

# PRIESTHOOD AND INTERCESSION

## Challenges and Guidance from Scripture

**Leviticus 10:1-3\_** *“By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as Holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.”*

This verse shows that God does not permit just anyone to enter into His presence but rather those He chooses, prepares, and

qualifies. Being a priest is a matter of function. Being an intercessor is much more about having a right heart attitude to God, as well as having a genuine burden for the people you represent. It's a person who is prepared to stand in the gap and sometimes take drastic action to appeal to

God on behalf of those who because of their behaviour, are headed towards destruction. It's a vital ministry we need to appreciate in the home, in fellowship, in our nation and especially on behalf of Israel.

**The first priests referred to in scripture** are not those of Israel but the Egyptian Priests of ON. Who knows exactly how they were selected and what life was like for them? Joseph got a close up view by being married to Asenath the daughter of Poti-Pherah the priest of ON. His two sons born in Egypt were named Manasseh ("For God has made me forget all my toil AND my fathers house") and Ephraim ("For God has made me to be fruitful in the Land of my affliction.") [Gen 41:51,52](#) His early bitter experiences had marked Joseph. He thought he could forget his father's house but God would change and shape him for future use.

**The first Biblical evidence** of priestly activity was in [Gen 3:21](#). Right at the beginning of all things, God steps into the tragedy in the Garden as the Great High Priest who initiates redemption by the death of a substitute animal, to provide skins that effectively cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. Their sense of shame after having eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, drove them to hide from God's presence. By their own efforts, they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. [Gen 3:7](#). Just as for us, their efforts to cover their sin proved inadequate; for fig leaves are indeed a poor choice for covering.

### **Some opening observations**

1. Priests were not chosen because they were good and better than anyone else.

2. Priests were not chosen by selection panel on the strength of a good CV.  
3. Priests were not chosen because they knew what they should do.

Being drawn into intercession, is not something for us to boast about. It is not something that elevates you in order to have power over others. If you are always telling people that you are an intercessor, according to some notable Prayer leaders in Israel, it's a good indication that you are probably not there yet. Often being called into intercession can be with reluctance and a feeling of dread.

Whilst there is much blessing and encouragement from corporate prayer, intercession seems to be an activity where one enters the presence of the Lord and shuts the door behind you. It's drawing near to Him often on your own, as we can see by looking in [Jer 30:21](#). Here we have the example of our great High Priest – the Lord Jesus Christ. But lets look at some examples of Intercessors.

### **Joseph as Intercessor**

In [Gen chs 41-45](#) Joseph is a type of Messiah in his choosing, his rejection, his suffering, his elevation and his provision for a people who only come to know him after themselves suffering a while. Notice that Joseph recognised them before they knew him. Joseph creates a time of trouble for his brothers. Why? There is a sense of anger and justice in his heart but also a desire to show mercy. It is all in his plan to bring them to confession and repentance. In the end, he sends out all the Egyptians before revealing himself to them as the one who would be their deliverer. In their youthful jealousy, they almost killed him.

Mercifully, they sold him for the price of a slave to Egypt instead. They meant it for evil but God meant it for good. So despite their treatment of him, Joseph intercedes for them before Pharaoh - and peace and restoration comes. [Gen 45:16](#)

### Preparation of Moses as intercessor.

Moses was born a Hebrew but raised in the palace of Pharaoh in Egypt. His name means “drawn forth or “drawn out of”. His name describes the work he would do in leading forth the people of Israel from the bondage of slavery into the Land of promise. Even though he was raised in Egypt, it seems clear he knew who he was, where he came from and who his people were. [Ex 3](#) After many trials, God arranges a meeting with Moses at Horeb by manifesting His Glory in the bush that burned by fire. Curiosity led to a fearful confrontation with a Holy God. *“Take off your shoes”* - it’s a Holy place.

Moses learned that you cannot come into God’s presence any way you please. It has to be at His timing and on His conditions. Here, God reveals all that He knows of the condition of His people. He also reveals to Moses the solution to their plight – It’s Moses! Moses was **God’s choice** to be **His spokesman and intercessor** who would stand before God and the People. His response was perhaps all too typical - Who me Lord? Has this not been the stock answer for all of God’s chosen spokesmen? But God knows what He is doing. *“He chooses the weak things of this world to confound the wise”*. [1 Cor 1:27](#) So that the glory goes to Him.

In [Gen 32:1-14](#) after the Golden Calf incident and again in [Num 14:11-25](#) when Israel

arrives at the borders of the land, Moses demonstrates his compassion to a rebellious nation. He intercedes to prevent the Lord from destroying the people even to the point of offering to be blotted out. What a wonderful example! Here it shows that it wasn’t a question of altering God’s mind, rather it brought him into a closer relationship with God, to know what God was thinking. The same is true for us. How important it is to know what God has already agreed to do. It saves us from much presumption when we pray the prayers that are truly according to His will.

There is so much more about Moses, but I believe by now looking at the life of Aaron, we will gain some very useful personal practical guidance and encouragement to what it was like to be chosen for a priestly and intercessory role.

### The Choosing of Aaron as High priest.

Aaron was brother to Moses and first chosen by God to be Moses mouthpiece when he considered himself inadequate to do the job. Aaron may have had a good voice but he didn’t have the character to go with it. This would change only as he became Israel’s High priest.

Before he began his ministry in the Tabernacle there was much shaping of his character to make him fit for that unique role. A refining work needed to be done. He appears first as the mouthpiece for Moses before Israel and then before Pharaoh.

**Israel as Priests.** In [Ex 19:22, 24](#) it indicates there were already the sons of Levi who were functioning as priests in Israel. And yet in [Ex 19:5](#) God declares that Israel as a whole was to a Kingdom of Priests and a

Holy Nation. All of them! They couldn't just pass off the responsibility onto a professional class. They were collectively to be a Witness before the world See [Isaiah 43](#). As a Royal Priesthood they would stand between God and the world as intermediaries proclaiming to the world the redeeming love of God and His remedy for sin. Into this ministry all believers are grafted in. [1 Peter 2:9](#)

God's desire was to dwell among them as a people, in order to stir up a jealousy among the nations. His desire was to re-establish the Eden condition where God walked and talked with His creation. In establishing the Tabernacle and all the institutions of that Holy Place, God could dwell amongst His People without destroying them! But every critical part needed careful and skilful construction.

### [Aarons transformation.](#)

On the first visit to Sinai which resulted in the Book of the Law, [Ex 24:4-7](#) Aaron looks on as Moses and Joshua are called up to speak with God and record all He said in the Book of the Covenant. Then in [Ex 24:9](#) Moses Aaron, Nadab and Abihu are called up to see God. But as before, it is Moses and Joshua who proceed further, where God provided the Tablets of Stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. God and not man established the Priesthood [Ex 28-31](#) as a functioning entity that would operate in the Tabernacle. I wonder how Aaron felt about that.

[Aaron's disastrous beginning.](#) [Ex 32](#) explains in terrible detail what happened when Moses was away on the mountain for 40 days and nights. It had all gone horribly wrong down below!

[Aaron complicit and deceptive.](#) Aaron makes no effort to stop what the people ask for. He fashions the Golden calf himself, he builds an altar for it. He proclaims a feast to the LORD! "*The people sat down to eat and rose up to play.*" And the noise which reaches God's hearing makes Him appalled. Moses is appalled – everyone is appalled. God is ready to destroy them and without the intervention of Moses and his appeal to God's Covenant faithfulness and mercy, who knows what would have happened. [32:11-14](#)

On questioning, Aaron makes all sorts of pathetic excuses for his behaviour [32:22-24](#) much like Eve in the Garden before him, Moses calls the sons of Levi together and 3000 of the people are killed by their swords. In addition, the Lord plagued the people [32:35](#). In [33:1-6](#) God really lets them know what a rotten bunch they were – nevertheless He showed mercy.

Here at Sinai where the giving of the Law is remembered as one of God's appointed times or the Feast of Shavuot, we can also remember the wonderful contrast which occurs in Acts 2 at Pentecost. After the preaching of the Gospel of Yeshua, here we see 3000 receiving eternal life by repenting and believing in the one who is the Living Word, who because of His substitutionary death made it possible to have the Law written into their hearts. God pours out His Holy Spirit and the Law is written in their hearts. [Jer 31:33](#)

[Tent of Meeting.](#) Initially God will only meet with Moses in his personal Tent of Meeting that was outside the camp until the Tabernacle was erected. Moses tent is pitched outside the camp [33:7-11](#). Joshua is

his personal right hand man. Aaron's beginning as High Priest had been pretty poor. But to be fair, he hadn't been initiated yet.

**Aaron's initiation - at last!** The initiation into the priesthood was a serious matter which only began in **Lev 8:22-36**. Every part of clothing and process of entry into the Tabernacle was laid down. To err in any point meant to die. But pain would accompany the transformation of Aaron through a number of bitter experiences. It hadn't been established very long when Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu rebel. **Lev 10** describes their offering of strange fire which was not accepted by the Lord. Why? For some reason, they kindle the fire in their own censers rather than using the fire that the Lord had Himself ignited on the Altar of Incense. A small mistake? They should have known better. They thought they could do things their own way and it proved costly. The judgment of the Lord that comes upon them is very severe. But Aaron "...holds his peace." **10:4-10**

**Aaron rebuked for casual attitude.** **Lev 16** begins with a rebuke for Aaron for turning up at the Tabernacle at the wrong time. He could not be casual about the role he would play. The "set times" of the Lord were given to remember Israel's deliverance and remind them of God's provision. It had to be done on time at the right time. God is a God of order. They are God's "Appointed Times" - They were His Feasts.

**Aarons dissension.** In **Num 12:1-16** we have an example of Aaron and Miriam complaining against Moses for marrying a Cushite woman. Whether they refer to Asenath or Zipporah, what the basis of the

complaint was, we do not know. But God is totally supportive of Moses. Miriam suffers an outbreak of leprosy as a sign of God's displeasure but its effect is enduring. Later when Israel refuses to enter Canaan in **Num 14** and wants to choose another leader Aaron shows his complete commitment to Moses.

**Rebellion of Korah.** **Numbers 16** This time the target is Moses and Aaron. There are usurpers waiting in the wings. Moses and Aaron intercede before the Lord **16:22** But God will do what was right. The people complain again **16:41-50** and at this point God is about to destroy everyone of them. Even so, He brings severe judgment upon them that only stopped by Aaron's intervention.

Here, Aaron demonstrates his complete obedience to Moses call. By taking brave action and running through the camp with the censer that had fire from the altar, he makes atonement for them. As it says, *"He stood between the dead and the living."* Aaron stopped the plague but not before 14,700 had died. Aaron had been finally proven in the furnace of affliction and come out purified and faithful. At Last! Aaron had come to the point of maturity. In **Num 20** he is relieved of his position as High priest and dies on Mount Hor – unlike Moses, never even seeing the Promised Land.

**His legacy** is passed to Eleazar his son. And his son is Phineas who seems to have the same zeal as his grandfather during the rebellion at Moab in **Num 25:11**

Aaron, Moses and Joseph all have roles that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Great High Priest *"...who ever lives to intercede*

*for us*". All three have characteristics for us to learn from, although it is Aaron that we can perhaps identify with most of all. Ultimately, we thank God for Jesus who despite who we are, *"...loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*

*and has made us kings and priests to our God and Father..." Rev 1:6* Not by our own efforts but by His grace.

**Derek Rous**