

Parasha “B’Midbar, In the Wilderness” 2015  
Numbers Chapters 1-4:20

*“The Honorable Role & Status Ascribed  
to the Levitical Order of the Priesthood”*



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# Law and Family in the Book of Numbers

The book of Numbers deals with the duties and rights of the Levites and the priests in chs 3, 4, 8, 16, 17, 18, 25. In these passages a new arrangement regarding the cult is introduced. The Levites are assigned to the sanctuary, an act which has an implication for the priesthood. The priests, who were consecrated in Exod. 28-29 and again in Lev. 8, **are still challenged** by other families of the tribe of Levi, and therefore, in contrast to Exodus and Leviticus, **Numbers is concerned primarily with the status and the inheritance of the priests, and not with their performance.**



**Role.** The concept of “role,” borrowed from the stage, involves behavior and the socially recognized position of a person, entailing rights and duties. A role implies a set of expectations for interaction between a person who holds one position in a group and another person who holds a reciprocal position. In other words, there can be no role of ‘leader’ without a ‘follower’ role, no mother without child. as several anthropologists define it, “role” is a set of expected behavior patterns, obligations, and norms attached to a particular status. The distinction between status and role is a simple one: you “occupy” a certain status, but you “play” a role. . . as a student you occupy a certain status that differs from that of your teacher, administrators, or other staff. As you occupy that status you perform by attending lectures, taking notes, participating in class, and studying for examinations. This concept of role is derived from the theater and refers to the parts played by actors on the stage. If you are a husband, mother, son, daughter, teacher, lawyer, judge, male or female, you are expected to behave in certain ways because of the norms associated with that particular status.



**Status.** Whereas persons play certain roles, they occupy or have status. “Status” differs from “role” in that status is “a recognized position that a person occupies within society. . .[which] determines where he or she fits in relationship to everyone else.” In addition, one scholar defines status as “a quality entailing deference and precedence in interaction, a quality of professional or public honor. . .Status systems are generated by bases or dimensions of honor – power, wealth, knowledge.” “Status” suggests verticality, a ranking of people according to cultural criteria of worth or excellence.<sup>16</sup> It indicates the honor, respect, or worth a person enjoys. Thus statuses are thought of as “polar or reciprocal: any particular status always implies at least one other to which it is related.” For example, some statuses may be first or last, highest or lowest, most or least or best or worst.

# When was Aaron given the Priesthood?

Exo 28:1 “And you, bring near Aharon your brother and his sons with him, from among the children of Yisra’ēl, for serving as priest to Me: Aharon, Nadab\_ and Abihu, El’azar and Ithamar, the sons of Aharon.

THEN AT END OF CHAPTER....

Exo 28:43 “And they shall be on Aharon and on his sons when they come into the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near the altar to attend in the Set-apart Place, so that they do not bear crookedness and die – **a law forever to him, and to his seed after him.**

## WEINFELD: *The Covenant of Grant* in Old Testament and Ancient Near East

“The author shows that the covenants with Abraham and with David are modelled on the "royal grant" so common in the ancient Near East. Gift of land and dynasty, the subjects of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, are most prominent in the suzerain-vassal relationship. Like the royal grant in the ancient Near East so the covenants with Abraham and David are gifts bestowed upon individuals who excelled in serving loyally their masters. The terminology used in this context is very close to that used in the grants. **Especially characteristic are: "he kept my charge," "walked before me in truth," "his heart was whole to his master," "walked in perfection."**





## Two Witnesses Establish a Legal Matter

Num 3:10 “And appoint Aharon and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. And the stranger who comes **near shall be put to death.**”

Num 3:38 And those who were to camp before the Dwelling Place on the east, before the Tent of Meeting, were Mosheh and Aharon, and his sons, guarding the duty of the set-apart place, and the duty of the children of Yisra'ěl. But the stranger who came near was to **be put to death.**

# Chapter 3:12

**Num 3:12** And I,<sup>H589</sup> behold,<sup>H2009</sup> I have taken<sup>H3947 (H853)</sup> the Levites<sup>H3881</sup> from among<sup>H4480 H8432</sup> the children<sup>H1121</sup> of Israel<sup>H3478</sup> **instead of<sup>H8478</sup>** all<sup>H3605</sup> the firstborn<sup>H1060</sup> that openeth<sup>H6363</sup> the matrix<sup>H7358</sup> among the children<sup>H4480 H1121</sup> of Israel:<sup>H3478</sup> therefore the Levites<sup>H3881</sup> shall be<sup>H1961</sup> mine;

Num 3:13 Because<sup>H3588</sup> all<sup>H3605</sup> the firstborn<sup>H1060</sup> are mine; for on the day<sup>H3117</sup> that I smote<sup>H5221</sup> all<sup>H3605</sup> the firstborn<sup>H1060</sup> in the land<sup>H776</sup> of Egypt<sup>H4714</sup> I hallowed<sup>H6942</sup> unto me all<sup>H3605</sup> the firstborn<sup>H1060</sup> in Israel,<sup>H3478</sup> both man<sup>H4480 H120</sup> and<sup>H5704</sup> beast:<sup>H929</sup> mine shall they be:<sup>H1961</sup> I<sup>H589</sup> am the LORD.<sup>H3068</sup>

## H8478

תחת

tachath

takh'-ath

From the same as H8430; the bottom (as depressed); only adverbially below (often with prepositional prefix underneath), in lieu of, etc.: - as, beneath, X flat, in (-stead), (same) place (where . . . is), room, for . . . sake, stead of, under, X unto, X when . . . was mine, whereas, [where-] fore, with.



# Numbers Chapter Eight



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# Numbers Chapter 18

*The Legal Deed to the Royal Grant.*



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# Two Essential Orders of the Priesthood, Two Distinct Roles and Status'

- ✓ *Melchizedek Order of the Priesthood- Macro Temple of YHWH in the Cosmos*
- ✓ *Aaronic/Levite Order of the Priesthood- Earthly Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem*

