

Exegetical Notes, Numbers 3:1-4
“The Priestly Family”

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Numbers 3:1-4

Verse 1

This is the account of the family of Aaron and Moses at the time YHWH talked with Moses on Mount Sinai.

- Moses and Aaron are the sons of Amram who was the son of Kohath, one of the sons of Levi. Thus they are part of the tribe of Levi.
- The names, Moses and Aaron, are usually given in that order. Moses, the greater of the two, usually comes first. Here, the names are in reverse order because Aaron is Moses' oldest brother, the first born son of Amram.

Verse 2-3

The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab the firstborn and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Those were the names of Aaron's sons, the anointed priests, who were ordained to serve as priests.

- All four of Aaron's sons were called to serve as priests under their father.
- They were "anointed" with holy oil. The word in Hebrew is mishiah, in English, Messiah.
- They were ordained. The Hebrew word means, "to fill the hands of." It means that they were in the hands of God.

Verse 4

Nadab and Abihu, however, fell dead before YHWH when they made an offering with unauthorized fire before him in the Desert of Sinai. They had no sons; so only Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the lifetime of their father Aaron.

- Two of Aaron's sons proved unworthy to the task to which they were called. See Leviticus 10:1-3.
- The phrase, "unauthorized fire" is obscure. It implies that what Nadab and Abihu did was not in agreement with God's specific instructions. They violated the word of God. As a result, they both died.

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