2

And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

The Lord gave instructions to Moses and Aaron

Numbers 2:1

Then the Lord gave these instructions to Moses and Aaron:

The nation of Israel was organized according to tribes for several reasons. (1) It was an effective way to manage and govern a large group. (2) It made dividing the promised land easier. (3) It was part of their culture and heritage (people were not known by a last name, but by their family, clan, and tribe). (4) It made it easier to keep detailed genealogies, and genealogies were the only way to prove membership in God's chosen nation. (5) It made travel much more efficient. The people followed the tribe's standard (a kind of flag) and thus stayed together and kept from getting lost.

Aaron and his sons were held liable for priesthood violations.

Numbers 18:1

The Lord now said to Aaron: "You, your sons, and your relatives from the tribe of Levi will be held responsible for any offenses related to the sanctuary. But you and your sons alone will be held liable for violations connected with the priesthood.

Commissioned as a deliverer of Israel

Exodus 6:13

But the Lord ordered Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to demand that he let the people of Israel leave Egypt.

Summoned to Sinai with Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders

Exodus 19:24

But the Lord said, "Go down anyway and bring Aaron back with you. In the meantime, do not let the priests or the people cross the boundaries to come up here. If they do, I will punish them."

Priesthood of Aaron

Exodus 28:1

So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, "Do not marry any of these Canaanite women.

God was teaching his people how to worship him. To do so, he needed ministers to oversee the operations of the tabernacle and to help the people maintain their relationship with God. These men were called priests and Levites, and they could only be members of the tribe of Levi. Exodus 28-29 give some details about priests.

Not only was a priest from the tribe of Levi, but he also was a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first high priest. Priests had more responsibilities than Levites. As high priest, Aaron was in charge of all the priests and Levites.

The priests performed the daily sacrifices, maintained the tabernacle, and counseled the people on how to follow God. They were the people's representatives before God and thus were required to live worthy of their office.

Jesus is now our high priest (Hebrews 8). Daily sacrifices are no longer required because he sacrificed himself on the cross for our sins. Today ministers no longer sacrifice animals. Instead they lead us in prayer and teach us about both the benefits and the commandments that characterize our new life as Christians.

Exodus 29:9

With their woven sashes and their headdresses. They will then be priests forever. In this way, you will ordain Aaron and his sons.

Enters upon the priestly office

Lev 9

The First Offerings of Aaron for Himself and the People

These many sacrifices, which were all done away by the death of Christ, teach us that our best services need washing in his blood, and that the guilt of our best sacrifices needs to be done away by one more pure and more noble than they.

Why were priests needed in Israel? In Exodus 19:6, the Israelites were instructed to be a kingdom of priests; ideally they would all be holy and relate to God. But from the time of Adam's fall, sin has separated man and God, and people have needed mediators to help them find forgiveness.

At first, the patriarchs—heads of households like Abraham and Job—were priests of the house or clan and made sacrifices for the family. When the Israelites left Egypt, the descendants of Aaron were chosen to serve as priests for the nation. The priests stood in the gap between God and man. They were the full-time spiritual leaders and overseers of offerings.

The priestly system was a concession to people's inability, because of sin, to confront and relate to God individually and corporately. In Christ, this imperfect system was transformed. Jesus Christ himself is our High Priest. Now all believers can approach God through him.

Descendants of ordained priests

Exodus 28:40-43

"Then for Aaron's sons, make tunics, sashes, and headdresses to give them dignity and respect. Clothe Aaron and his sons with these garments, and then anoint and ordain them. Set them apart as holy so they can serve as my priests.

Also make linen underclothes for them, to be worn next to their bodies, reaching from waist to thigh. These must be worn whenever Aaron and his sons enter the Tabernacle or approach the altar in the Holy Place to perform their duties. Thus they will not incur guilt and die. This law is permanent for Aaron and his descendants.

Judges Israel in the absence of Moses

Exodus 24:14

Moses told the other leaders, "Stay here and wait for us until we come back. If there are any problems while I am gone, consult with Aaron and Hur, who are here with you."

Aaron makes the golden calf

Exodus 32

While Moses was in the mount, receiving the law from God, the people made a tumultuous address to Aaron. This giddy multitude were weary of waiting for the return of Moses.

Let their readiness to part with their ear-rings to make an idol, shame our niggardliness in the service of the true God. They did not draw back on account of the cost of their idolatry; and shall we grudge the expenses of religion?

Aaron produced the shape of an ox or calf, giving it some finish with a graving tool.

They offered sacrifice to this idol. Having set up an image before them, and so changed the truth of God into a lie, their sacrifices were abomination.

Rod of, buds

Numbers 17

While all the other rods remained as they were. Aaron's rod became a living branch. In some places there were buds, in others blossoms, in others fruit, at the same time; all this was miraculous. Thus Aaron was manifested to be under the special blessing of Heaven.

s punished by the plagues, and experiencing the actual presence of God, the Israelites still complained and rebelled. We wonder how they could be so blind and ignorant, and yet we often repeat this same pattern.

We have centuries of evidence, the Bible in many translations, and the convincing results of archaeological and historical studies.

But people today continue to disobey God and go their own way. Like the Israelites, we are more concerned about our physical condition than our spiritual condition. We can escape this pattern only by paying attention to all the signs of God's presence that we have been given.

Has God guided and protected you? Has he answered your prayers? Do you know people who have experienced remarkable blessings and healings? Do you know Bible stories about the way God has led his people? Focus your thoughts on what God has done, and rebellion will become unthinkable.

Hebrews 9:7

But only the high priest goes into the Most Holy Place, and only once a year, and always with blood, which he offers to God to cover his own sins and the sins the people have committed in ignorance.

The high priest could enter the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 9:3; or the “inner room,” Hebrews 9:7), the innermost room of the tabernacle, and one day each year to atone for the nation’s sins.

The Most Holy Place was a small room that contained the Ark of the Covenant (a gold-covered chest containing the original stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, a jar of manna, and Aaron’s staff). The top of the chest served as the “atonement cover” (the altar) on which the blood would be sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

The Most Holy Place was the most sacred spot on earth for the Jews. Only the high priest could enter—the other priests and the common people were forbidden to come into the room. Their only access to God was through the high priest, who would offer a sacrifice and use the animal’s blood to atone first for his own sins and then for the people’s sins.

Places a pot of manna in the ark

Exodus 16:34

Aaron did this, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant.

With Hur supports the hands of Moses during Battle

Exodus 17:12

Moses' arms finally became too tired to hold up the staff any longer. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side, holding up his hands until sunset.

Aaron's benedictions upon the people

Leviticus 9:22

After that, Aaron raised his hands toward the people and blessed them. Then, after presenting the sin offering, the whole burnt offering, and the peace offering, he stepped down from the altar.

Numbers 6:23 -26

"Instruct Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing:

**'May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you
and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his
peace.'**

Aaron was forbidden to mourn the death of his son, Nadab and Abihu

Lev 10:

The most quieting considerations under affliction are fetched from the word of God. What was it that God spake? Though Aaron's heart must have been filled with anguish and dismay, yet with silent submission he revered the justice of the stroke. When God corrects us or ours for sin, it is our duty to accept the punishment, and say, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

Here we discover that stealing involves more than just taking from someone. Finding something and not returning it or refusing to return something borrowed are other forms of stealing. These are sins against God and not just your neighbor, a stranger, or a large business. If you have gotten something deceitfully, then confess your sin to God, apologize to the owner, and return the stolen items—with interest.

While the previous offerings and sacrifices were ones that the people did, the section from Leviticus 6:8-7:38 deals with priestly procedure. The burnt offering was presented in the morning and evening for the whole nation (see Exodus 29:38-43). The holy fire on the altar had to keep burning because God had started it. This represented God's eternal presence in the sacrificial system. It showed the people that only by God's gracious favor could their sacrifices be acceptable. God's fire is present in each believer's life today.

He lights the fire when the Holy Spirit comes to live in us, and he tends it so that we will grow in grace as we walk with him. When we are aware that God lives in us, we have confidence to come to him for forgiveness and restoration. We can carry out our work with strength and enthusiasm.

Intercedes for Miriam

Numbers 12:11-12

He cried out to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please don't punish us for this sin we have so foolishly committed. Don't let her be like a stillborn baby, already decayed at birth."

Aaron asked that the sin he and Miriam committed not be held against them. It is easy to look back at our mistakes and recognize their foolishness. It is much harder to recognize foolish plans while we are carrying them out because somehow then they seem appropriate. To get rid of foolish ideas before they turn into foolish actions requires eliminating our wrong thoughts and motives. Failing to do this caused Miriam and Aaron much grief.

Stays the plague by priestly intercession

Numbers 16:46-48

And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it and carry it quickly among the people to make atonement for them. The Lord's anger is blazing among them—the plague has already begun."

Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people. The plague indeed had already begun, but Aaron burned the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped.

His presumption, when the rock is smitten

Numbers 20:10-12

Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?" [11] Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank their fill.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!"

The Lord had told Moses to speak to the rock; however, Moses struck it, not once, but twice. God did the miracle; yet Moses was taking credit for it when he said, "we bring you water out of this rock." For this he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. Was God's punishment of Moses too harsh?

After all, the people had nagged him, slandered him, and rebelled against both him and God. Now they were at it again (Numbers 20:5). But Moses was the leader and model for the entire nation. Because of this great responsibility to the people, he could not be let off lightly. By striking the rock, Moses disobeyed God's direct command and dishonored God in the presence of his people.

Not permitted to enter Canaan

Numbers 20:23-29

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor on the border of the land of Edom, "The time has come for Aaron to join his ancestors in death. He will not enter the land I am giving the people of Israel, because the two of you rebelled against my instructions concerning the waters of Meribah.

Now take Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mount Hor. There you will remove Aaron's priestly garments and put them on Eleazar, his son. Aaron will die there and join his ancestors."

So Moses did as the Lord commanded. The three of them went up Mount Hor together as the whole community watched.

At the summit, Moses removed the priestly garments from Aaron and put them on Eleazar, Aaron's son. Then Aaron died there on top of the mountain, and Moses and Eleazar went back down. When the people realized that Aaron had died, all Israel mourned for him thirty days.

Aaron died just before entering the Promised Land, probably as punishment for his sin of rebellion (Exodus 32; Numbers 12:1-9). This was the first time that a new high priest was appointed. The priestly clothing was removed from Aaron and placed on his son Eleazar, following the commands recorded in the book of Leviticus.

Age of Aaron at his death

Exodus 7:7

Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three at the time they made their demands to Pharaoh.

Israel mourns for Aaron

Numbers 20:27-29

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Life application

Many have more of the follower than the leader in us. We may even be good followers, following a good leader. But no leader is perfect, and no human deserves our complete allegiance. Only God deserves our complete loyalty and obedience. We need to be effective team members in using the skills and abilities God has given us. But if the team or the leader goes against God's Word, we must be willing to stand alone.

Today we can allow many things to become gods to us. Money, fame, work, or pleasure can become gods when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity, meaning, and security. No one sets out with the intention of worshipping these things. But by the amount of time we devote to them, they can grow into gods that ultimately control our thoughts and energies. Letting God hold the central place in our lives keeps these things from turning into gods.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary