

Participant Notes: The Law of the Firstborn - Part 4:

When the children of Israel built and worshiped the golden calf, the firstborn of the tribes failed in their duties to serve only God.

Exodus 32:9-14 NKJV 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation." 11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" 14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

All the firstborn older than one month had the obligation to be redeemed.

Numbers 3:40-41 NKJV 40 Then the LORD said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. 41 "And you shall take the Levites for Me-I am the LORD-instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel."

Instead of accepting the redemption price, God “exchanged” them with the Levites.

Numbers 3:45 NKJV 45 "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the LORD.

All the firstborn who could not be redeemed by a Levite paid the redemption price of five shekels of silver.

Numbers 3:46-48 NKJV 46 "And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, 47 "you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. 48 "And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons."

The Levites would not be redeemed; they are the redemption! The Stone Edition Chumash comments:

As Rambam describes the mission of the Levites (Hil. Shemittah V'Yovel 13:12-13), they are the “legion of HASHEM,” whose task it is to serve Him and to teach His Torah and way of life to others... This aspect of Levite existence is lifelong and independent of age and strength.

The firstborn son and the firstborn of the unclean animal are both to be redeemed from the priests.

Numbers 18:15 NKJV 15 "Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

The Levites cannot purchase back their service to the Aaronic priesthood.

Numbers 18:2-6 NKJV 2 "Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. 3 "They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die-they and you also. 4 "They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. 5 "And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel. 6 "Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

Instead of being redeemed, they are offered up to God as a wave or heave offering.

Numbers 8:13-19 NKJV 13 "And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them like a wave offering to the LORD. 14 "Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. 15 "After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them, like a wave offering. 16 "For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. 17 "For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. 18 "I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. 19 "And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary."

Discussion Question: What are some of the words God used in this passage to describe the firstborn and the Levites who replaced the firstborn? When did God claim the firstborn as His own? What is the significance of this timing?

Since the Levites have been taken in place of the Firstborn, it is important that we look at their duties.

Exodus 28:1 NKJV 1 "Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Aaron's responsibilities include bearing the children of Israel on his shoulders.

Exodus 28:12 NKJV 12 "And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders as a memorial.

He is to hold Israel close to his heart and bear the responsibility of light and truth in judgment over Israel.

Exodus 28:29-30 NKJV 29 "So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually. 30 "And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

Urim: #224 meaning lights

Tome: #8537 meaning complete, full, perfect.

Aaron was to judge according to the light and truth of God. He was to be the primary teacher of God's Torah.

Leviticus 10:9-11 NKJV 9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 "that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, 11 "and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

The Levites are to be ministers to God's tabernacle and they are to assist the priesthood in their duties.

Numbers 3:5-10 NKJV 5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 7 "And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. 8 "Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. 9 "And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel. 10 "So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

The book of Malachi describes how the Levites and the Priesthood failed the children of Israel and failed God.
“Malachi: #4401 means my messenger.

Malachi 1:10 NKJV 10 "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.

Malachi brings God’s warning on the entire priesthood and the tribe of Levi.

Malachi 2:1-2 NKJV 1 "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.

God indicts them for failing to fulfill their mission as the messengers of God!

Malachi 2:7-9 NKJV 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."

Discussion Question: What does curse your blessings mean? What is the covenant of Levi? In what ways have the Levites corrupted the covenant God made with them?

Jeremiah prophesies about the restoration of Israel or Ephraim as the firstborn.

Jeremiah 31:9 NKJV 9 They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.

Jeremiah continues by describing the renewal of the covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 NKJV 31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

He announces that His covenant with Israel will stand forever.

Jeremiah 31:35-37 NKJV 35 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): 36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the LORD.

God will restore Israel starting with the Levites and the priesthood.

Malachi 3:1-3 NKJV 1 "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts. 2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.

One of the titles of Messiah is the Messenger of the Covenant!

John the Baptist announced His arrival and God declared that He is the firstborn!

Matthew 3:16-17 NKJV 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Yeshua states that He is the Messenger of the Covenant.

Matthew 26:26-28 NKJV 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

The Psalmist writes of the Son of David who will reign over Israel.

Psalms 89:24-29 NKJV 24 "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted. 25 Also I will set his hand over the sea, And his right hand over the rivers. 26 He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' 27 Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth. 28 My mercy I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall stand firm with him. 29 His seed also I will make to endure forever, And his throne as the days of heaven.

The writer of Hebrews declares that Yeshua is the firstborn whom the angels worship! He is the Son.

Hebrews 1:5-9 NKJV 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? 6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." 8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Yeshua is the one who paid the redemption price for us all.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 NKJV 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

The apostle John sends greetings in the name of Yeshua, the firstborn from the dead and ruler over all creation.

Revelation 1:4-6 NKJV 4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Through Yeshua, we are now restored and have access to the Garden of Eden that was lost through Adam's failure as the firstborn of God.

Revelation 22:1-3 NKJV 1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.