

# Old Testament Priests & Priesthood

- Definition: A priest is one authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, especially a mediator between man and God.” (Webster)
- The origin of dedicated priests is uncertain.
- Melchizedek, King of Salem was a priest of God (Gen. 14:18)
- Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was priest of Midian. (Exodus 4:1)
- There were priests among the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. (Exodus 19:22, 24)
- There were false priests who served false gods:
  - Priest of Midian (Exodus 18:1)
  - Priests of On (Genesis 41:45)
  - Priests of Dagon (1 Samuel 5:5)
  - Priests of the high places (1 Kings 12:32)
  - Priests “of them that are no gods.” (2 Chronicles 13:9)
- At Mount Sinai, God designated Aaron and his descendants to serve as priests. (Exodus 28:1, 44; 30:30; 40:13-15; Numbers 3:3)
- All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.
- Only those designated could perform priestly duties.
  - Not other Levites (Numbers 16:1-3; 1-10; 10:1-3)
  - Not even Moses or his descendants (1 Chronicles 23:13)
  - Not anyone other than Aaron and his descendants (Numbers 16:40)
- QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRIESTLY SERVICE:
  - Must be a male (Exodus 28:1)
  - Must be a descendant of Aaron (Exodus 28:1) with a documented lineage.
  - Must be between 30 and 50 years old. (Numbers 4:3)
  - Must be unblemished (not lame or blond). (Lev. 21:16-23)
  - Must have a proper marriage. (Leviticus 21:9, 14)
    - Not married to a harlot.
    - Not married to a divorced woman.
    - Not married to a widow other than a priest’s widow. (Ezekiel 44:22)
    - The high priest must marry a virgin of his own people.
  - Must have no uncleanness (leprosy, etc.). (Lev. 22:3-9)



- Must have an untrimmed beard with well trimmed (but unshaved) hair. (Ezekiel 4:20; Leviticus 21:5)
- Must be properly dressed. (Exo. 28:1-4; Ezekiel 44:17-19)

## ■ DUTIES OF THE PRIEST

- Teach the people. (Leviticus 10:8-11)
- Serve as judges to resolve controversy. (Deut. 21:5)
- Offer sacrifices. (Exodus 29:38-42)
- Assess impurity. (Leviticus 13-15)
- Burn incense. (Exodus 30:7-8)
- Bless the people. (Numbers 6:22-27)
- Bless God (Deuteronomy 10:8)
- Keep the tabernacle. (Numbers 3:38; 4:16)
- Take care of the altar (Leviticus 6:8-13), the lamps, and the showbread (Leviticus 24:1-9)
- Prepare the holy things for each days journey. (Num. 4:5-15)
- Continue the sacred fire. (Leviticus 6:12-13)
- Blow the trumpets. (Numbers 10:1-10)

## ■ THE HIGH PRIESTS

- Also called the chief priest. (2 Chronicles 19:11)
- God’s leader over the priests.
- Aaron served as the first High Priest. (Exodus 40:12-13)
- Aaron’s son, Eleazer, replaced him as High Priest when he died. (Numbers 20:26-28)
- The position of high priests continued through the time of Christ (Matthew 26:3 and apparently to the time of the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D.)

## ■ DUTIES OF THE HIGH PRIEST

- Direct the work of the priests & Levites. (Numbers 3:4)
- Inquire of the Lord. (Judges 20:28)
- Consecration of the priests. (Exodus 29:1-37)
- Maintain the golden candlestand with its fire. (Lev. 24:1-4)
- Burning incense daily (Exodus 30:7-8), and in a special way on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:2, 12-13)
- Offering sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. (Hebrews 5:1; Leviticus 23:6, 11, 15, 20)