

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 288

A COVENANT OF EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD

A Covenant Deep Dive into *berit kehunnat olam* (a covenant of everlasting priesthood) and the Teaching That the Levitical Priesthood Was Dissolved

Did Yahweh Ever Dissolve the Priesthood of Aaron and Levi, What Does Psalms 110:4 Say of Melchizedek, and Who Stands at the Altar in the Restoration? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response to Christianity and the Sacred Name Movement

October 2026

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Rabbinic tradition has never taught that the priesthood ended. Families of <i>kohanim</i> (priests) and Levites are still known from father to son. The priests still bless the congregation with Numbers 6:24–26 , and the daily prayer asks that the service be restored. Maimonides counts the return of the offerings among the works of the awaited king (Laws of Kings 11:1). The Reform Pittsburgh Platform (1885) broke with this, expecting no <i>“sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron.”</i>	Hebrews argues from Psalms 110:4 that a priest <i>“after the order of Melchisedec”</i> has come, and concludes: <i>“the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law”</i> (Hebrews 7:12). Trent taught a new priesthood <i>“into which the old has been translated”</i> (Session 23), and the Westminster Confession calls the ceremonial laws <i>“now abrogated”</i> (19.3). Yet Hebrews itself says that on earth he <i>“should not be a priest”</i> (8:4), and the first believers still went to the Temple (Acts 21:26).	The Qur'an honors Harun (Aaron) as a prophet and as the helper of Musa (Q. 19:53; 20:29–32), speaks of <i>“the family of Aaron”</i> (Q. 2:248), and shows Zakariyya praying in the sanctuary (Q. 3:37–39). Islam has no priesthood and no altar; its <i>imam</i> (one who stands in front) leads prayer by knowledge and not by descent. Classical Islamic teaching holds that the law given through Muhammad replaced the earlier laws (Q. 2:106; 5:48), and so it also treats the service of Aaron's house as belonging to a former age.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one claim: that the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the tribe of Levi were dissolved, and that a priesthood “*after the order of Melchizedek*” has taken their place. It asks how the priesthood was given and in what words, whether **Yahweh** ever withdrew it, what **Psalms 110:4** says and does not say, and who stands at the altar in the prophets' promises of restoration. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with their English meaning, also bold italic, in parentheses. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English versions; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, church teaching, the published statements of Sacred

Name assemblies, and the Qur'an appear only in the opening table, the Comparative Texts table, and the Three-Religion Audit, as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Melchizedek; the grant of the priesthood to Aaron and of the service to Levi; the covenant of salt; the covenant with Phinehas; the rule against adding to the commandment or taking from it
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	The house of Eli and the rise of Zadok; Jeroboam's priests; the covenant with Levi set beside the covenant with David; the sons of Zadok in the restored house; the purifying of the sons of Levi
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Job, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	The oath of Psalms 110:4 ; the lament over the first destruction; the return of the priests and Levites; the covenant of salt with David; Uzziah at the altar of incense

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 5:17–19; Acts 3:1; 6:7; 21:20–26; Hebrews 5:4; 7:11–18; 8:4, 13; 1 Peter 2:9	The Melchizedek argument and “ <i>a change also of the law</i> ”; the first believers and the Temple; the priesthood of all believers

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Church teaching	Luther, <i>To the Christian Nobility</i> (1520); Council of Trent, Session 23, ch. 1 (1563); Westminster Confession 19.3 (1647); Scofield Reference Bible (1909); Catechism of the Catholic Church 1540; Doctrine and Covenants 107:1	How the churches state the end of the old priesthood; where some still expect Zadok's sons to serve; priesthoods conferred by ordination
Sacred Name and Sabbath-keeping assemblies	Assemblies of Yahweh , Statement of Doctrine, points 6 and 24; Yahweh's Restoration Ministry, <i>What We Believe</i> ; United Church of God, <i>“Tithing and the Priesthood”</i> (Good News, 2007); Hoshana Rabbah, <i>“The Levitical vs. the Melchizedek Priesthoods”</i> (2014)	What these assemblies publish about the offerings, the priesthood, and the tithe
Qur'an	Q. 2:106, 248; 3:37–39; 5:44, 48; 9:31; 19:53; 20:29–32; 22:34, 37	Aaron and his family in the Islamic witness; sacrifice; the replacement of earlier laws
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Ta'anit 4:6; Talmud Nedarim 32b; the Amidah (blessing of the Service); Maimonides, Laws of Kings 11:1; Pittsburgh Platform (1885), principle 5	The end of the daily offering; the rabbinic reading of Psalms 110:4 ; the prayer for restoration; the Reform movement's break with it
Historical and textual sources	Septuagint, Psalms 110:4 (Greek 109:4) and Jeremiah 33 ; Qumran scroll 4QJer-c (Tov, <i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i> XV, 1997); Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i> 6.94; JPS Tanakh (1985); Skorecki and others, <i>Nature</i> 385 (1997); Hammer and others, <i>Human Genetics</i> 126 (2009)	Where the word <i>“order”</i> comes from; the text of Jeremiah 33:14–26 ; the date the offerings stopped; the paternal ancestry of priestly families

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — WAS THE PRIESTHOOD DISSOLVED?

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

Ask most church members where the priests of Israel are today, and the answer comes quickly: there are none, and there need be none. The priesthood of Aaron, they have been taught, was a temporary

arrangement that ended when a better priest came. Ask the same question in most assemblies of the Sacred Name movement, which keep the Sabbath, the feasts, and the clean-food laws that the churches set aside, and the answer is nearly the same. The commandments stand, they say, except the ones that belonged to the altar and to the men who served it.

This study tests that answer. It does not ask whether the Temple is standing; it is not. It does not ask whether offerings can be brought today; Section IX shows that they cannot. It asks a narrower question, and the Tanakh answers it plainly:

Did Yahweh ever dissolve the priesthood He gave to Aaron and the service He gave to Levi?

I-B. The Teaching Stated Fairly

The teaching. The claim is not careless, and it deserves to be stated in its strongest form. It runs in six steps.

First: the priesthood of Aaron could not finish the work of atonement, so it was never meant to last.

Second: Psalms 110:4 announces another priest, *“after the order of Melchizedek,”* who is not of Aaron’s line.

Third: that priest is from Judah, a tribe to which the Torah gives no altar, so the Torah itself must have been changed to make room for him.

Fourth: his one offering ended every offering, so no altar and no altar priest will be needed again.

Fifth: every believer is now a priest, so a separate priestly family has no purpose.

Sixth: in the form common among Hebrew Roots teachers and some Sacred Name teachers, the first priesthood was Melchizedek’s and was held by the fathers and the firstborn; the priesthood of Levi was a temporary insertion after the golden calf; and the priesthood has now gone back to its first order.

The texts on which these steps rest are listed in the Comparative Texts table and examined in the Three-Religion Audit (Section X). Under the standing rule of this Library they are not quoted here as authority. Each step is tested against the Tanakh alone in Section VII.

I-C. The Governing Text

One passage states the matter in Yahweh’s own words. After Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood up at Baal Peor, **Yahweh** said:

“Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace. And it shall be to him and to his seed after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his Elohim and made atonement for the children of Israel” (Numbers 25:12–13).

וְהָיְתָה לוֹ וּלְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו בְּרִית כְּהֻנַּת עוֹלָם

The phrase is *berit kebunnat olam* (a covenant of everlasting priesthood).

It is a covenant!

Yahweh gives it!

It is given to a named man and to his seed, and the word *olam* (forever) is attached to it. The title of this study is taken from it.

If the priesthood was dissolved, this covenant was broken, and the reader must then ask who broke it?

I-D. What This Study Builds On

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. Part 5 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation* (revised 2026) already stated that the Levitical priesthood holds permanent offices of the covenant, and that the Tanakh refutes the teaching that it was abolished. **Doc 164** (Section IX) set out the three great restoration texts. **Doc 265** (*Seven Offices, One King*) examined what a priest is and who may hold the office today. **Doc 271** examined the calling of the whole nation as a kingdom of priests (**Exodus 19:5–6**). **Doc 250** examined the tithe given to Levi, **Doc 251** the place that **Yahweh** chooses, **Doc 239** the Day of Atonement, and **Docs 281** and **284** the new covenant and the heart of flesh. The present document gathers the witnesses on one question, tests the opposing argument step by step, and corrects several points in the earlier material (Section XI).

Every finding is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is a **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The Tanakh gave the priesthood in exact words, and the question of this study turns on them. The table sets out the vocabulary.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>kohen (priest)</i> , כֹּהֵן	H3548	One who stands and serves before Yahweh at His altar; about 750 times in the Tanakh	Exodus 28:1; Deuteronomy 18:5
<i>kehunnah (priesthood)</i> , כֹּהֲנָה	H3550	The office of the priest; fourteen times, always of the priesthood given through Aaron	Exodus 29:9; Numbers 18:7
<i>Levi (Levi; the Levite)</i> , לֵוִי	H3878 / H3881	The tribe set apart to carry the ark, to stand before Yahweh , and to bless in His name	Deuteronomy 10:8; Numbers 3:5–10
<i>olam (forever; perpetual)</i> , עוֹלָם	H5769	Time with no end stated; lasting duration	Exodus 40:15; Jeremiah 33:20–21
<i>chuqqat olam (a perpetual statute)</i> , חֻקַּת עוֹלָם	H2708 / H5769	A fixed ordinance with no end named; said of the Passover, the feasts, the Day of Atonement, and the priesthood	Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 16:34; 23:41
<i>berit melach (a covenant of salt)</i> , בְּרִית מֶלַח	H1285 / H4417	A covenant that does not spoil; said only of Aaron's portion and of David's kingdom	Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5
<i>berit kehunnat olam (a covenant of everlasting priesthood)</i> , בְּרִית כֹּהֲנֵת עוֹלָם	H1285 / H3550 / H5769	The covenant given to Phinehas and to his seed after him	Numbers 25:13
<i>kol ha-yamim (all the days)</i> , כָּל-הַיָּמִים	H3605 / H3117	Continually; without a gap in time	Deuteronomy 18:5; Jeremiah 33:18
<i>le-dorotam (throughout their generations)</i> , לְדֹרֹתָם	H1755	From each generation to the next	Exodus 40:15
<i>zar (stranger; outsider)</i> , זָר	H2114	In the laws of the altar, anyone who is not of the seed of Aaron	Numbers 3:10; 16:40
<i>le-sharet (to minister)</i> , לְשָׂרֵת	H8334	To serve in attendance; the verb of priestly and Levitical service	Deuteronomy 10:8; Jeremiah 33:21

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>le-hafer beriti (to break My covenant)</i> , לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי	H6565 / H1285	To annul a covenant; what Yahweh says He will not do	Leviticus 26:44; Judges 2:1; Jeremiah 33:20–21
<i>nishba Yahweh ve-lo yinnachem (Yahweh has sworn and will not relent)</i> , נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם	H7650 / H5162	An oath that Yahweh will not take back	Psalms 110:4
<i>al-divrati (after the manner of)</i> , עַל-דִּבְרָתִי	H1700	From <i>divrah (cause; manner)</i> , a noun found five times in the Tanakh	Psalms 110:4; Ecclesiastes 8:2
<i>Malki-tsedeq (Melchizedek; “my king is righteousness”), מֶלְכִי-צֶדֶק</i>	H4442	King of Salem and priest of El Elyon; named in two passages only	Genesis 14:18; Psalms 110:4
<i>bene Tsadoq (sons of Zadok)</i> , בְּנֵי צָדוֹק	H1121 / H6659	The priestly line of Eleazar and Phinehas that kept the charge of the sanctuary	Ezekiel 44:15; 1 Kings 2:35

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First: the word *olam (forever)*. The teacher under test often answers this word by saying that it means only a long age, and that an age can end. It is true that *olam* takes its length from what it is joined to. A servant who chooses to stay serves his master “forever,” which is his lifetime (**Exodus 21:6**), and Hannah allows Samuel to remain at the house of **Yahweh “forever”** (**1 Samuel 1:22**). But the *olam* of the priesthood is not joined to one man’s life. It is joined to “their generations” (**Exodus 40:15**), to “you and your seed with you” (**Numbers 18:19**), to “all the days” (**Deuteronomy 18:5; Jeremiah 33:18**), and at last to the fixed order of day and night (**Jeremiah 33:20–21**).

The same word carries the memorial Name of **Yahweh** (**Exodus 3:15**), the covenant with Abraham (**Genesis 17:7**), the Sabbath (**Exodus 31:16–17**), and the throne of David (**2 Samuel 7:16**). Whoever shortens the *olam* of Aaron has no ground left for keeping the *olam* of those.

Finding: that the priesthood was given in words of unending duration, tied to the generations and to the created order, is Corroborated (**Exodus 40:15; Numbers 18:19; 25:13; Jeremiah 33:20–21**).

Second: the phrase *chuqqat olam (a perpetual statute)* stands in twenty-three verses of the Tanakh. It is the phrase that makes the Passover binding (**Exodus 12:14, 17**), the feasts of the seventh month

binding (**Leviticus 23:31, 41**), and the Day of Atonement binding (**Leviticus 16:29, 31, 34**). Sabbath-keeping assemblies rightly appeal to it when they keep those days. The same phrase gives the priesthood to Aaron: “*the priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute*” (Exodus 29:9). A reader may not keep the phrase in **Leviticus 23:41** and set it aside in **Exodus 29:9**.

Third: the noun *kehunnah* (*priesthood*) occurs fourteen times, and every time it speaks of the priesthood given through Aaron. That includes the one time a Levite reached for it and was refused (**Numbers 16:10**). It is never used by Melchizedek. Genesis calls him a *kohen* (*priest*) (**Genesis 14:18**), but no text speaks of “*the priesthood of Melchizedek*.” When the Tanakh does speak of priests arranged in ranks, it uses another word, *machleqot* (*divisions*), for the twenty-four courses of the sons of Aaron (**1 Chronicles 24:1**). That word is not in **Psalms 110:4** (Section VI).

III. HOW THE PRIESTHOOD WAS GIVEN

III-A. Before Sinai

Priests are older than Israel. Melchizedek was “*priest of El Elyon*” in Salem (**Genesis 14:18**). Jethro was “*the priest of Midian*” (**Exodus 3:1**). Before Aaron was consecrated the text already speaks of “*the priests who come near to Yahweh*” (**Exodus 19:22**). The fathers built altars and offered for their own households (**Genesis 8:20; 12:7–8; Job 1:5**). Doc 265 (Section IV-A) set out this evidence.

What the Tanakh does not say matters as much. It never calls Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob a priest. It never says that Melchizedek handed an office to Abraham or to anyone else. It never says that the firstborn sons of Israel served as priests. It says that the firstborn belonged to **Yahweh** because He spared them in Egypt (**Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:13**), and that He took the Levites in their place:

“And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn ... and the Levites shall be Mine” (**Numbers 3:12**).

This is the only exchange of sacred service that the Torah records. It moves toward Levi, and Yahweh Himself makes it (**Numbers 3:41, 45; 8:16–18**).

Finding: that a “Melchizedek priesthood” was held by the fathers or by the firstborn before Sinai is Not in the text. That Yahweh took the Levites in place of the firstborn is Corroborated (**Numbers 3:12–13; 8:16–18**).

III-B. The Grant to Aaron

The priesthood of the altar was given to one family by name. *“Bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may serve Me as priest”* (Exodus 28:1). The grant is then sealed with the words of permanence:

“And the priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute” (Exodus 29:9).

וְהִיְתָה לָהֶם כְּהֹנָה לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם

“And their anointing shall surely be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations” (Exodus 40:15).

וְהִיְתָה לִהְיוֹת לָהֶם מְשַׁחְתָּם לְכֹהֲנֵת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתָם

One point of order answers a common claim. The command to set Aaron apart stands in **Exodus 28–29**. The golden calf stands in **Exodus 32**. The priesthood of Aaron was commanded before the calf was made, so it cannot be a penalty laid on Israel because of the calf.

Finding: the altar priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons as a perpetual statute for their generations. Corroborated (Exodus 28:1; 29:9; 40:15; Numbers 3:10; 1 Chronicles 23:13).

III-C. The Grant to Levi

The rest of the tribe was given to Aaron for the service of the Tent. *“Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him”* (Numbers 3:6). Their zeal at the calf is remembered (Exodus 32:26–29), and Moses names their work in his last blessing:

“They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your Torah; they shall put incense before You, and whole burnt offering upon Your altar” (Deuteronomy 33:10).

Moses also says for how long:

“At that time Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister to Him, and to bless in His name, to this day” (Deuteronomy 10:8).

“For Yahweh your Elohim has chosen him out of all your tribes, to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons all the days” (Deuteronomy 18:5).

לְעֹמֵד לְשֵׁרֶת בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה הוּא וּבָנָיו כָּל־הַיָּמִים

The Torah keeps the two apart. Every priest was a Levite, but not every Levite was a priest (Numbers 18:1–7). It also gave the Levites no land. *“Yahweh is his inheritance”* (Deuteronomy

10:9; 18:2), and *“the priesthood of Yahweh is their inheritance”* (Joshua 18:7). The tithe was their wage for the service (Numbers 18:21), by *“a statute forever throughout your generations”* (Numbers 18:23).

III-D. The Covenant of Salt

Yahweh then bound the priests' portion to Himself by covenant:

“All the beave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to Yahweh, I have given to you, and to your sons and to your daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before Yahweh, for you and for your seed with you” (Numbers 18:19).

בְּרִית מֶלַח עוֹלָם הוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֲתָן

Salt does not rot, and every offering was salted with *“the salt of the covenant of your Elohim”* (Leviticus 2:13). The phrase *berit melach* (a covenant of salt) stands in only one other verse of the Tanakh, and there it is the kingdom of David: *“Yahweh, the Elohim of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, to him and to his sons, by a covenant of salt”* (2 Chronicles 13:5).

The house of Aaron and the house of David are the only two houses that hold a covenant of salt. **Finding:** the Tanakh sets the priesthood of Aaron and the throne of David on the same footing. **Corroborated** (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5; Jeremiah 33:20–21).

III-E. The Covenant with Phinehas

The third grant is the governing text of this study (Numbers 25:10–13). It narrows the line. The priesthood belongs to Aaron's sons, and the covenant of everlasting priesthood is given to Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, and to his seed. A psalm remembers it in the same terms: *“Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague stayed; and it was counted to him for righteousness, from generation to generation, forever”* (Psalms 106:30–31).

The line can be followed. The genealogy runs from Aaron through Eleazar and Phinehas to Zadok (1 Chronicles 6:4–8 [Hebrew 5:30–34]), and through Zadok to Ezra (Ezra 7:1–5). Zadok was set in Abiathar's place in Solomon's day (1 Kings 2:35), and it is the *bene Tsadoq* (sons of Zadok) whom Ezekiel sees serving in the restored house (Ezekiel 44:15).

Finding: the covenant with Phinehas runs through Zadok into the restoration. **Corroborated** (Numbers 25:13; 1 Chronicles 6:4–8; Ezekiel 44:15).

IV. SEVEN WITNESSES THAT THE PRIESTHOOD STANDS

IV-A. The Witnesses Side by Side

#	WITNESS	WHAT IS SAID	THE WORDS OF DURATION
I	Exodus 29:9; 40:15	The priesthood is Aaron's and his sons'	<i>chuqqat olam (a perpetual statute); kebunnat olam le-dorotam (an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations)</i>
II	Numbers 18:19, 23	The priests' portion and the Levites' service	<i>berit melach olam (a covenant of salt forever)</i>
III	Numbers 25:12–13	The covenant with Phinehas and his seed	<i>berit kebunnat olam (a covenant of everlasting priesthood)</i>
IV	Deuteronomy 10:8; 18:5	Levi chosen to stand and to minister in the Name	<i>kol ha-yamim (all the days)</i>
V	1 Chronicles 23:13	Aaron set apart, he and his sons, to burn incense, to minister, and to bless	<i>ad olam (forever)</i> , said twice in one verse
VI	Jeremiah 33:17–22	The Levitical priests shall not lack a man before Yahweh	As sure as the covenant of the day and of the night
VII	Ezekiel 44:15; Malachi 2:4–5; 3:3–4	The sons of Zadok come near; the covenant with Levi stands; the sons of Levi are purified	Spoken of the days still to come

The seven come from all three divisions of the Tanakh and from every age of Israel's history: the wilderness, the kingdom, the eve of the exile, the exile itself, and the return. The fifth reads:

“And Aaron was set apart to sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before Yahweh, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name forever” (1 Chronicles 23:13).

וַיִּבְדֵּל אֶהֱרֹן לְהַקְדִּישׁוּ קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא-וּבָנָיו עַד-עוֹלָם

IV-B. The Strongest Witness — Jeremiah 33

Jeremiah spoke these words while Jerusalem was under siege and he himself was shut up in the court of the guard (**Jeremiah 33:1**). The Temple was about to burn, and the priests were about to be carried away. If the priesthood were finished, this was the hour for a prophet to say so.

He said the opposite:

“For thus says Yahweh: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifice all the days” (Jeremiah 33:17–18).

וְלִכְהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם לֹא־יִכָּרֵת אִישׁ מִלְּפָנַי

“Thus says Yahweh: If you can break My covenant of the day and My covenant of the night, so that there should not be day and night in their time, then also My covenant may be broken with David My servant, so that he should not have a son reigning on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers” (Jeremiah 33:20–21).

אִם־תִּפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־בְּרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה

Three things stand out.

First: the covenant with David and the covenant with the Levitical priests are named in one breath, and each is sworn by the same sign. A reading that keeps the throne of David forever and ends the priesthood of Levi divides what the verse joins.

Second: the work named is the work of the altar: burnt offering, grain offering, and sacrifice. The verse cannot be turned into a figure for teaching or for prayer.

Third: the promise grows. *“As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the seed of David My servant, and the Levites who minister to Me”* (Jeremiah 33:22).

The passage even quotes the opposing claim.

“Have you not seen what these people have spoken, saying, The two families which Yahweh chose, He has rejected them?” (Jeremiah 33:24).

Readers differ on whether the two families are Israel and Judah or the houses of David and Levi just named. On either reading Yahweh answers that He has not cast off what He chose (**Jeremiah 33:25–26**).

A note on the text. The oldest Greek translation of Jeremiah does not contain **Jeremiah 33:14–26**. The passage stands in the Hebrew text that has been handed down, and a Hebrew scroll of Jeremiah from Qumran (4QJer-c), copied in the first century before the common era, preserves part of verses 16–20. This Library follows the oldest Hebrew text available, and that text has the passage. The finding below does not rest on Jeremiah alone; six other witnesses carry it.

Finding: that **Yahweh** bound the continuance of the Levitical priesthood to the order of day and night is stated in **Jeremiah 33:17–22**. That the priesthood was given to stand without end is **Corroborated** by seven witnesses in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. A teaching that the priesthood was dissolved must answer every one of them.

V. CAN A PRIESTHOOD BE REMOVED? — WHAT THE TANAKH SHOWS

The Tanakh does not hide the failures of the priests. It records priests who died for their sin, a priestly house that was cut off, and a Temple that was burned. Each case shows what **Yahweh** does when priests fail. **In none of them does He end the priesthood!**

V-A. Priests Judged, the Priesthood Kept

Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and died before **Yahweh** (**Leviticus 10:1–2**). In the same chapter the service continues in the hands of *“Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons who were left”* (**Leviticus 10:12**). Hosea told the priests of his day, *“Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest to Me”* (**Hosea 4:6**). The sentence falls on those men, and the same prophet promises that after *“many days”* without sacrifice the children of Israel will return (**Hosea 3:4–5**).

Malachi’s rebuke is the sharpest of all, and it is spoken *“that My covenant may be with Levi”* (**Malachi 2:4**).

להיות בריתי אֶת־לִי

He does not say that the covenant is over. He says that the priests have *“corrupted the covenant of Levi”* (**Malachi 2:8**), and then that **Yahweh** *“will purify the sons of Levi”* (**Malachi 3:3**). A thing is purified in order to be kept. Nehemiah speaks the same way after the return. He prays against those who *“have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites”* (**Nehemiah 13:29**). After the exile it is still called a covenant.

V-B. The House of Eli — A House Removed, Not the Priesthood

The case that comes nearest to a dissolution is the house of Eli. A man of **Elohim** told him:

“I said indeed that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever. But now Yabweh declares: Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).

A promise spoken *“forever”* to one priestly house was withdrawn because of that house's contempt. This is the text most often cited to show that *olam* can end, and it must be read to its close:

“And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed all the days” (1 Samuel 2:35).

וְהָקִימְתִּי לִי כֹהֵן נָאֶמֶן

The Tanakh names the fulfillment. Solomon *“thrust out Abiathar from being priest to Yabweh, to fulfill the word of Yabweh which He spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh”* (1 Kings 2:27), and *“Zadok the priest the king put in the place of Abiathar”* (1 Kings 2:35). Abiathar's line is traced to Ithamar and Zadok's to Eleazar (1 Chronicles 24:3). The priesthood passed from one branch of Aaron's sons to another branch of Aaron's sons. It did not leave Aaron. The faithful priest also walks *“before My anointed.”* He stands beside the king; he is not the king.

Finding: Yabweh removes unfaithful priests and unfaithful priestly houses, and He keeps the priesthood within Aaron. Corroborated (Leviticus 10:1–2, 12; 1 Samuel 2:30–35; 1 Kings 2:27, 35).

V-C. Those Who Replaced the Sons of Aaron

Three times in the Tanakh men reach past the sons of Aaron, and each act is judged.

Korah. A Levite and two hundred and fifty leaders said to Moses and Aaron,

“All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Yabweh is among them; why then do you lift yourselves above the assembly of Yabweh?” (Numbers 16:3).

The words were true as far as they went, for the whole nation had been called a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Korah used a true calling to cancel a distinction that Yabweh had made, and Moses named what he was after: “and do you seek the priesthood also?” (Numbers 16:10). The censers of his company were beaten into a covering for the altar, as

“a memorial to the children of Israel, so that no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, should come near to burn incense before Yahweh” (Numbers 16:40 [Hebrew 17:5]).

לא־יִקְרַב אִישׁ זָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא מִזֶּרַע אַהֲרֹן

Aaron's rod, the only one that budded, was kept *“as a sign”* (Numbers 17:10 [Hebrew 17:25]).

Jeroboam. The first king of the northern tribes *“made priests from among all the people, who were not of the sons of Levi”* (1 Kings 12:31), and *“this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam”* (1 Kings 13:34). A king of Judah later stated the charge in full:

“Have you not driven out the priests of Yahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of the lands? ... But as for us, Yahweh is our Elohim, and we have not forsaken Him; and the priests who minister to Yahweh are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites are at their work” (2 Chronicles 13:9–10).

In Abijah's mouth, keeping the sons of Aaron at the altar is the mark of not having forsaken Yahweh, and replacing them is the mark of having forsaken Him. The same speech opens with the covenant of salt (2 Chronicles 13:5).

Uzziah. A king of Judah and a son of David went into the Temple to burn incense. The priests withstood him: *“It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to Yahweh, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense”*. He was a leper to the day of his death (2 Chronicles 26:18–21).

Finding: every attempt in the Tanakh to put other priests in the place of Aaron's sons, or to give their service to the tribe of Judah, is judged. Corroborated (Numbers 16:40; 1 Kings 13:33–34; 2 Chronicles 13:9–10; 26:16–21).

V-D. The Temple Was Destroyed Once Before

It is often said that the destruction of the Temple by Rome proves that Yahweh Himself ended the priesthood. The Tanakh has already answered this, because the Temple was destroyed once before. On that day the lament was as dark as words can be:

“Yahweh has caused the appointed feast and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion, and has spurned in the indignation of His anger king and priest. The Lord has cast off His altar” (Lamentations 2:6–7).

Yet the Torah had said beforehand what such a desolation means. It is the covenant's penalty, “I will make your sanctuaries desolate” (Leviticus 26:31), and the covenant's promise follows it: “I will not reject them ... to break My covenant with them” (Leviticus 26:44).

So it proved. When the exiles returned, 4,289 priests came with them (**Ezra 2:36–39**). Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests built the altar and offered on it *“as it is written in the Torah of Moses,”* before the foundation of the house was laid (**Ezra 3:2, 6**). Haggai was sent to the priests for a ruling: *“Ask now the priests for Torah”* (**Haggai 2:11**). When the house was finished *“they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses, for the service of Elohim at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses”* (**Ezra 6:18**). Two generations without an altar had dissolved nothing.

Finding: the loss of the Temple interrupts the service and does not end the priesthood.
Corroborated (**Leviticus 26:31, 44; Lamentations 2:6–7; Ezra 3:2–6; 6:18**). A second destruction is the same penalty a second time. The Tanakh gives no ground for reading it as a different verdict.

VI. PSALMS 110:4 AND MELCHIZEDEK — WHAT THE TEXT SAYS

VI-A. What Genesis Says of Melchizedek

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; and he was priest of El Elyon” (**Genesis 14:18**).

וּמֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וַיֵּין וְהוּא כֹהֵן לֵאלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן

Three verses hold all that the Torah tells of him. He was a king and a priest. He blessed Abram, and he blessed El Elyon (**Genesis 14:19–20**). *“And he gave him a tenth of all”* (**Genesis 14:20**); the Hebrew does not name the giver, though the sense is that Abram gave. Abram then named El Elyon as **Yahweh** (**Genesis 14:22**). The table sets what the text says beside what is commonly built on it.

WHAT IS TAUGHT	WHAT THE TEXT SAYS	GRADE
He had no father, no mother, and no genealogy	<u>No genealogy is recorded. Genesis is silent, and silence is not a statement.</u>	Not in the text
He founded an order of priests with successors	No successor, no ordination, and no body of priests is mentioned.	Not in the text

WHAT IS TAUGHT	WHAT THE TEXT SAYS	GRADE
Abram's tenth proves that his priesthood is greater than Levi's	Abram gave a tenth of the spoil once (Doc 250). The text draws no comparison with a tribe not yet born.	Not in the text
He was king and priest in Salem, and he served El Elyon, whom Abram calls Yahweh	Stated in Genesis 14:18, 22 . Salem is named with Zion in Psalms 76:2 [Hebrew 76:3].	Corroborated

VI-B. The Oath

“Yahweh has sworn and will not relent: You are a priest forever, after the manner of Melchizedek” (Psalms 110:4).

נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם אֶת־הַכֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבַרְתִּי מֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק

The last phrase is *al-divrati Malki-tsedeq*. The noun *divrah* (*cause; manner*) occurs five times in the Tanakh. In Job it is a “*cause*” laid before Elohim (Job 5:8). In Ecclesiastes *al-divrat* means “*on account of*” or “*concerning*” (Ecclesiastes 3:18; 8:2). The phrase in the psalm has been read in more than one way.

READING	SENSE	NOTE
<i>“after the manner of Melchizedek”</i>	A priest of the same kind: a king in Salem who is also a priest	The common reading
<i>“by My word, a king of righteousness”</i>	The name is read as its meaning, and <i>divrati</i> as “ <i>My decree</i> ”	The last letter of <i>divrati</i> may be read as “ <i>My</i> ”
<i>“on account of Melchizedek”</i>	Because of what Melchizedek was or said	Follows the sense of <i>al-divrat</i> in Ecclesiastes

Older English versions say “*after the order of,*” where “*order*” meant kind or manner. The sense of a standing body of priests with ranks and members is not in the Hebrew word, and none of the three readings gives it.

Finding: Psalms 110:4 records an oath of **Yahweh** that makes the one addressed “*a priest forever.*” It is a **Single witness**. No second text in the Tanakh repeats the oath or explains the phrase.

VI-C. Who Is Addressed, and What Kind of Priest

The psalm is headed *“Of David,”* and it opens, *“Yahweh says to my lord: Sit at My right hand”* (Psalms 110:1). The one addressed rules from Zion (Psalms 110:2). The psalm does not name him, and this study will not name him beyond what is written. What can be shown from the Tanakh is the kind of priesthood that the kings in Jerusalem held.

David wore a linen ephod, offered burnt offerings and peace offerings when the ark came to Zion, and *“blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts”* (2 Samuel 6:14, 17–18). Solomon blessed the assembly and offered at the dedication of the house (1 Kings 8:14, 55, 62–64). David's sons are once called *kohanim (priests)* (2 Samuel 8:18). The text says that these kings *“offered”*; it does not say whether they did so by their own hands or through the priests who served beside them. A king in Salem who blesses, as Melchizedek blessed, fits what the psalm says.

The same history shows the limit. In those very reigns the altar priesthood stayed with Aaron's sons. When Solomon was made king, *“they anointed him to Yahweh as leader, and Zadok as priest”* (1 Chronicles 29:22).

וַיִּמְשְׁחוּ לַיהוָה לְנָגִיד וּלְצִדּוֹק לְכֹהֵן

Two men were anointed on one day for two offices. When a later son of David crossed the line and took the incense, he was struck (2 Chronicles 26:16–21).

Finding: that the king in Jerusalem bore a royal priesthood of blessing and presiding, beside the priesthood of Aaron, is **Corroborated** (2 Samuel 6:17–18; 1 Kings 8:55; 1 Chronicles 29:22). That the altar service passed to him is **Not in the text.**

VI-D. Does the Oath Cancel the Covenant?

This is the center of the matter. The teaching under test reads **Psalms 110:4** as the end of Aaron's priesthood. The psalm says nothing of the kind. **It does not mention Aaron, Levi, the altar, or the Torah. It gives a priesthood to one. It takes nothing from another.**

Two things sworn “forever” by the same Elohim cannot cancel each other. **Yahweh** says so of His own word: *“My covenant I will not profane, nor alter what has gone out of My lips”* (Psalms 89:34 [Hebrew 89:35]). The Tanakh also sets the king and the priest beside each other again and again.

TEXT	THE KING	THE PRIEST
1 Samuel 2:35	<i>“My anointed”</i>	<i>“a faithful priest”</i> who <i>“shall walk before My anointed all the days”</i>
1 Chronicles 29:22	Solomon anointed as leader	Zadok anointed as priest, on the same day
Jeremiah 33:17–21	David shall not lack a man on the throne	The Levitical priests shall not lack a man before Yahweh
Zechariah 4:14	One of <i>“the two sons of oil”</i>	The other of the two <i>“who stand by the Lord of all the earth”</i>
Zechariah 6:13	<i>“he shall sit and rule upon his throne”</i>	<i>“and there shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them”</i>
Ezekiel 45:17; 46:2	The prince provides the offerings and worships at the threshold of the gate	<i>“the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings”</i>

Zechariah 6:13 can be read of one man who is both king and priest, or of two men, a ruler and a priest beside him. Doc 265 (Section X-D) set out both readings. The closing words speak of two:

וְעֵצַת שְׁלוֹם תִּהְיֶה בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם

“And the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them.” On either reading the verse does not remove the sons of Aaron, for the same prophet has just shown Joshua the high priest promised the charge of the house and its courts if he keeps the way (**Zechariah 3:7**).

Finding: that **Psalms 110:4** ends, replaces, or outranks the priesthood of Aaron is **Not in the text**. That the king and the priest stand side by side in the promises of restoration is **Corroborated** (**1 Samuel 2:35; Jeremiah 33:17–21; Zechariah 4:14; Ezekiel 46:2**).

VII. “A CHANGE OF THE PRIESTHOOD” — THE ARGUMENT TESTED

Each of the six steps set out in Section I-B is tested here against the Tanakh.

VII-A. Step One — “It Could Not Finish the Work”

The Torah does not describe the priesthood as a work that failed. Of the sin offering it says again and again, *“and the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him”* (Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35).

Of the Day of Atonement it says, *“from all your sins you shall be clean before Yahweh”* (Leviticus 16:30).

The psalmist says, *“The Torah of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul”* (Psalms 19:7 [Hebrew 19:8]).

The prophets do say that offerings without obedience are refused (1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11–17; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8). Those words rebuke the worshiper. They do not retire from the altar. The psalm that says *“You do not delight in sacrifice”* ends, *“then You will delight in sacrifices of righteousness ... then they shall offer bulls upon Your altar”* (Psalms 51:16, 19 [Hebrew 51:18, 21]). The repeating of the offerings is not a defect in the Torah's eyes either. The daily offering is *tamid (continual)* by command (Exodus 29:38–42; Numbers 28:3–6), as the Sabbath returns by command.

Finding: that the Torah calls the priesthood weak, unprofitable, or temporary is Not in the text.

VII-B. Steps Two and Three — “A Priest from Judah, and So a Change of the Law”

The argument grants the fact that matters most: **the Torah gives the altar to no tribe but Levi and to no family but Aaron's.** From that fact it concludes that the Torah was changed. Tanakh draws the other conclusion. When a man of Judah, a king of David's house, took up the priest's work, he was not counted as the first of a new order. He was struck with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16–21).

The Torah also says beforehand how to weigh any later word that alters a commandment:

“Whatever I command you, that you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it, nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]).

The next lines say that even a prophet whose sign comes true is not to be followed if he leads away from *“the way in which Yahweh your Elohim commanded you to walk”* (Deuteronomy 13:1–5 [Hebrew 13:2–6]). The commandment tests the later word. The later word does not test the commandment. And **Yahweh** says of Himself,

“For I am Yahweh, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6);

“El is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should relent” (Numbers 23:19);

“All His precepts are sure; they stand fast forever and ever” (Psalms 111:7–8).

Finding: that a change of priesthood requires or permits a change of the Torah is **Not in the text**. It is the reverse of the Torah's own rule (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 13:1–5).

VII-C. Step Four — “One Offering Ended Every Offering”

Whatever a reader believes about atonement, the prophets who saw furthest did not see an age without an altar. They saw the altar restored and the nations coming to it.

PROPHET	TEXT	WHAT IS SEEN IN THE DAYS TO COME
Isaiah	Isaiah 56:6–7; 60:7; 66:20–21	The foreigner's <i>“burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon My altar”</i> ; the flocks <i>“shall come up with acceptance on My altar”</i> ; priests and Levites are taken
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 17:26; 33:11, 18	Burnt offerings, grain offerings, and thank offerings are brought to the house of Yahweh
Ezekiel	Ezekiel 20:40–41; 43:18–27; 44:15–16	On <i>“My holy mountain”</i> the offerings are accepted; the altar is consecrated; the sons of Zadok offer the fat and the blood
Zechariah	Zechariah 14:16–21	The nations keep the Feast of Booths, and <i>“all who sacrifice shall come”</i>
Malachi	Malachi 3:3–4	The sons of Levi bring <i>“an offering in righteousness,”</i> pleasing <i>“as in the days of old”</i>

Finding: that the altar service belongs to the promised restoration is **Corroborated** by five prophets. That **Yahweh** ended all offerings forever is **Not in the text**. Atonement itself, and what stands in its place while no altar stands, was examined in **Doc 239** and is not repeated here.

VII-D. Step Five — “Every Believer Is Now a Priest”

The calling of the whole people as *“a kingdom of priests”* is true, and it is older than the teaching under test (Exodus 19:6). It was spoken at Sinai, and at the same mountain **Yahweh** gave the altar to Aaron (Exodus 28:1). The two were given together and have always stood together. The first says

what the nation is among the nations. The second says who serves at the altar within the nation. Isaiah holds both in the restoration: the people *“shall be called the priests of Yahweh”* (Isaiah 61:6), and from those gathered He will take *“for priests and for Levites”* (Isaiah 66:21). The one man in the Torah who argued from the holiness of all to the end of Aaron's distinction was Korah (Numbers 16:3). Doc 271 examined the national calling in full.

Finding: that the calling of all as a kingdom of priests removes the priesthood of Aaron is Not in the text.

VII-E. Step Six — “The Priesthood Went Back to Its First Order”

Section III-A showed that the Tanakh knows no priesthood of Melchizedek held by the fathers or by the firstborn, and that the priesthood of Aaron was commanded before the golden calf. There is no earlier order for the priesthood to return to. The one transfer that the Torah records runs from the firstborn to the Levites, and Yahweh says of it, “the Levites shall be Mine” (Numbers 3:12; 8:14).

Finding: Not in the text.

VII-F. The Six Steps Together

#	THE CLAIM	THE TANAKH	GRADE
1	The priesthood could not finish its work	<i>“The priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him”</i> (Leviticus 4:26)	Not in the text
2	Psalms 110:4 announces a priest who replaces Aaron	The psalm gives a priesthood to one and does not name Aaron, Levi, or the altar	Not in the text
3	A priest from Judah means the Torah was changed	A king of Judah who took the incense was struck (2 Chronicles 26:19); nothing may be added or taken away (Deuteronomy 12:32)	Not in the text
4	All offerings have ended forever	Five prophets see the altar in the restoration (Malachi 3:3–4)	Not in the text
5	All are priests, so none is set apart	The kingdom of priests and the house of Aaron were given at the same mountain (Exodus 19:6; 28:1)	Not in the text
6	The priesthood returned to Melchizedek's first order	No such order among the fathers; Aaron was chosen before the calf (Exodus 28–29; Exodus 32)	Not in the text

VIII. THE RESTORATION — WHO STANDS AT THE ALTAR

VIII-A. Ezekiel — The Sons of Zadok

“But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Yabweh” (Ezekiel 44:15).

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי צִדּוֹק אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִקְדָּשִׁי

Ezekiel names them four times (Ezekiel 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). The Levites who went astray after idols are not cast out of the house. They *“bear their iniquity”* and keep the charge of its gates and its service, though they do not come near the altar (Ezekiel 44:10–14). The priests teach the people *“the difference between the holy and the common”* and stand as judges (Ezekiel 44:23–24). Faithfulness decides who comes nearest. Descent decides who may come at all.

The ruler in this vision is called the *nasi (prince)*, and Ezekiel has earlier used that title of the promised ruler: *“My servant David shall be prince among them”* (Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25). In the restored house the prince provides the offerings for the feasts (Ezekiel 45:17), and then:

“The prince shall enter by way of the porch of the gate from outside, and shall stand by the post of the gate; and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate” (Ezekiel 46:2).

The prince stands at the threshold. The sons of Zadok stand at the altar. Even in the furthest vision that the Tanakh gives, the two offices are in two hands.

An honest note. The house that Ezekiel saw was not the house that the returned exiles built, and readers have long differed on whether it is a plan to be built or a vision to be understood. This study does not settle that. On either reading the prophet's witness is the same. When he was shown the days to come, he saw Zadok's sons serving. He did not see them dismissed.

VIII-B. Isaiah — Priests and Levites Taken

“And also from them I will take for priests and for Levites, says Yabweh” (Isaiah 66:21).

וְגַם־מֵהֶם אֶקַּח לְכֹהֲנִים לְלִוִּים אָמַר יְהוָה

The words “*from them*” may point to the children of Israel who are brought home in the verse before, or to the nations who bring them (**Isaiah 66:20**). On the first reading the scattered priestly families are restored to service. On the second, **Yahweh** widens the service to men of the nations. Careful readers stand behind each reading, and this study does not force the verse. Neither reading allows an end of priests and Levites. The offices are named in the last chapter of Isaiah, in a prophecy of “*the new heavens and the new earth*” (**Isaiah 66:22**).

VIII-C. Zechariah and Malachi — After the Return

These two prophets spoke after the exile, to the generation that rebuilt the house, and theirs are among the last voices of the Prophets. Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest cleansed and tells him,

“If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My charge, then you shall also judge My house and also keep My courts” (Zechariah 3:7).

He sees the family of the house of David and the family of the house of Levi mourning side by side on the day of repentance (**Zechariah 12:12–13**). Malachi closes the Prophets with the sons of Levi refined like gold and silver:

“And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and as silver, and they shall be to Yahweh bringers of an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to Yahweh, as in the days of old and as in former years” (Malachi 3:3–4).

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Finding — the restoration: the prophets promise a restored service in which the sons of Zadok offer, the Levites keep the charge, the sons of Levi are purified, and the ruler of David’s house stands beside them. Corroborated (**Jeremiah 33:17–22; Ezekiel 44:15; 46:2; Zechariah 3:7; Malachi 3:3–4**).

No prophet of the Tanakh foresees an age in which Yahweh has ended the priesthood of Aaron.

IX. WHERE THE PRIESTHOOD STANDS TODAY — INTERRUPTED, NOT DISSOLVED

IX-A. What Is Missing

Honesty runs in both directions. The same Tanakh that says the priesthood was never dissolved says plainly that its service can be stopped for a long time. “*For the children of Israel shall remain*

many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod and teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek Yahweh their Elohim and David their king” (Hosea 3:4–5). The “many days” are real. So is the “afterward.”

Three things that the Torah requires for the service are not present. There is no altar at the place **Yahweh** chose, and offerings may be brought nowhere else (**Deuteronomy 12:13–14**; Doc 251). There is no proven register of descent, and the returned exiles shut out of the priesthood every man who could not show his: *“These sought their register among those enrolled by genealogy, but it was not found; so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean” (Ezra 2:62).* And there is no priest with the Urim and Thummim to decide such cases (**Ezra 2:63**; **Nehemiah 7:65**).

IX-B. What Follows

First: no one may serve as a priest today. The priesthood is Aaron’s, and Aaron’s sons cannot now be proven or brought to an altar. This Institution said so in Doc 265 and repeats it here.

Second: no one may take the priesthood’s place. If the office were dissolved it would be vacant, and men have always been ready to fill a vacant office. Because it is not dissolved but waiting, every claim to hold it by another road is the claim of Korah and of Jeroboam (Numbers 16:10; 1 Kings 12:31). **This is true of a clergy that calls itself a priesthood and of an eldership that puts itself in the Levite’s place.** It is also true of any claim to hold a priesthood *“of Melchizedek”* by membership or by ordination. The Tanakh records that oath as spoken to one whom Yahweh addresses, and it names no body of members (**Psalms 110:4**).

Third: no one may collect the Levite’s wage while denying the Levite’s office. The tithe was given *“to the children of Levi ... in return for their service” (Numbers 18:21).* Malachi rebukes the withholding of the tithe (**Malachi 3:8–10**), and he is the same prophet who says that the covenant with Levi stands (Malachi 2:4–5). A ministry cannot quote his third chapter for its treasury and set aside his second. Doc 250 reached the same finding: **no pastor, elder, rabbi, imam, or institution today stands in the place of the Levite.**

Fourth: what the Torah gives to every Israelite and to every sojourner remains. Prayer toward the place continues where no altar stands (**1 Kings 8:46–50**; **Daniel 6:10** [Hebrew 6:11]).

Return continues: “Take with you words, and return to Yahweh” (Hosea 14:2 [Hebrew 14:3]). Teaching in the household continues (**Deuteronomy 6:7**). The calling to be a kingdom of priests among the nations continues (**Exodus 19:6**). Doc 239 set out the witnesses to return where no altar stands.

IX-C. A Note on the Priestly Families

A historical note, not a covenant witness. Jewish families have handed down the standing of priest and of Levite from father to son since the Temple fell. Studies of the Y chromosome published since 1997 have found that a large share of the men who carry the priestly family tradition descend from a common paternal ancestor of roughly three thousand years ago. This is of interest, and it agrees with the Tanakh's expectation that the seed of Aaron continues. **It proves no man's right to the altar.** The Tanakh's own standard is a register and a priest with Urim and Thummim (**Ezra 2:62–63**), and by that standard the matter waits for **Yahweh**.

IX-D. The Standard Applied to This Institution

Miqdash Bethel applies the same standard to itself. Its founder holds the title of Elder, an office that the Torah leaves open in every covenant community (Doc 265, Section V). This Institution ordains no priests, claims no descent from Aaron for its service, and receives no tithe as the Levite's due (Doc 250). It teaches the Torah as fathers and elders are commanded to teach it, and it waits, with every covenant believer, for the day that **Yahweh** has promised. Where its own earlier writings have said more than the Tanakh says, Section XI sets the matter out.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION TREATS THE PRIESTHOOD OF AARON

X-A. The Three Traditions

The table sets the three traditions against Tanakh's findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, under the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Teaching today	Rabbinic tradition holds that the priesthood of Aaron is permanent and that its service is suspended. The Mishnah records that the daily offering ceased on the seventeenth of Tammuz (Ta'anit 4:6), and Josephus gives the same day for the year the Temple fell (<i>Jewish</i>	Hebrews argues that perfection did not come by the Levitical priesthood, that another priest has arisen <i>“after the order of Melchisedec,”</i> and that <i>“the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law”</i> (7:11–12). It says the former	Islam has no priesthood, no altar, and no sacrifice for sin. The Qur'an honors Harun as a prophet (Q. 19:53) and as Musa's appointed helper (Q. 20:29–32), names <i>“the family of Aaron”</i> (Q. 2:248), and shows Zakariyya praying in the sanctuary (Q. 3:37–39). It says that every

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
	<i>War 6.94</i>). Kohanim still gives the priestly blessing and receives the redemption of the firstborn. The daily Amidah asks that the service be restored to the house. Maimonides writes that in the days of the awaited king the offerings will be brought again (Laws of Kings 11:1). The Talmud reads Psalms 110:4 of Abraham and explains the phrase as “<i>due to the words of Melchizedek</i>” (Nedarim 32b).	commandment is set aside “<i>for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof</i>” (7:18) and that the first covenant is “<i>ready to vanish away</i>” (8:13). The Greek Psalter’s <i>kata tēn taxin</i> (according to the order) supplied the word “<i>order.</i>” Trent taught “<i>a new, visible, and external priesthood, into which the old has been translated</i>” (Session 23, ch. 1). The Catholic Catechism says the old priesthood “<i>remains powerless to bring about salvation</i>” (1540). The Westminster Confession calls the ceremonial laws “<i>now abrogated</i>” (19.3). Luther taught the priesthood of all the baptized (1520; 1 Peter 2:9). The Latter-day Saints confer an “<i>Aaronic</i>” and a “<i>Melchizedek</i>” priesthood by ordination (Doctrine and Covenants 107:1).	community was given a rite of sacrifice (Q. 22:34), and that it is not the flesh or the blood of the offering that reaches Allah, but the piety of the one who offers (Q. 22:37). Classical teaching holds that earlier laws were replaced by the law given through Muhammad (Q. 2:106; 5:48).
Covenant strength	Keeps the priesthood closed to all but Aaron’s sons, as Numbers 3:10 requires. Refuses to build a substitute altar or to ordain a substitute priesthood. Keeps the hope of Jeremiah 33:18 and Malachi 3:3–4 in daily prayer. This matches Ezra 2:63: wait “<i>until a priest</i>	Hebrews itself says, “<i>if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law</i>” (8:4). That sentence places its argument in heaven and leaves the earthly altar to Aaron’s sons. Hebrews 5:4 restates the	Claims no priesthood where no altar stands, and so never made priests as Jeroboam did. Honors Aaron and his family by name. Q. 5:44 says the prophets, the rabbis, and the scholars judged by the Torah, in which is “<i>guidance and light.</i>” Q.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
	<i>stands with Urim and with Thummim.”</i>	Torah's rule that no one takes this honor for himself. The first believers went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1); <i>“a great company of the priests”</i> believed (Acts 6:7); and Paul paid for offerings there among thousands who were <i>“all zealous of the law”</i> (Acts 21:20–26). Matthew 5:17–19 denies that the Torah is abolished. Dispensational teachers since the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) read Ezekiel 40–48 as a future house in which Zadok's sons serve.	9:31 warns against taking religious leaders as lords.
Covenant departure	The Pittsburgh Platform of the Reform movement (1885) declared, <i>“We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron”</i> (principle 5). That is a Jewish form of the same dissolution. The reading of Psalms 110:4 in Nedarim 32b is homily; the psalm does not name Abraham. Where prayer or study is taught as a full and final replacement for the service, more is claimed than Hosea 14:2 says.	The argument takes one verse, Psalms 110:4 , and sets it against seven witnesses that the priesthood of Aaron is forever. By the standard of Deuteronomy 19:15 the many govern the one. It concludes from the Torah's silence about Judah that the Torah was changed, where the Tanakh concludes that Judah may not take the altar (2 Chronicles 26:18). It is called <i>“weak”</i> what Psalms 19:7 calls perfect. A ministerial priesthood at an altar that is not Aaron's, and a priesthood <i>“of Melchizedek”</i> conferred by ordination, are both what Numbers 16:40 forbids. A	The teaching that earlier laws were replaced (Q. 2:106) meets the same witnesses as the church's teaching. A covenant sworn <i>“forever,”</i> by the sign of day and night, is not replaced (Jeremiah 33:20–21). The Qur'an's honor of Aaron is not joined to any expectation that his sons will serve again.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	✶ ISLAM
		<i>“change of the law”</i> is what Deuteronomy 12:32 forbids.	
Covenant witness	Nearly two thousand years of refusing to replace the sons of Aaron is itself a witness that the office is being held open and has not been closed.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Hebrews 8:4, Acts 21, and Matthew 5:17–19 call the churches to stop teaching that Yahweh annulled what He swore, and to leave the altar to those He named.	Q. 22:37 agrees with 1 Samuel 15:22 and Hosea 6:6 that obedience is what Yahweh seeks in every offering. That is the prophets' rebuke of the worshiper. It is not the end of the altar.

X-B. The Sacred Name Movement

The Sacred Name movement is not one body, and its assemblies do not all say the same thing. Most of them came out of Sabbath-keeping churches and kept the framework that those churches had received from Protestant teaching: the commandments remain, except the *“ceremonial”* ones. The published statements below are quoted as comparative reference. They do not all use the word *“dissolved.”* What they share is the result.

ASSEMBLY OR TEACHER	WHAT IT PUBLISHES	TESTED BY THE TANAKH
Assemblies of Yahweh (Bethel, Pennsylvania), Statement of Doctrine	Members must keep all the commandments, statutes, and judgments <i>“(except the ritual and animal sacrifice Laws)”</i> ; <i>“We now keep a spiritual sacrifice rather than animal sacrifices, meal, and drink offerings”</i> (point 6). Every member is to tithe <i>“to the Assemblies of Yahweh,”</i> paid <i>“to the headquarters treasury,”</i> with Malachi 3:8–12 and Leviticus 27:30–33 cited (point 24).	The accepted laws are the ones the Torah marks <i>chuqqat olam</i> (Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 16:34). The title of Leviticus 27:30 and Malachi 3:10 was given to Levi (Numbers 18:21). The statement sets aside Levi's service and keeps Levi's wage.
Yahweh's Restoration Ministry (Holts	All of Yahweh's laws are to be kept <i>“(except the sacrifices mentioned in Hebrews 9 and ritual circumcision)”</i> ; a	The same exception and the same redirection. The Torah gives no list of

ASSEMBLY OR TEACHER	WHAT IT PUBLISHES	TESTED BY THE TANAKH
Summit, Missouri), <i>What We Believe</i>	tithe is <i>“10 percent of a person’s income,”</i> with Leviticus 27:30–33 and Malachi 3:8–12 cited.	statutes that expire (Deuteronomy 4:2).
Hebrew Roots teaching (Hoshana Rabbah, 2014)	<i>“With the coming of Yeshua, the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was replaced by the original order of Melchizedek”;</i> the Levitical priesthood was <i>“temporarily and parenthetically inserted.”</i> The same article allows that the sons of Zadok may serve in a future house.	No original order of Melchizedek among the fathers is in the text (Section III-A). Aaron was chosen before the golden calf (Exodus 28:1). The allowance for Ezekiel 44:15 concedes the point.
Sabbath-keeping Churches of God (United Church of God, <i>Good News</i> , 2007)	<i>“Christ’s divine office as High Priest has superseded the Levitical priesthood”;</i> the law of tithing is said to have changed <i>“only in the aspect of the recipient of the tithe.”</i>	Jeremiah 33:18–21 says the Levitical priests will not lack a man while day and night remain. The Tanakh names no new recipient for Levi’s tithe (Numbers 18:21–24).

Where these assemblies are right. They restored the Name where the churches had removed it. They keep the Sabbath, the feasts, and the clean-food laws on the ground that **Yahweh’s** statutes are forever. That ground is sound, and the priesthood stands on the same ground. This study asks them to apply their own rules evenly. A statute is not ***“ceremonial”*** and expired because it concerns the altar; the Torah knows no such class. Every covenant believer today is unable to keep the statutes of the altar, because the house is not standing. That is the condition **Hosea 3:4** foretold. To teach that **Yahweh** annulled those statutes is a different thing, and the Tanakh does not support it.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library’s rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else’s. On the main finding the earlier material and this study agree. Part 5 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation* and Doc 164 (Section IX) both teach that the Levitical priesthood was not abolished, and this study confirms them. The points below need correction or refinement. Corrections 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 were made in the Google Docs in October 2026. Corrections 3 and 4 concern the Institution’s own teaching and are set out for Elder Kepha’s decision.

Correction 1 — Zechariah 6:13, “a second time.” Part 9 of *The Government of the Hebrew Nation* (*The Order of Melchizedek*, revised 2026), in its section on a second restoration, quoted the verse as *“the counsel of peace shall be between them a second time”* and built on those last words. The Hebrew is *bein sheneihem* (*between the two of them*), בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם, from the number two (H8147). The Hebrew for *“a second time”* is *shenit*, שְׁנִית (H8145), as in **1 Chronicles 29:22**, and it is not in **Zechariah 6:13**. The quotation has been corrected in the Google Doc and a note placed there. Whether the teaching of that section stands on other grounds is for Elder Kepha’s decision.

Correction 2 — a New Testament sentence cited to Daniel and Isaiah. Part 9 quoted *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of Elohim”* as a covenant principle from **Daniel 7:22** and **Isaiah 61:1–2**. The sentence is Romans 8:19. It is in neither Tanakh passage. The citation has been corrected in the Google Doc.

Correction 3 — “above” and “superior to” the Levitical priesthood. Part 9 says that Abram’s tenth *“establishes the order of authority: Melchizedek’s order stands above the Levitical priesthood,”* and that **Psalms 110:4** establishes an order *“independent of the Levitical succession and superior to it.”* That the priesthood of the psalm is distinct from Aaron’s is sound. That it stands *“above”* Aaron’s is an argument drawn from Abram’s tenth, and it is **Not in the text** (Sections VI-A and VI-D). The Tanakh sets the two side by side. Suggested wording: *“beside the Levitical priesthood and distinct from it.”*

Correction 4 — the Order of Melchizedek as a body with members. Parts 9 and 13 describe the children of Israel at Sinai as *“the members of the Melchizedek Order,”* the covenant at Sinai as its *“covenant congress,”* and the Order as a governing body that covenant-faithful servants enter by qualification. The Sinai narrative does not name Melchizedek. The oath of **Psalms 110:4** is spoken to one, and the Hebrew phrase does not carry the sense of a body with members (Section VI-B). Part 9 also says that **Yahweh** issued to another *“the same covenant of peace that He gave to Phinehas.”* The covenant of **Numbers 25:12–13** is given *“to him and to his seed after him.”* These three points are **Not in the text**. The finding of Part 5 of the same series, that the Levitical priesthood holds permanent offices, is not affected.

Correction 5 — the definition of *divrah*. Part 13 defined the word behind *“order”* in **Psalms 110:4** (H1700) as *“cause, manner, reason; business, occupation, acts, matter; an arrangement or placement of something creating order; a place of order.”* The lexicons give cause, reason, and manner. The remaining senses are not found in any of the word’s five uses (**Job 5:8; Ecclesiastes 3:18; 7:14; 8:2; Psalms 110:4**). The definition has been corrected in the Google Doc.

Correction 6 — the word *sphragis*. Part 5 called *sphragis* (*seal*) a word of “*the Aramaic context*.” It is Greek. The Hebrew word for a seal is *chotam* (*seal; signet*) (H2368). The line has been corrected in the Google Doc.

Correction 7 — Isaiah 66:21 in Doc 164. Doc 164 (Section IX-C) presented it as settled that “*from them*” means men of the nations. The Hebrew allows that reading and also the reading that the returned children of Israel are meant (Section VIII-B above). A sentence giving both readings has been added in the Google Doc. Doc 164’s finding stands on either reading.

One open item is touched by this study. MLI v59 (Open Item 13) records that the words “*priesthood and patriarch*” in Doc 216 still await a decision. The findings of Sections V-C and IX-B bear on that wording.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE PRIESTHOOD

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	Yahweh gave the altar priesthood to Aaron and his sons, and the service of the house to Levi, by a perpetual statute for their generations.	Exodus 28:1; 29:9; 40:15; Numbers 3:5–10; Deuteronomy 18:5
II	Yahweh bound the priests’ portion by a covenant of salt and gave Phinehas a covenant of everlasting priesthood. He set the priesthood on the same footing as the throne of David.	Numbers 18:19; 25:12–13; 2 Chronicles 13:5; Jeremiah 33:20–21
III	Yahweh judges unfaithful priests and removes unfaithful priestly houses, and He keeps the priesthood within Aaron. He has never dissolved it.	Leviticus 10:1–2, 12; 1 Samuel 2:30–35; 1 Kings 2:27, 35; Malachi 2:4–8
IV	No man, king, or assembly may put other priests in the place of Aaron’s sons or take their service.	Numbers 16:10, 40; 1 Kings 12:31; 13:33–34; 2 Chronicles 13:9–10; 26:16–21
V	The oath of Psalms 110:4 names a priest forever after the manner of Melchizedek. It takes nothing from Aaron. The king and the priest stand side by side.	Psalms 110:4; 1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Chronicles 29:22; Zechariah 6:13; Ezekiel 46:2

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
VI	The loss of the Temple interrupts the service and does not end the priesthood. The prophets promise the sons of Zadok at the altar and the sons of Levi purified.	Leviticus 26:31, 44; Hosea 3:4–5; Ezra 3:2–6; Ezekiel 44:15; Malachi 3:3–4
VII	Until a priest stands with Urim and Thummim, no one may serve as priest, and no one may take the priest's place or the Levite's wage. Every covenant believer keeps what remains: prayer, return, the teaching of the Torah, and the calling of a kingdom of priests.	Ezra 2:62–63; Numbers 18:21; Hosea 14:2; Deuteronomy 6:7; Exodus 19:6

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question there is usually a person who was taught that the priests of Israel were a shadow that has passed, and who has now read the word *“forever”* in the Torah and does not know what to do with it. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: believe what Yahweh swore. He tied the priesthood of Levi to the coming of day and night (**Jeremiah 33:20–21**). Every morning is His witness that He has not broken it.

Second: test the teaching by the commandment. *“You shall not add to it, nor take away from it”* (**Deuteronomy 12:32**). A teaching that needs the Torah to be changed has already been answered by the Torah (**Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Isaiah 8:20**).

Third: do not take what is not yours, and do not follow one who does. The censors of Korah's company are a covering on the altar to this day in the text, *“a memorial to the children of Israel”* (**Numbers 16:40**). No title, ordination, or membership makes a priest of one whom Yahweh did not name (**2 Chronicles 13:9**).

Fourth: do what remains. *“Take with you words, and return to Yahweh”* (**Hosea 14:2**). Teach your children (**Deuteronomy 6:7**). *“To obey is better than sacrifice”* was said while the altar stood (**1 Samuel 15:22**), and it is no less true now.

Fifth: wait in hope. The lament over the first ruin ends with a prayer: *“Turn us to You, O Yahweh, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old”* (**Lamentations 5:21**). He will purify the sons of Levi (**Malachi 3:3**). He who gave the office will fill it.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 8:20; 12:7–8	The fathers build altars	III-A
Genesis 14:18–22	Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of El Elyon	II; III-A; VI-A
Genesis 17:7	The everlasting covenant with Abraham	II
Exodus 3:1, 15	The priest of Midian; the Name forever	II; III-A
Exodus 12:14, 17	The Passover a perpetual statute	II
Exodus 13:2	The firstborn belong to Yahweh	III-A
Exodus 19:5–6, 22	A kingdom of priests; priests before Aaron	I-D; III-A; V-C; VII-D; VII-F; IX-B; XII
Exodus 21:6	A servant <i>“forever”</i>	II
Exodus 28:1	Aaron and his sons brought near	II; III-B; VII-D; VII-F; X-B; XII
Exodus 28–29	Aaron and his sons set apart, before the golden calf	III-B; VII-F
Exodus 32	The golden calf	III-B; VII-F
Exodus 29:9	The priesthood theirs for a perpetual statute	II; III-B; IV-A; X-B; XII
Exodus 29:38–42	The continual offering	VII-A
Exodus 31:16–17	The Sabbath an everlasting covenant	II
Exodus 32:26–29	The sons of Levi at the calf	III-C
Exodus 40:15	An everlasting priesthood throughout their generations	II; III-B; IV-A; XII
Leviticus 2:13	The salt of the covenant	III-D
Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35	The priest makes atonement, and it is forgiven	VII-A; VII-F

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Leviticus 10:1–2, 12	Nadab and Abihu; Eleazar and Ithamar continue	V-A; V-B; XII
Leviticus 16:29–34	The Day of Atonement a perpetual statute	II; VII-A; X-B
Leviticus 23:31, 41	The feasts a perpetual statute	II
Leviticus 26:31, 44	Sanctuaries desolate; the covenant not broken	II; V-D; XII
Leviticus 27:30–33	The tithe is holy to Yahweh	X-B
Numbers 3:5–13, 41, 45	The Levites given to Aaron and taken for the firstborn	II; III-A; III-B; III-C; VII-E; X-A; XII
Numbers 8:14–18	The Levites shall be Mine	III-A; VII-E
Numbers 16:3, 10, 40	Korah seeks the priesthood; the memorial	II; V-C; VII-D; IX-B; X-A; XII; XIII
Numbers 17:10	Aaron's rod kept as a sign	V-C
Numbers 18:1–7	Priests and Levites kept apart	II; III-C
Numbers 18:19	A covenant of salt forever	II; III-D; IV-A; XII
Numbers 18:21–24	The tithe given to Levi for the service	III-C; IV-A; IX-B; X-B; XII
Numbers 23:19	El is not a man, that He should lie	VII-B
Numbers 25:10–13	The covenant of everlasting priesthood	I-C; II; III-E; IV-A; XI; XII
Numbers 28:3–6	The continual burnt offering	VII-A
Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32	Do not add or take away	VII-B; VII-F; X-A; X-B; XIII
Deuteronomy 6:7	Teach your children	IX-B; XII; XIII
Deuteronomy 10:8–9	Levi set apart to this day	II; III-C; IV-A
Deuteronomy 12:13–14	Offerings only at the chosen place	IX-A
Deuteronomy 13:1–5	The later word tested by the commandment	VII-B; XIII
Deuteronomy 18:2, 5	Chosen to minister all the days	II; III-C; IV-A; XII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Deuteronomy 19:15	Two or three witnesses	I-D; X-A; XII
Deuteronomy 33:10	Levi teaches and offers	III-C
Joshua 18:7	The priesthood of Yahweh their inheritance	III-C
Judges 2:1	I will never break My covenant	II
1 Samuel 1:22	Samuel given <i>“forever”</i>	II
1 Samuel 2:30–35	The house of Eli; a faithful priest	V-B; VI-D; XII
1 Samuel 15:22	To obey is better than sacrifice	VII-A; X-A; XIII
2 Samuel 6:14–18	David offers and blesses	VI-C
2 Samuel 7:16	The throne of David forever	II
2 Samuel 8:18	David’s sons called kohanim	VI-C
1 Kings 2:27, 35	Abiathar removed; Zadok in his place	II; III-E; V-B; XII
1 Kings 8:14–64	Solomon blesses and offers	VI-C; IX-B
1 Kings 8:46–50	Prayer toward the place	IX-B
1 Kings 12:31; 13:33–34	Jeroboam’s priests	V-C; IX-B; XII
Isaiah 1:11–17	Offerings without obedience refused	VII-A
Isaiah 8:20	To the Torah and to the testimony	XIII
Isaiah 56:6–7; 60:7	Offerings accepted on My altar	VII-C
Isaiah 61:1–6	You shall be called the priests of Yahweh	VII-D; XI
Isaiah 66:20–22	Priests and Levites taken	VII-C; VII-D; VIII-B; XI
Jeremiah 17:26; 33:11	Offerings brought to the house of Yahweh	VII-C
Jeremiah 33:1, 14–26	David and the Levitical priests; the covenant of day and night	II; III-D; IV-A; IV-B; VI-D; VII-C; VIII-C; X-A; X-B; XII; XIII
Ezekiel 20:40–41	Offerings accepted on My holy mountain	VII-C

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25	My servant David, the prince	VIII-A
Ezekiel 40–48	The vision of the restored house	X-A
Ezekiel 40:46; 43:18–27	The sons of Zadok; the altar consecrated	VII-C; VIII-A
Ezekiel 44:10–24	The sons of Zadok come near; the Levites keep the charge	II; III-E; IV-A; VII-C; VIII-A; VIII-C; X-B; XII
Ezekiel 45:17; 46:2	The prince at the threshold, the priests at the altar	VI-D; VIII-A; VIII-C; XII
Ezekiel 48:11	The sons of Zadok who kept the charge	VIII-A
Hosea 3:4–5	Many days without sacrifice; afterward	V-A; IX-A; X-B; XII
Hosea 4:6; 6:6	Priests rejected; mercy and not sacrifice	V-A; VII-A; X-A
Hosea 14:2	Take with you words	IX-B; X-A; XII; XIII
Micah 6:6–8	What Yahweh requires	VII-A
Haggai 2:11	Ask the priests for Torah	V-D
Zechariah 3:7	Joshua the high priest and the charge of the house	VI-D; VIII-C
Zechariah 4:14	The two sons of oil	VI-D
Zechariah 6:13	The counsel of peace between the two of them	VI-D; XI; XII
Zechariah 12:12–13	The houses of David and Levi mourn	VIII-C
Zechariah 14:16–21	All who sacrifice shall come	VII-C
Malachi 2:4–8	The covenant with Levi	IV-A; V-A; IX-B; XII
Malachi 3:3–4, 6	The sons of Levi purified; I do not change	IV-A; V-A; VII-B; VII-C; VII-F; VIII-C; X-A; XII; XIII
Malachi 3:8–12	The tithe and the storehouse	IX-B; X-B
Psalms 19:7	The Torah of Yahweh is perfect	VII-A; X-A

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Psalms 51:16, 19	Sacrifices of righteousness	VII-A
Psalms 76:2	Salem and Zion	VI-A
Psalms 89:34	My covenant I will not profane	VI-D
Psalms 106:30–31	Phinehas, to all generations forever	III-E
Psalms 110:1–4	A priest forever after the manner of Melchizedek	I-B; II; VI-B; VI-C; VI-D; VII-F; IX-B; X-A; XI; XII
Psalms 111:7–8	His precepts stand fast forever	VII-B
Job 1:5; 5:8	Job offers for his children; a cause laid before Elohim	III-A; VI-B; XI
Lamentations 2:6–7; 5:21	King and priest spurned; renew our days	V-D; XIII
Ecclesiastes 3:18; 7:14; 8:2	The uses of divrah	II; VI-B; XI
Daniel 6:10; 7:22	Prayer toward Jerusalem; judgment given to the holy ones	IX-B; XI
Ezra 2:36–39, 62–63	The priests who returned; those without a register	V-D; IX-A; IX-C; X-A; XII
Ezra 3:2–6; 6:18	The altar rebuilt; priests in their divisions	V-D; XII
Ezra 7:1–5	Ezra's line through Zadok and Phinehas	III-E
Nehemiah 7:65; 13:29	Urim and Thummim awaited; the covenant of the priesthood	V-A; IX-A
1 Chronicles 6:4–8	From Aaron through Phinehas to Zadok	III-E
1 Chronicles 23:13	Aaron set apart forever	III-B; IV-A
1 Chronicles 24:1, 3	The divisions of the sons of Aaron	II; V-B
1 Chronicles 29:22	Solomon and Zadok anointed	VI-C; VI-D; XI; XII
2 Chronicles 13:5, 9–10	The covenant of salt; the sons of Aaron not forsaken	II; III-D; V-C; XII; XIII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
2 Chronicles 26:16–21	Uzziah and the incense	V-C; VI-C; VII-B; VII-F; X-A; XII

“And it shall be to him and to his seed after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood.”

Numbers 25:13 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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