hline

Priests

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)

hline

[Introduction 1](#_Toc79739722)

[Melchizedek 1](#_Toc79739723)

[Priesthood of the Firstborn 3](#_Toc79739724)

[How did Shem know how to act as a priest? 5](daat.html)

[Messianic Preeminence 5](#_Toc79739726)

[Priesthood of The Nazareans 5](#_Toc79739727)

hline

# Introduction

In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine the priesthood and how [Yeshua](yeshua.html) could be a priest and not be a Levitical descendant of Aaron. Let’s start by examining the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word for *priest*:

The [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word for *priest* is Kohen. Strong's defines this word as:

3548 Kohen, ko-hane'; act. part. of 3547; lit. [one](one.html) officiating, a priest; also (by courtesy) an acting priest (although a layman):-chief ruler, X own, priest, prince, principal officer.

From this definition we can see that a priest is the [one](one.html) officiates before [HaShem](hashem.html) to carry out the will of [HaShem](hashem.html) and His people. He represents the people before [HaShem](hashem.html) and he represents [HaShem](hashem.html) before the people.

# Melchizedek

The [first](one.html) use of the word *Kohen*, priest, is found in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 14:14-20*** *When* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his* [*household*](househld.html) *and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *divided his men to* [*attack*](attacks.html) *them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. After* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *returned from defeating Kedarlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and* [*wine*](wine.html)*. He was priest of God Most High, And he blessed* [*Abram*](avraham.html)*, saying, "Blessed be* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *by God Most High, Creator of* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*." Then* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *gave him a tenth of everything.*

This [first](one.html) use of the word gives us a clue as to what [HaShem](hashem.html) intended a priest to be, and to do. Note that this Godly priest was not a Levite (Levi, [Avraham](avraham.html)'s great grandson, was not yet born). The [Talmud](orallaw.html) has this to say about Melchizedek:

***Nedarim 32b*** *R. Zechariah said on R. Ishmael's* [*authority*](authority.html)*: The Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, intended to bring forth the priesthood from Shem, as it is written, And he [sc. Melchizedek] was the priest of the most high God.[[1]](#footnote-1) But because he gave precedence in his blessing to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *over God, He brought it forth from* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*; as it is written, And he blessed him and said. Blessed be* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *of the most high God, possessor of* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and earth, and blessed be the most high God. Said* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *to him, ‘Is the blessing of a servant to be given precedence over that of his master?’ Straightway it [the priesthood] was given to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, as it is written, The Lord said unto my Lord,[[2]](#footnote-2) Sit thou at my right* [*hand*](mashal.html)*, until I make thine enemies thy footstool;[[3]](#footnote-3) which is followed by, The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek’,*[[4]](#footnote-4) *meaning, ‘because of the words of Melchizedek’.*[[5]](#footnote-5) *Hence it is written, And he was a priest of the most High God, [implying that] he was a priest, but not his* [*seed*](flower.html)*.*[[6]](#footnote-6)

From the [Talmud](orallaw.html) we learn that the title, "Melchizedek", was held by Shem the [third](three.html) born son of [Noah](noach.html). Shem received [the birth](thebirth.html)right which was normally given to the firstborn.

**Melchizedek** means:

4442 Malkiy-Tsedeq, mal-kee-tseh'-dek; from 4428 and 6664; king of right; Malki-Tsedek, an early king in Pal.:-Melchizedek.

We [know](daat.html) that Shem was [Noah](noach.html)'s [third](three.html) born from:

***Sanhedrin 69b ...****And* [*Noah*](noach.html) *was* [*five*](five.html) *hundred years old, and* [*Noah*](noach.html) *begat Shem, Ham and Japheth; hence [if the order is according to age], Shem was at least a year older than Ham, and Ham a year older than Japheth, so that Shem was* [*two*](two.html) *years older than Japheth. Now, it is written, And* [*Noah*](noach.html) *was* [*six*](six.html) *hundred years old when the flood of water was upon the earth;*[[7]](#footnote-7) *and it is written, These are the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *of Shem. Shem was a hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad* [*two*](two.html) *years after the flood.[[8]](#footnote-8) But was he a hundred years old? He must have been a hundred and* [*two*](two.html) *years old?[[9]](#footnote-9) Hence thou must say that they are enumerated in order of wisdom [not age];*[[10]](#footnote-10) *then here too [in the case of* [*Terah*](stages.html)*'s sons], they are stated in order of wisdom.*

*R. Kahana said: I repeated this discussion before R. Zebid of Nahardea. Thereupon he said to me: You deduce [that the order is according to wisdom] from these verses, but we deduce it from the following: Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even unto him were children born;*[[11]](#footnote-11) *this means that he was the eldest of the brothers.*

My guess is that Shem received [the birth](thebirth.html)right when Canaan was cursed. There is a second opinion, though, that Shem was the [first](one.html) born:

According to Ibn Ezra, Radak, and Ramban, Shem was the eldest and the designation 'the elder', from Genesis 10:21, reverts to Shem as in Isaiah son of Amos, the prophet [II Kings 20:1] Isaiah, not Amos being the prophet referred to.

Targum Yonatan is also of the opinion that Shem is the firstborn. At any rate, the fact that the priesthood was given to Shem is demonstrated by the Torah when it calls Melchizedek a priest.

The priesthood of Melchizedek is also important because it is also the priesthood of [Yeshua](yeshua.html):

[***Bereans***](bereans.html) ***(***[***Hebrews***](bereans.html)***) 5:5-10*** *So* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a* [*high priest*](kohen.html)*. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." During the days of* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*' life on earth, he offered up* [*prayers*](prayer.html) *and petitions with loud cries and* [*tears*](mashal.html) *to the* [*one*](one.html) *who could* [*save*](salvation.html) *him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *for all who obey him And was designated by God to be* [***high priest***](kohen.html) *in the order of Melchizedek.*

From this passage we learn that Melchizedek was also a [high priest](kohen.html). So, what distinguishes Melchizedek's priesthood from the Levitical priesthood? To answer this question, we must examine the origins of the Levitical priesthood.

# Priesthood of the Firstborn

The [first](one.html) [time](time.html) that the Levites have an action [type](types.html) role is in:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 32:22-29*** *"Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You* [*know*](daat.html) *how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html)*, we don't* [*know*](daat.html) *what has happened to him.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the* [*fire*](fire.html)*, and out came this calf!" Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the* [*camp*](stages.html) *and said, "Whoever is for* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, "This is what* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the* [*camp*](stages.html) *from* [*one*](one.html) *end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about* [*three*](three.html) *thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."*

The Levites were set apart to [HaShem](hashem.html) because they did not participate in the [sin](sin.html) of the golden calf and they rallied to Moses to destroy the sinners, at that [time](time.html). Later [HaShem](hashem.html) traded the firstborn sons for the Levites:

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 3:40-45***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, "Count all the firstborn Israelite males who are a month old or more and make a list of their names. Take the Levites for me in place of all the firstborn of the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites in place of all the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*." So Moses counted all the firstborn of the Israelites, as* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *commanded him. The total* [*number*](nchart.html) *of firstborn males a month old or more, listed by* [*name*](name.html)*, was 22,273.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *also said to Moses, "Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites in place of their livestock. The Levites are to be mine. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.*

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 10:1-9*** *At that* [*time*](time.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to me, "Chisel out* [*two*](two.html) *stone tablets like the* [*first*](one.html) *ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden chest. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the* [*first*](one.html) *tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the chest." So I made the* [*ark*](ark.html) *out of acacia wood and chiseled out* [*two*](two.html) *stone tablets like the* [*first*](one.html) *ones, and I went up on the mountain with the* [*two*](two.html) *tablets in my* [*hands*](fourteen.html)*.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the* [*Ten*](ten.html)[*Commandments*](cmds613.html) *he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the* [*fire*](fire.html)*, on the day of the assembly. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *gave them to me. Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the* [*ark*](ark.html) *I had made, as* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *commanded me, and they are there now. (The Israelites traveled from the wells of the Jaakanites to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar his son succeeded him as priest. From there they traveled to Gudgodah and on to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water. At that* [*time*](time.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *set apart the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Levi to carry the* [*ark*](ark.html) *of the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, to stand before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *to minister and to pronounce blessings in his* [*name*](name.html)*, as they still do today. That is why the Levites have no share or* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *among their brothers;* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *is their* [*inheritance*](inherit.html)*, as* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God told them.)*

A footnote in the Soncino [Talmud](orallaw.html) helps to make this clear:

***Sanhedrin 17a*** *Footnote* [*number*](nchart.html) *13: Num. III, 47. After the completion of the* [*Tabernacle*](mikdash.html)***,*** *the Levites were called to replace the firstborns of all Israelites in the service of the* [*Sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*, (cf. Ex. XXIV, 5; XIX, 24.) In order to effect this transfer of office, both the firstborn and the Levites were numbered. And when it was found that of the former there were* [*twenty*](twenty.html)*-*[*two*](two.html) *thousand* [*two*](two.html) *hundred and* [*seventy*](seventy.html)*-*[*three*](three.html)*; and of the latter,* [*twenty*](twenty.html)*-*[*two*](two.html) *thousand, the* [*two*](two.html) *hundred and* [*seventy*](seventy.html)*-*[*three*](three.html) *firstborns who were in excess of the Levites were* [*redeemed*](redemption.html) *at the rate of* [*five*](five.html) *shekels per* [*head*](body.html)*.[[12]](#footnote-12)*

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) reiterates this exchange of the [first](one.html) born for the Levites:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah Bamidbar 4:8*** *Originally the* [*Temple*](temple.html) *service devolved upon the firstborn, but when they committed the* [*sin*](sin.html) *of the Golden Calf, the Levites, inasmuch as they had not erred in the matter of the calf,* *were privileged to enter in their stead.*

So, the Levitical priesthood was established because of the [sin](sin.html) of the golden calf. The priesthood had been held by the firstborn males, until that [time](time.html). The Levitical priesthood, therefore, was a replacement for the priesthood of the firstborn, which was [HaShem](hashem.html)'s ideal. This ideal was established with [Adam](adam.html), and was the norm until the [sin](sin.html) of the golden calf. The Levitical priesthood was a ‘second chance’ for men to properly serve [HaShem](hashem.html)

Rashi confirms this change of priesthood:

***Rashi on Bamidbar 3:12*****from among the children of Israel:** That the Israelites should have to hire them for My service? I gained My right to them through the [Israelite] firstborns, taking them [the Levites] in their place. For [originally] the service was performed by the firstborns, but when they sinned by [worshipping] the [golden] calf, they became disqualified. The Levites, who had not committed [idolatry](idolatry.html), were chosen in their stead.[[13]](#footnote-13)

So, why did [Abraham](avraham.html) pay a tithe to Melchizedek, alias Shem? The [Talmud](orallaw.html) talks about the "court" or "yeshiva" of Shem in the [Talmud](orallaw.html).[[14]](#footnote-14) Tradition indicates that [Avraham](avraham.html) [studied](study.html) in the yeshiva (Torah school) of Shem and Eber. Because [Avraham](avraham.html) was a descendent of Shem, when Shem Died, [Avraham](avraham.html) became the priest of his family, as Rashi relates:

**Rashi’s Commentary for:** [**Psalm**](psalms1.html) **110:4 you are a priest forever because of the speech of Malchizedek** From you will emerge the priesthood and the kingship that your children will [inherit](inherit.html) from Shem your progenitor, the priesthood and the kingship, which were given to him. דִבְרָתִי מלכי־צדק. The “yod” is superfluous, like:[[15]](#footnote-15) “the [city](city.html) that was once so populous (רבתי).” Because of the speech of Malchizedek, because of the [command](cmds613.html) of Malchizedek. You are a priest, Heb. כהן. The wordכהן bears the connotation of priesthood and rulership, as:[[16]](#footnote-16) “and David’s sons were chief officers.”

Biblical personalities Shem and Ever formed a Yeshiva called Yeshiva Shem V'Ever. Our forefather [Yaaqob](jacob.html) learned there for [fourteen](fourteen.html) years. This was all prior to the giving of the Torah at Mount [Sinai](stages.html). The [Talmud](orallaw.html) mention the yeshiva of Shem in [two](two.html) places: Avodah Zara 36b and Makot 23b.

At this point we can put together some of the pieces: [Avraham](avraham.html) paid a tithe to Melchizedek because Melchizedek was a priest, and the task of a priest was to [teach](teacher.html) Torah. Since [Avraham](avraham.html) learned Torah from the priest Melchizedek, therefore he gave Melchizedek a tithe. We will see that the giving of a tithe to the priests, the Torah teachers, will later be codified in Torah:

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 18:26*** *Thus* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your* [*inheritance*](inherit.html)*, then ye shall offer up an heave* [*offering*](korbanot.html) *of it for* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, even a tenth part of the tithe.*

So, the reason that [Avraham](avraham.html) paid a tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, is because he was [Avraham](avraham.html)’s Torah [teacher](teacher.html).

# How did Shem [know](daat.html) how to act as a priest?

Melchizedek, whose [name](name.html) was Shem, was very close to [Adam](adam.html). Shem lived during the days of Methuselah, and Methuselah lived during the days of [Adam](adam.html). The [Talmud](orallaw.html) records this closeness:

***Baba Batra 121b*** *Our Rabbis* [*taught*](teacher.html)*:* [*Seven*](seven.html) *[men] spanned*[[17]](#footnote-17) *[the life of] the whole* [*world*](worlds.html)*.[[18]](#footnote-18) [For] Methuselah saw* [*Adam*](adam.html)*; Shem saw Methuselah,* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *saw Shem; Amram saw* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*; Ahijah the Shilonite saw Amram; Elijah saw Ahijah the Shilonite, and he[[19]](#footnote-19) is still alive.*

In order to begin to understand the true role of [Jewish](gen-jew.html) leadership, we must remember that [Avraham](avraham.html) was not the [first](one.html) person after [Noah](noach.html) to devote himself to [HaShem](hashem.html). [Noah](noach.html)'s son, Shem who, according to the [Midrash](orallaw.html), was not only born [nine](nine.html) [generations](toldot.html) before [Avraham](avraham.html) but lived [forty](forty.html) years after the [first](one.html) patriarch died, really qualified for this preeminent position. He, together with his son Ever, established the [first](one.html) yeshiva in history. And when Rebecca, [Avraham](avraham.html)'s daughter-in-[law](law.html), felt unwell in her pregnancy (the fetuses in her [womb](thebirth.html) struggled), she "inquired of the Lord",[[20]](#footnote-20) and Rashi explains that she sought the [spiritual](physical.html) advice not of [Avraham](avraham.html) but rather of Shem. Several verses later, after she gives [birth](birth.html) to twins, [Jacob](israelja.html) the younger son is described as "[dwelling](dwelling.html) in tents”.[[21]](#footnote-21) And again Rashi tells us that these are the tents of Torah, the tent of Shem and the tent of Ever for which [Jacob](israelja.html), Midrashic sources reveal, left his father's and grandfather's home and [studied](study.html) Torah for [fourteen](fourteen.html) years.

Indeed, the centrality of Shem and Ever in the unfolding [spiritual](physical.html) development of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people is given full fanfare when Rashi, in the very context of [Abraham](avraham.html)'s own life back in Parashat Vayera, explains that the guests of honor "at the great feast [Abraham](avraham.html) made on the day that [Isaac](isaac.html) was weaned,"[[22]](#footnote-22) were "...the greatest of the [generation](toldot.html): Shem and Ever and Elimelech."

# Messianic Preeminence

At this point we understand that Shem was a priest because he was a firstborn. Further, we also understand that as the patriarch of the family he represented the entire family before [HaShem](hashem.html). This helps us to understand that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek because He, too, was not only the [first](one.html) born of His mother, but He was the firstborn of [creation](bara.html), as we read in the Nazarean Codicil:

***Colossians 1:14-17*** *In whom we have* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *through his* [*blood*](body.html)*, even the* [*forgiveness*](forgive.html) *of* [*sins*](sin.html)*: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) also states that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) will be a firstborn:

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***19:7*** *Rabbi Natan said: "The Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, told Moses: 'Just as I have made* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *a firstborn, for it says: Israel is My son, My firstborn, so will I make the King* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html) *a firstborn, as it says: I also will appoint him firstborn.[[23]](#footnote-23)*

Thus we see that [Yeshua](yeshua.html) is the ultimate patriarch priest of the human race. He was thus The [High Priest](kohen.html) according to the order of Melchizedek.

Ultimately, the Levites will divest themselves of the priesthood in favor of the priesthood of the firstborn. This will happen at the restoration of all things:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 17:11*** *And* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall* [*first*](one.html) *come, and restore all things.*

# Priesthood of The Nazareans

The Nazarean Codicil also foresees a day when the Nazareans will also be priests:

***Revelation 1:4-6*** *John to the* [*seven*](seven.html) *churches which are in Asia:* [*Grace*](grace.html) *be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the* [*seven*](seven.html) *Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)[*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, who is the faithful witness, and the* [*first*](one.html) *begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our* [*sins*](sin.html) *in his own* [*blood*](body.html)*, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

***Revelation 5:8-10*** *And when he had taken the book, the* [*four*](four.html) *beasts and* [*four*](four.html) *and* [*twenty*](twenty.html) *elders fell down before the Lamb, having every* [*one*](one.html) *of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the* [*prayers*](prayer.html) *of saints. 9 And they sung a* [*new*](new.html) *song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast* [*redeemed*](redemption.html) *us to God by thy* [*blood*](body.html) *out of every kindred, and* [*tongue*](spirit.html)*, and people, and* [*nation*](nations.html)*; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

***Revelation 20:6*** *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the* [*first*](one.html)[*resurrection*](techiyat.html)*: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

The word *Toldot*, in [Numbers](nchart.html) 3:1,points to the counting of the Levites, the servants of [HaShem](hashem.html), who stand instead of the [first](one.html)-born of Yisrael, and it starts by saying that "These are the Toldot of Aharon and Moshe," which in a way is the Toldot ([Generations](toldot.html)) of [two](two.html) priesthoods [one](one.html) after the order of Melech Tzadiq, Melchizedek, exemplified by Moshe Rabbenu, and the other of the order of Aharon, which are still to this day with us by those who are surnamed *Kohen*. How interesting it is that these [two](two.html) priesthoods have their tents side by side at the entrance of the [Tabernacle](mikdash.html). But not only are their [generations](toldot.html) important but also their counting which is unique amongst the Bne Yisrael. Whilst the counting of the various [tribes](tribes.html) to establish the mean of war was done by individuals over the age of [twenty](twenty.html), of the Levites we read that their accounting, from [one](one.html) month and older, is by family units which have specific tasks to discharge as family units.

What I find quite fascinating is that the early Nazareans did not established their headquarters in any of the many available Synagogues around [Yerushalayim](city.html), but they established their headquarters in the [Temple](temple.html).[[24]](#footnote-24) It appears that they saw themselves very much as Levites but of a different Priesthood, that of Moshe Rabbenu and [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html) the [Messiah](mashiach.html)![[25]](#footnote-25)

We also see that all Israel is to be a kingdom of priests at the restoration of all things:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 19:6*** *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy* [*nation*](nations.html)*. These are the words which thou shalt* [*speak*](mashal.html) *unto the children of Israel.*

Israel can all be priests because they are all firstborn sons. This is what the Torah [teaches](teacher.html):

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:21*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Moses, When thou goest to return* [*into Egypt*](thebirth.html)*, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*: but I will harden his* [*heart*](body.html)*, that he shall not let the people go. 22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

Thus we see that the priesthood of the firstborn is an enduring priesthood. What makes this especially interesting is that we have previously learned, in the [study](study.html) titled [Mashiach](mashiach.html), that:

[**Mashiach**](mashiach.html) **= Israel**

Thus we understand that since [Yeshua](yeshua.html), the [Mashiach](mashiach.html), is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and Israel is a “Kingdom of Priests”, then we can understand that [Yeshua](yeshua.html) is the [head](body.html) of the [body](body.html) called Israel, and the [body](body.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

In the beginning [Adam](adam.html) walked with [HaShem](hashem.html) in [Gan Eden](eden.html). In the end [Mashiach](mashiach.html), the second [Adam](adam.html), will [walk](walking.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html) in [Gan Eden](eden.html).[[26]](#footnote-26)

\* \* \*

In Matityahu (Matthew) we have a very interesting Midrashic allusion to Nazarean priests:[[27]](#footnote-27)

***Matityahu (Matthew) 19:16-22*** *16 An behold,* [*one*](one.html) *approached and said, “Good Rabbi, what good will I do in order that I may have life eternal? 17. And he (*[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*) said to him, Why do you ask me about good? Only* [*One*](one.html) *is good. But if you wish to come into life, you must continually keep the* [*commandments*](cmds613.html)*. 18. He said to Him, What sort of* [*commandments*](cmds613.html)*? [Or, which ones?] And* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *answered, You will not murder, You will not commit adultery, You will not steal, You will not bear false witness, 19. Honor your father and your mother, and, You will love your companion as [you do] yourself 20. The youth said, I have observed all these; what still do I lack? 21.* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *answered him, If you wish to be whole, go innocuously and sell your property and give [the proceeds] to the humble, and you will have treasure in the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*; and come, then come over here and follow me! 22. And having heard that saying, the youth went away distressed, for he had much property.*

This pasuk from the Nazarean Codicil is the [triennial](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) [connection](connection.html) to the Torah reading of the [Sotah](hair.html)[[28]](#footnote-28) in Bamidbar ([Numbers](nchart.html)) 5:11 – 6:21. In this Torah portion we have the detailed procedure for the woman suspected of adultery and this is followed by the procedure for the Nazir.

Chazal, in the [Talmud](orallaw.html), [teach](teacher.html) that the nazir takes his vow and grows his [hair](hair.html) in order to be a priest, of sorts, for a short [time](time.html) (typically 30 days).

***Taanit 17a*** *Our Rabbis have* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: A king cuts his* [*hair*](hair.html) *every day, a* [*high priest*](kohen.html) *on the eve of every* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*, all ordinary priest once in* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *days. Why has a king to cut his* [*hair*](hair.html) *every day? — R. Abba b. Zabda said: Scripture says, Thine* [*eyes*](body.html) *shall see the king in his beauty. Why has a* [*high priest*](kohen.html) *[to cut his* [*hair*](hair.html)*] on the eve of every* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*? — R. Samuel b.* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *said: Because the Mishmar changes every week. Whence can it be adduced that an ordinary priest [must cut his* [*hair*](hair.html)*] once in* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *days? — It is to be adduced from the analogous use of the word pera’ in* [*connection*](connection.html) *with the Nazirite [and the priests]. Of the priests [it is written], Neither shall they shave their heads, ‘nor suffer their locks [pera’] to grow long; and of the Nazirite it is written, He shall be holy. he shall let the locks of the* [*hair*](hair.html) *of his* [*head*](body.html) *grow long [pera’]; as in the case of the Nazirite the period of growing his* [*hair*](hair.html) *is* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *days so too must it be in the case of the ordinary priest. But whence do we* [*know*](daat.html) *this to be the requirement of the Nazirite himself? R. Mattena said: A Nazirite's unspecified [term of] vow is* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *days. Whence is this to be adduced? — Scripture uses the word yihyeh the numerical value of which is* [*thirty*](thirty.html)*. R. Papa said to Abaye: Perhaps Scripture means [that the priests] should not let their* [*hair*](hair.html) *grow at all? — The latter replied: Had Scripture written, ‘nor suffer to grow long their locks’, it might be as you suggest, but since Scripture has written, ‘Nor suffer their locks to grow long,’ this implies, they may grow their* [*hair*](hair.html) *but they may not suffer their locks to grow long. If that is so, this restriction should be valid even at the present* [*time*](time.html)*! — [This restriction is] on the same lines as that of the drinking of* [*wine*](wine.html)*; just as the restriction of drinking* [*wine*](wine.html) *applied only to the* [*time*](time.html) *when they might enter [the* [*Temple*](temple.html)*] to do service, so too with regard to the restriction of letting the locks grow long. But has it not been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: Rabbi says, I declare that [a priest] should not at any* [*time*](time.html) *drink* [*wine*](wine.html)*, but what can I do, seeing that his misfortune turned out to be an advantage to him.*

***Taanit 26b*** *It is, however, generally agreed that an intoxicated [priest] may not lift up his* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *[in benediction]. Whence is this view adduced? — R. Joshua b. Levi said in the* [*name*](name.html) *of Bar Kappara: Why does the section dealing with [the blessing by] the priest follow immediately after the portion of the Nazirite? In order to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *you that, just as the Nazirite is forbidden to drink* [*wine*](wine.html)*, so too is the priest about to recite the priestly benediction.*

***Nazir 47a*** *MISHNAH. A* [*HIGH PRIEST*](kohen.html) *AND A NAZIRITE MAY NOT DEFILE THEMSELVES [BY CONTACT] WITH THEIR [DEAD] RELATIVES, BUT THEY MAY Defile THEMSELVES WITH A METH MIZWAH.*

***Nazir 47a*** *It is clear that as between a* [*High Priest*](kohen.html) *and a Nazirite, the* [*one*](one.html) *[*[*authority*](authority.html)*] is of the opinion that the* [*High Priest*](kohen.html) *is of superior sanctity, and the other that the Nazirite is of superior sanctity.*

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Numbers***](nchart.html) ***X:11*** *DEAD* [*BODY*](body.html)*.[[29]](#footnote-29) Observe now that whenever a man hallows himself here below he is hallowed from on high. Of this man, inasmuch as he separates himself from* [*wine*](wine.html) *and imposes suffering on himself by refraining from shaving his* [*head*](body.html)*, with the object of keeping himself free from* [*sin*](sin.html)*, the Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, said: ‘Behold, he ranks in My estimation as a* [*High Priest*](kohen.html)*.’ As a priest is forbidden to defile himself by any dead* [*bodies*](body.html)*, so is the Nazirite forbidden to defile himself by any dead* [*bodies*](body.html)*. As in reference to the* [*High Priest*](kohen.html) *it is written, For the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him,[[30]](#footnote-30) so in reference to the Nazirite it says, Because his consecration unto God is upon his* [*head*](body.html)*.[[31]](#footnote-31) As in regard to the priest it is written, And Aaron was separated, that he should be sanctified as most holy,[[32]](#footnote-32) so also is the Nazirite described as holy; for it says, All the days of his Naziriteship he is holy unto the Lord.[[33]](#footnote-33) Come and observe how the* [*commandments*](cmds613.html) *circle Israel like crowns! The growing of long* [*hair*](hair.html)*, surely, makes man uncouth, for he cannot cleanse his* [*head*](body.html)*, yet because he grows it with a lofty motive Scripture calls it a ‘crown’ to his* [*head*](body.html)*; hence it is written, Because the crown of his God is upon his* [*head*](body.html)*.*

Thus we see the [connection](connection.html) between a nazir and a priest. The Nazarean codicil then tells us about a man who [desires](needs.html) to have [eternal life](eternal.html). [Yeshua](yeshua.html) tells him to sell his property and give it to the poor, and follow Him. Now just as the priest does not own any property, here the Nazarean is enjoined not to have any property. Thus we have a [connection](connection.html) between the priests => the Nazir = > and the Nazarean. From this we can deduce that a Nazarean is also a priest.

**\* \* \***

This [study](study.html) was written by

Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian).

Comments may be submitted to:

Rabbi Dr. Greg Killian

12210 Luckey Summit

San Antonio, TX 78252

Internet address: [gkilli@aol.com](mailto:gkilli@aol.com)

Web page: <https://www.betemunah.org/>

(360) 918-2905

Return to [The WATCHMAN](https://www.betemunah.org/) home page

Send comments to Greg Killian at his email address: [gkilli@aol.com](mailto:gkilli@aol.com)

1. Bereshit (Genesis) 14:18. The [Midrash](orallaw.html) identifies him with Shem, the son of Noah, Abraham's eighth ancestor. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Here taken as referring to Abraham; cf. Berachot 7b, where my lord is explicitly so explained. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tehillim (Psalms) 110:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tehillim (Psalms) 110:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I.e., because of his giving precedence to Abraham. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Though Abraham was a descendant of Melchizedek, and thus the priesthood was inherited by the latter's seed, yet this was through the merit of Abraham, not of Melchizedek. - Ran. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Bereshit (Genesis) 7:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Since Noah was five hundred years old when Shem was born, and six hundred when the flood commenced, Shem must have been a hundred then. Consequently, two years later he was a hundred and two years old. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. So that Shem as the youngest, not the eldest. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bereshit (Genesis) 10:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Five shekels is the legal sum for the redemption of a firstborn. v. Bamidbar (Numbers) 18:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Midrash Aggadah [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. in Avodah Zarah 36b and Makkoth 23b [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Eicha (Lamentations) 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Shmuel bet (II Samuel) 8:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lit., ‘folded’. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The total length of their respective lives covered the entire period of the life of the human species. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Elijah. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Bereshit (Genesis) 25:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bereshit (Genesis) 25:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Bereshit (Genesis) 21:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Tehillim (Psalms) 89:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 2 Luqas (Acts) 2:46 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. This section contains what I have learned from my teacher, His Eminence Hakham Dr. Yoseph ben Haggai. Most represent His Eminence’s words. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Sefer Yetzirah 1:7, Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 46:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. I heard this from Paqid Adon Poriel ben Avraham. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Woman suspected of adultery. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Bamidbar (Numbers) 6:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Vayikra (Leviticus) 21:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Bamidbar (Numbers) 6:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Divrei Hayamim (I Chronicles) 23:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Bamidbar (Numbers) 6:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)