



*Back
to the
altar*

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Back to the altar



*Ministério Seara Ágape
Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

*Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
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Thanks to Him of whom it is written, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

This book is dedicated to the saints of the Lord, who eagerly seek the ALTAR and know the pain of seeing themselves away from it.

*“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
 My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
 my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
 where she may lay her young, at your altars,
 O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
 Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.
 Happy are those whose strength is in you,
 in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
 As they go through the valley of Baca [or Baka: ‘dry’ or ‘weep’ or ‘Valley
 of mulberry trees’] they make it a place of springs;
 the early rain also covers it with pools [or blessings].
 They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
 give ear, O God of Jacob!
 Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.
 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
 I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
 than live in the tents of wickedness.
 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor.
 No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.
 O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.”
 (Ps. 84: 1-12)*

Introduction

What is your greatest desire in life? Did you already find out why you came into the world?

The word of God says that we are the light of the world; that we came to show the works of the Father so that all believe in Him and glorify Him. It also says that we have come to destroy the works of the devil, like Jesus did, and that we were made by Him kings and priests to reign on earth. The bible tells us many things about God's plan for us as a Body, as a whole. But have you ever stopped to think about you specifically, as a unique being to Him? What is your place in this big puzzle of the Almighty?

This book was written for those who yearn to be at the *altar*, to enter in a deeper way into the heart of God, knowing His secrets, and that truly want to be priests in the midst of His people.

It is for those who, one day, were in deeper communion with Him, but by force of the circumstances, by their own omission or intrigue of darkness found themselves away from the *Holy of Holies* and now need the power of the Spirit to break the barriers and come back to the arms of the Father.

It is for those who despite all the opposition didn't give up to accomplish the divine plan for their lives and believe in the impossible, even having been persecuted, confronted, devastated and wounded, not only by the world, but even within the Church itself and the own family. It is for those who do not give up being His true *priests*.

This book brings a bit of everything. Along with the allegory of the story, which moves the divine healing within us, it also brings teaching about what is the royal priesthood established by God; how it was determined in the past and how it was completed and fulfilled through Jesus Christ, our high priest.

I hope you can travel along with the character of the story and learn from him the way to the *altar*, and when you get there, to find peace and the fulfillment of all desires of your heart, never to leave the comforting presence of the lap of Jesus.

May God bless you, and the Holy Spirit may be your companion on this trip. I love you in Jesus.

Tânia Cristina

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [] or parenthesis (), in *italics*, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).

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The meeting

The meeting

He was feeling very lonely. His reflection in the lake was blurred by the tears that ran without control from his eyes. He felt rejected. He didn't want to talk to anyone, to see anyone, to participate in anything else; he seemed to be the last sincere survivor of his race. Suddenly he saw something beside his image reflected in the lake. That certainly was not a lamb; what was it? Then he lifted up his head and looked back. A tall man dressed in sheep's skin was standing there looking at him with his staff in his right hand and a bag hanging from his shoulder. Another object could be seen and hung from his neck: it was a ram's horn, twisted, but that was certainly very useful, otherwise it would not be there.

"Good morning, my little friend, why do cry so much?"

"I cry because I have a good reason for it. Who are you?"

"You can call me Good Shepherd. Do you not want to tell me your story?"

"I don't know! Are you going somewhere? If you are a shepherd, where are your sheep?"

"I'm going to meet them; they wait for me in another sheepfold."

"Can I come along?"

"Sure, it's always good to have someone to walk along."

"My name is Jonathan, I'm a little lamb."

"I know! Can you tell me why you were crying?"

"I was part of a flock, you know? We were being prepared to serve at the *altar* of the temple. I was finding myself very important; after all, being on the *altar* was always my desire. Suddenly, something happened. The priest looked at us and began to inspect us. When my turn came, he told to the others, "This one won't do; it has one ear smaller than the other and has a dark spot in its wool." I always thought myself very beautiful, I have never seen any blemish in me, although I have not my wool all white; indeed, my whole family has the wool stained with another color. Besides, what difference does it make if one ear is bigger than the other? I hear very well. I was too upset and walked away; when I realized, the flock had been taken away and I got lost. Now, I'll never be able to enter the *altar*."

"I can teach you the way, do you want to try?"

"Wow! Can you, indeed? And what will I do with my flaws? No one with a defect can enter the *altar*."

"I see no blemish in you. For me you are perfect."

"These are your eyes! But thank you very much for the encouragement; it makes me feel not so rejected."

"On the contrary, you are a blessing. Do you know what your name means?"

"No."

"Jonathan (*Yônâthân* or *Yêhônâthân*) means 'YHWH gave us, gift of God, YHWH has given.'"

"You know many things, don't you? Do you know what it is to be a priest? I always wanted to be a priest."

"I can teach you all things. Come! Let's walk! I have to find my flock."

"All right! Do you have something to eat? I am hungry."

"Have you not looked around? The grass is green and is all yours. Help yourself."

Jonathan fed, while the Good Shepherd looked at him tenderly, knowing his thoughts, feelings and desires and thinking of a way to cure him from his low self-esteem. Jonathan could not see himself with the Shepherd's eyes, but with the distorted

vision of those who rejected him. They started walking and the little lamb began to enjoy that wise and protective presence at his side. As he walked, the Good Shepherd spoke,

“Jonathan, my boy, let’s begin our lesson on the priesthood; what do you think?”

“You can speak, I’m listening. What does a priest do?”

“The priest makes the connection between the people and God, and God with the people. He offers sacrifices to Him by the people and teaches them to approach the *altar*. Have you heard of the Scriptures?”

“Of course! They teach us the word of God, right?”

“Exactly! The first man mentioned in the bible as a priest was a man named Melchizedek. Nobody knows where he came from, or what happened to him after the meeting with Abram.”

“Ah! I know who this Abram was. He left his land, his home and his kindred to go to the land which the Lord had told him to go, right?”

“Yes, he himself. After he returned from war as an ally of the king of Sodom and against King Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, the priest Melchizedek came to meet him, bringing him bread and wine. He was priest of the God Most High, owner of heaven and earth, and blessed Abram for having been victorious. So Abram, of all the spoil, gave him the tithe. His name means *‘king of righteousness’*, *‘king of Salem’*, *‘king of peace’*.”

“So what? Did he disappear and no one has ever heard of him?”

“That’s right. But the bible returns to speak of another priest, centuries later. Do you know who?”

“No.”

“It’s Jethro, also called Reuel, the priest of Midian, whose daughter married Moses.”

“Oh! Now I remember. His name was Zipporah, wasn’t it? And she bore him two sons: Gershon, for Moses said, “I have been an alien residing in a foreign land”; and the other, Eliezer, for he said, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” I just cannot remember what happened to him later.”

“When Moses came to Sinai after leaving Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, Jethro brought his wife and his two children, who had been safe with him in Midian. Then Jethro, as priest, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron brother of Moses came and all the elders of Israel to eat bread with the priest before God.”

“How funny! The two priests gave men bread to eat.”

“Later you will know what this means.”

“What was the next priest whom the Scriptures speak of?”

“It was Aaron the brother of Moses. First, God said that he would be the spokesman of Moses before the people and Pharaoh, because he could speak fluently. Then God separated him and his sons as priests of all the people and gave them special garments, told them about their rights and duties; they should offer sacrifices for themselves, for the Israelites and were entitled to receive tithes and offerings, for they had no part or inheritance with their brothers. Through Moses, YHWH made a covenant with the people and gave them order to build a place called the *Tabernacle*, where He would talk to everyone and where Aaron and his sons would bring Him offerings and sacrifices. The fire of the *altar* should never go out, that’s what the Word says.”

“I always thought this subject about Tabernacle and priestly garments very complicated. How were they?”

“It’s easier if I show you in the book.”

“What book?”

“This one I bring with me to teach my sheep. Look! This is the tabernacle, and those are the priestly garments.”



The tabernacle



The tabernacle



The high priest's garments

“Wow! How beautiful!”

“You can see in the picture above that outside the tent the sacrifices were offered by the priests; however, inside the tent, the priests only offered incense, put the loaves and lit the candlestick. In the inmost of the tent was the Ark of the Covenant, and there, the

high priest made the prayer to God for the people. Inside that place, only Aaron could enter.”

“Don’t you have a better picture?”

“Of course! See, these are the elements I told you about.”



The Altar of burnt offering



The Altar of incense



The Table with the bread of the Presence



The golden lampstand



Ark of the Covenant



*The tablets of the Law that
were placed inside the ark*

“What can we learn from all this, Jonathan?”

“I can say that the priest is chosen by God and has the function to offer sacrifices for himself and for the people. He receives the tithes and offerings as his part that was appointed by the Lord. He has special clothes and should keep himself in holiness. He cannot let the fire on the *altar* go out and must keep the Covenant of God.”

“Very good! But how can we interpret this today?”

“I don’t know!”

“Yes, you know; you almost said it all. Later, when your little eyes and your little ears are open to understand other things, you will realize that all this ritual is no longer necessary. For now, let’s say that the priest has *to keep the word of God in his heart* (the

Covenant represented by ‘the tablets of the Law’); *he has to pray and praise God (sacrifices and burnt offerings)* not only for his own life, but for the lives of those entrusted to him, so that the Lord can bless them. *He should also have much reverence and awe for the altar.* One could not enter the tent of the meeting carelessly; in the same way, *the garments of the priest*, which are his soul and his spirit, *must be clean* to come into God’s presence, *without bad feelings*. He *must have intimacy with the Lord*, like the loaves were offered and symbolize communion with Him. It is *a lifestyle of holiness and intimacy with the Father*. The incense is the prayer that rises as a sweet aroma before *the altar of God*, with requests and supplications, besides thanksgiving for the victories that were achieved. The lampstand represents *the presence of the Holy Spirit* in the life of the priest and its lamps should never go out, namely, the word of God and the love for Him should never be overcome by the love for the things of the world and the flesh’s. The burning coals or fire on the *altar* also symbolizes *the burning desire to serve the Lord and the love for His work.*”

“There’s one more thing that I remember about the priest’s garments.”

“What is it, Jonathan?”

“He had two little stones, if I recall correctly, on the breastpiece of his clothes, the Urim and Thummim, didn’t he?”

“Yes, and do you know what they mean?”

“They were two flattened objects through which God’s will was consulted. The two had the word *Urim* written on one side, derived from *’ārar* (to curse); on the other side it was written the word *Thummim*, from *tāmam* (to be perfect). If when casting lots, both sides of the Urim were facing upwards, it meant a ‘no’ from God. If they were both *Thummim*, it meant ‘yes,’ and if one was *Urim* and another *Thummim*, it meant *unanswered*. The most important thing for us today is that we must *always consult the Lord*, in all circumstances of our lives, and hear the voice of His Spirit in our hearts clearly so that we take the right direction.”

The two had walked a lot. In fact, the day was already declining and the shadows of night began to appear. Jonathan had learned a lot that day. The words of the Good Shepherd were still fresh in his mind and he could digest them better during his sleep. Everything apparently seemed so easy, but he began to discern that all the qualities of a priest were not developed from night to day and that the most important of them all was love, which made him think less of himself and more of God and his fellow men. It was not easy to keep the flame of the spirit burning for so many years in a row, with so many adverse circumstances, but with some effort and good will it would not be so impossible. The Lord would help him in this. Jonathan was sleepy. He didn’t feel prepared to be at the *altar* yet. The inner wounds still made him suffer a little. However, he only had to thank the Good Shepherd for that day. Everything had begun so bad, but ended with a positive learning and a great friendship.

His sleepy little voice reached the ears of the Good Shepherd, “I just don’t understand one thing.”

“What, my little friend?”

“I was not chosen by them because I had a defect, and that is the law: who has a blemish shall not enter the *altar*. How, then, you said you saw no defect in me? You said you thought I was perfect.”

“Jonathan, the man does not see how God sees things. For man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Your heart is pure, so you’re perfect for me, regardless of your outward appearance. However, the Most High left this the law for the priests, not because of the animals. He left them because of men, so that they might learn to revere Him as the one God, and give Him always the best of

themselves, *the perfect and the precious*. The priest should have, first of all, the fear of God, the reverence to Him and learn to give his best.”

“Do you mean that we’ll be friends forever? Won’t you forsake me?”

“Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

“How nice! I don’t feel alone anymore. Good night.”

“Good night, Jonathan.”



Time to study

It was a sunny day and Jonathan woke up with a very good mood; after all, sleeping in the lap of the Good Shepherd was the best place for someone to be.

“Good morning, Good Shepherd.”

“Good morning, my little friend. Did you sleep well?”

“Of course! The bed was quite comfortable. What are you holding?”

“It’s a scroll. Today we will study.”

“Study what?”

“Don’t you want to be a priest? For this, you must study.”

“Do you mind if I take breakfast first? I am hungry.”

“Of course not, the green grass is at your disposal and the clear waters of the brook will satisfy your thirst.”

“You think of everything, don’t you?”

“A priest must think of the well-being of his sheep.”

...

“I’m ready for the lesson.”

“Let’s read first a few verses of the Scriptures in the book of *Leviticus*. This book is called ‘*The Book of Laws*.’ Let me explain. In Hebrew, its name is *wayyiqra*, which means ‘*He called*’ because the book precisely starts with the phrase, ‘*The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting...*’ Do you remember the names of the sons of Jacob?”

“Yes! They are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin.”

“Very good! Of all of them, God chose the tribe of Levi to be the tribe of the priests. *Levi* mean: *united, joined*; so the priests are the ones who should be united, joined to the Lord. We’ll read the verses in three different books, okay? The books complement each other. They are: *Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy* (which means ‘*repetition of the law*’). Let’s start by those talking about priests and Levites.”

Deut. 18: 1-2: “The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the sacrifices that are the Lord’s portion but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them.”

The Good Shepherd continued, “This means that the Lord separated them from all the tribes exclusively to serve Him. They would not have to work for their living as their brothers, because God Himself would support them, since they were doing His will. Their brothers would bring them the tithes and offerings to meet their material needs, while they would care for giving them the spiritual supply. Later, we’ll talk about it. The next four references speak of the duties and portions of the priests:”

Lev. 10: 8-11: “And the Lord spoke to Aaron: Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses.”

Lev. 21: 1; 4; 8; 21: “The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives ... But he shall not defile himself as a husband among his people and so profane himself ... and you shall treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your

God; they shall be holy to you, for I the Lord, I who sanctify you, am holy... No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the Lord's offerings by fire; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God."

Num. 18: 1; 6; 8; 14; 20: "The Lord said to Aaron: You and your sons and your ancestral house with you shall bear responsibility for offenses connected with the sanctuary, while you and your sons alone shall bear responsibility for offenses connected with the priesthood... It is I who now take your brother Levites from among the Israelites; they are now yours as a gift, dedicated to the Lord, to perform the service of the tent of meeting... The Lord spoke to Aaron: I have given you charge of the offerings made to me, all the holy gifts of the Israelites; I have given them to you and your sons as a priestly portion due you in perpetuity... Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours... Then the Lord said to Aaron: You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites."

Deut. 18: 1-2; 4-5: "The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the sacrifices that are the Lord's portion but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them... The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. For the Lord your God has chosen Levi out of all your tribes, to stand and minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for all time."

"Can we stop a little bit? I want to understand what we've read."

"First, the priest cannot drink alcohol to avoid the risk that another spirit, other than the Lord's directs him. Secondly, he must be the first to set an example of what is right and wrong, so that people learn. Thirdly, the priest had the guidance of the Lord not to touch the dead lest to defile himself. This means that, today, the priest should not touch the things of the past or the things of sin, because sin brings spiritual death. Often, the priest lives in a family that doesn't yet know the Lord, his God; therefore, they are spiritually dead and do things quite wrong. Thus, the Lord tells him not to follow their example; on the contrary, to be the example of holiness for them. At that time, the priest also could not enter the *altar* if he had any defect, for he would profane it; this means to us that the 'defect' is sin not confessed and it makes the separation between man and God; therefore, the priest must be 'clean', without sin, to come into the presence of the Most High. Later, we'll talk about how he can cleanse himself in a more quick and easy way, without having to kill so many animals. The priest is also responsible for his flock, and if the flock sins, he must give account to God, asking forgiveness for them and teaching them the correct path. He had separated for the priests all the offerings that were given by the people. They would eat them, as well as the firstfruits of cereals of the harvest. Thus, they would be supported in their material needs."

"Is there a difference between Levites and priests?"

"Yes, that's what we will see next. The priests were chosen among the descendants of Aaron to minister in the tent of meeting. The Levites were their brothers, descendants of the other sons of Levi, not of the same lineage of Aaron, and who were separated to assist the priests. Let's read the next verses. Till the end of our reading we'll be talking about the Levites:"

Num. 1: 47-54: "The Levites, however, were not numbered by their ancestral tribe along with them [*He was referring to the census made in the second year after the departure of Israel from Egypt*]. The Lord had said to Moses: Only the tribe of Levi you shall not enroll, and you shall not take a census of them with the other Israelites. Rather

you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the covenant, and over all its equipment, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, and they shall tend it, and shall camp around the tabernacle. When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. The other Israelites shall camp in their respective regimental camps, by companies; but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the covenant, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the Israelites; and the Levites shall perform the guard duty of the tabernacle of the covenant. The Israelites did so; they did just as the Lord commanded Moses.”

Num. 3: 6-12: “Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, so that they may assist him. They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, doing service at the tabernacle; they shall be in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the Israelites as they do service at the tabernacle. You shall give the Levites to Aaron and his descendants; they are unreservedly given to him from among the Israelites. But you shall make a register of Aaron and his descendants; it is they who shall attend to the priesthood, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine.”

Num. 3: 41: “But you shall accept the Levites for me—I am the Lord—as substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the livestock of the Israelites.”

Num. 3: 17; 19: “The following were the sons of Levi, by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari... The sons of Kohath by their clans: Amram [*Father of Aaron, Moses and Miriam*], Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.”

Num. 4: 1-3: “The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: Take a census of the Kohathites separate from the other Levites, by their clans and their ancestral houses, from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who qualify to do work relating to the tent of meeting.”

Num. 4: 15-16: “When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the Kohathites shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, or they will die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the Kohathites are to carry. Eleazar son of Aaron the priest shall have charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle and all that is in it, in the sanctuary and in its utensils.”

Num. 4: 24-26; 28: “This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites, in serving and bearing burdens: They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting with its covering, and the outer covering of fine leather that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, and all the equipment for their service; and they shall do all that needs to be done with regard to them... This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites relating to the tent of meeting, and their responsibilities are to be under the oversight of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

Num. 4: 29a; 31-33: “As for the Merarites... This is what they are charged to carry, as the whole of their service in the tent of meeting: the frames of the tabernacle, with its

bars, pillars, and bases, and the pillars of the court all around with their bases, pegs, and cords, with all their equipment and all their related service; and you shall assign by name the objects that they are required to carry. This is the service of the clans of the Merarites, the whole of their service relating to the tent of meeting, under the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

Num. 8: 24-26: “This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall begin to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting; and from the age of fifty years they shall retire from the duty of the service and serve no more. They may assist their brothers in the tent of meeting in carrying out their duties, but they shall perform no service. Thus you shall do with the Levites in assigning their duties.”

Num. 18: 21; 23-24; 26; 28: “To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for a possession in return for the service that they perform, the service in the tent of meeting... But the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear responsibility for their own offenses; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. But among the Israelites they shall have no allotment, because I have given to the Levites as their portion the tithe of the Israelites, which they set apart as an offering to the Lord... Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no allotment among the Israelites... You shall speak to the Levites, saying: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you from them for your portion, you shall set apart an offering from it to the Lord, a tithe of the tithe... Thus you also shall set apart an offering to the Lord from all the tithes that you receive from the Israelites; and from them you shall give the Lord's offering to the priest Aaron.”

Num. 35: 2-3; 6-7: “Command the Israelites to give, from the inheritance that they possess, towns for the Levites to live in; you shall also give to the Levites pasture lands surrounding the towns. The towns shall be theirs to live in, and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle, for their livestock, and for all their animals... The towns that you give to the Levites shall include the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit a slayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two towns. The towns that you give to the Levites shall total forty-eight, with their pasture lands.”

Deut. 10: 8-9: “At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God promised him.”

Deut. 12: 11-12: “then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).”

Deut. 33: 8-11: “And of Levi he said: Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your loyal one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, ‘I regard them not’; he ignored his kin, and did not acknowledge his children. For they observed your word, and kept your covenant. They teach Jacob your ordinances, and Israel your law; they place incense before you, and whole burnt offerings on your altar. Bless, O Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those that hate him, so that they do not rise again.”

“What did you think of all this, little one?”

“I don’t know yet, it seems a little complicated. Do you explain to me?”

“Let’s go! The Levites were given by God to Aaron to help him to take care of the tent of meeting. Each of the families who were descendants of Levi (Gershon, Kohath and Merari) had specific roles to play. As you saw, the family of Kohath took care of the utensils of the tabernacle, after Aaron and his sons cover them; then they carried them, including the Ark of the Covenant. Aaron and his sons took care of the priesthood itself, serving in the *Holy of Holies and in the Holy Place*. The family of Gershon took care to carry the curtains, as well as the other utensils of the Tabernacle, other than the sacred objects; and the family of Merari was responsible for the objects, the stakes and everything else that was on the outer court of the Tabernacle, besides its wood frames. Therefore, each played their own role. This is very important for us because it is the joint work of each member of the Church that helps to keep it in order and help the priest in his role which is prayer and the ministry of the word. From the age of thirty to fifty years, the Levites were set apart to serve the Lord. They gave the tithe of the tithes which they received of the people to the priest. To them were given cities to dwell (‘the cities of the Levites’) among the tribes of Israel, forty-eight cities in all. Because they put the things of God above the personal things, including their own family, is that Moses blessed them, asking God to guard them from all evil and rid them from all their enemies.”

“What image is this?”



“This is the banner of the tribe of Levi.”

Jonathan was thoughtful. How many things were necessary to be a priest! He felt so small comparing to the Good Shepherd. Would he know some day as much as his new friend?

“When I grow up, will I be able to understand things like you?”

“Of course! In fact, I think you’ve grown since we met. Even the little ear that was smaller seems to have grown. And the dark spot that you had seems to have gotten smaller too.”

“Do you think so? I’ll take a look at the lake...”

“Go my little friend.” The Good Shepherd thought, “*Soon you will have a big surprise.*”



Journey through time

Journey through time

“Gosh! What is this? Where does this light come from? And who are they up there?”

“You are seeing a *chariot of fire*, a chariot driven by the angels of the Lord, the symbol of His authority in the spiritual world. Go up, Jonathan; it will take us on a journey through time, so that you can better understand what happened to the priests and the Levites over the centuries.”

“Wow! Here we go ...”

“Let’s start by the calling of Samuel, Jonathan. Besides a great prophet and judge of Israel, he was also a priest chosen by God. His mother was barren. For a long time she prayed at the *altar* asking for a son. She promised the Lord that if He gave her one, she would consecrate him as a priest all the days of his life. So her request was granted, and Samuel was born. He was still very young and served in the tent of meeting along with the priest Eli. Once, when he was lying on his bed, almost asleep, he heard a voice that called him by name. He thought it was the priest, and went to him, but it was not Eli calling him. The voice called him two more times; it was only the fourth time that Samuel understood that it was the Lord. Then he said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” It was then that God told him everything he needed to know about the divine plan for his life as a judge, prophet and priest. When he grew up, the people asked God for a king to rule over them and Saul was chosen. He had lost the donkeys of his father and came to the land of Zuph, where Samuel was offering a burnt offering for the Israelites. The Lord confirmed that Saul was His chosen to reign over the nation and Samuel anointed him.”

“What is that thing he has in hand?”

“This? Don’t you recognize?”



“Yes! It is a *shofar*, the ram’s horn.”

“Exactly, it is with it that Samuel is anointing the king, do you see? He poured all the oil that was inside it over Saul’s head.”

“So was this way that a king was anointed?”

“Yes, and it was the function of the prophet and the priest.”

“And now why the priest is so angry with the king?”

“Because the king disobeyed his orders and didn’t wait for him to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Saul waited seven days for Samuel. But as he had not arrived, and the people were nervous because of the war against the Philistines, Saul decided to make a sacrifice for himself and offer it to God, in order to have His grace and mercy, and thus obtain victory over the enemy.”

“He played a role that was not his, didn’t he? He was king, not priest. Now I know that only the priest could offer sacrifices for the people.”

“That’s why Saul was rejected by God. Later, he made another mistake like this, disobeying His voice through Samuel, who directed him to destroy all the Amalekites. But Saul spared the enemy king, Agag, and the cattle, then to offer it unto the Lord. God was not pleased with this disobedience and used His priest to punish him. Because of this error, Saul was deposed and another one was put in his place.”

“Oh, I know! It’s that ruddy boy there, is it not?”

“Do you know his name?”

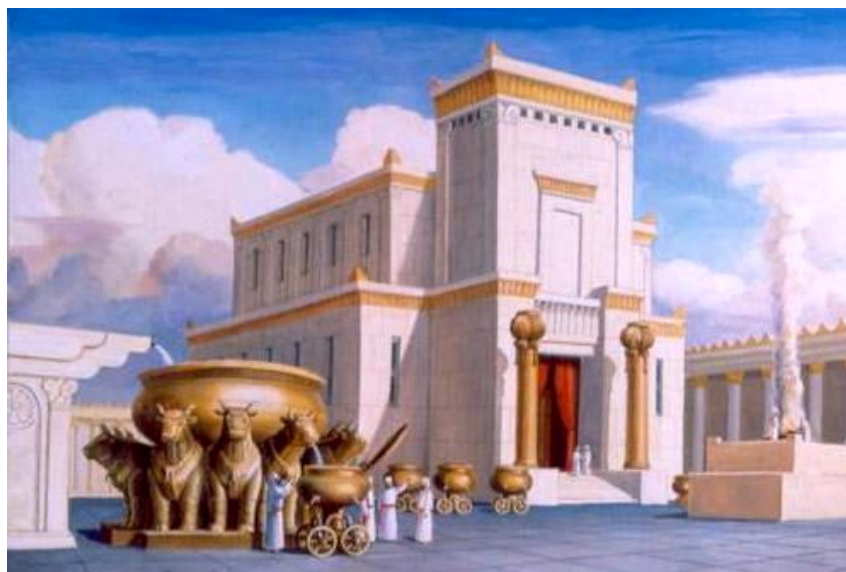
“Of course! It is King David. Look how much oil Samuel is pouring over him!”

“And in the days of David, what happened with the priests? Do you know, Jonathan?”

“More or less.”

“The priests who officiated in the reign of David were Zadok the son of Ahitub (a descendant of Eleazar son of Aaron), and Abiathar son of Ahimelech (a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron’s other son). Throughout his reign David worked preparing the materials for the construction of the temple that would be built by his son Solomon. The Ark of the Covenant was still in the tent of meeting and it was where the priests acted. However, when David was aged and appointed Solomon king over Israel, he reorganized the functions of the Levites, for now, with the temple to be built, was no longer necessary to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, the Levites were summoned by David to do the work in God’s House. Their charge was to attend Aaron’s sons in the ministry of the Lord’s House, in the courts and in the chambers, the purification of all sacred things and in the work of the ministry of the temple, namely, the bread of the Presence, the choice flour for the grain offering, the unleavened bread, the baking sheets; also the song (praise), the burnt offerings, the ritual on the Sabbath, the Festivals of the New Moon and the feasts (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles), taking care of all needs of the priests. David also established twenty-four divisions of priests who served the Lord for one week, twice a year. He established the role of the singers also in shifts and chose gatekeepers, treasurers and judges to meet the other needs in the temple.”

“Good Shepherd! Look at that beautiful building! What is it?”



“What it looks like?”

“A temple. Ah! I know! It is the temple of Solomon.”

“That’s right. Solomon was also anointed by the prophet Nathan, and Zadok the priest, as the new king of Israel. Later, when he was already king he sent away Abiathar the priest because he had joined with his brother Adonijah to take his throne. Therefore, during the time that Solomon reigned the priest was Zadok, a descendant of Eleazar son of Aaron. Then, his descendants officiated.”

“What happened after the death of Solomon? Did the priests continue to exist?”

“Of course. But there was a division in the kingdom. Israel divided into two kingdoms: the Northern kingdom was Samaria, ruled by Jeroboam (who was not the son of David) and was composed of ten tribes. Only two remained with Rehoboam, Solomon’s son and grandson of David, which were Judah and Benjamin, constituting the southern kingdom. As the king of Israel diverted to idolatry, Rehoboam the king of Judah received the Levites and the priests who came for him seeking refuge because they had been thrown out by Jeroboam, who forbade them to minister to the Lord. Later, Rehoboam also ceased to follow the Lord, and his son Abijah reigned in his stead. From there, the priests seem to have had a minor influence on the king than the prophets that God began to raise to lead the nation along with the monarch. Even without the apparent notoriety, the priests continued to perform their office, obeying the orders of the kings, some of which, faithful to YHWH, raised the people in a new revival so that the true worship did not perish. There was a king named Joash who was protected from death by the priest because his own grandmother killed all his brothers lest they didn’t take the throne. But Jehoiada, the priest of God, protected him and elected him king of Judah at the age of seven years, calling the Levites also to help to protect the king.”



Jehoiada influenced king Joash in a positive way, but after his death, the king was influenced negatively by the princes, deviating from the law of the Lord. God sent many prophets, but it was no use. Both the king and the people fell into idolatry. When Zechariah the son of priest Jehoiada told them the words of the Lord, rebuking them for their sin, he was stoned in the courtyard of the House of the Lord.

“It means that the priests suffered because of the disobedience of the kings, right?”

“Unfortunately, yes. However, some remained loyal to their function. Others also began to sin and to forget the commandments of the Lord. They forgot to teach people the right path. That’s why the prophet Hosea said in the name of God, ‘My people are

destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

“It was, then, a period of grief to God to see His priests astray from His law and their responsibilities, am I right?”

“Yes, my little friend. It’s always very sad for the Lord to see His children straying by paths of negligence and self-indulgence. The priest can never be unfaithful to God and can never forget his obligations, even in times of difficulties. He cannot preach a lie, only the truth of the divine word, even if it hurts in some disobedient hearts.”

“Didn’t the kings repent of what they were doing?”

“Some pious kings like Hezekiah and Josiah tried religious reformations, but were not completely successful. The people, the princes and the priests had sinned enough and no longer walked in the right ways of the Lord. At the time of King Josiah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law and read it to the people; it was a revival in the nation but small, compared to the sins that were there.”

“Who is that?”



“It’s a prophet, a man of God. Such men, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who were prophets as well as priests, returned to proclaim the divine judgment on the sins of Israel if the nation did not repent. The Lord used the mouth of Jeremiah to say, ‘Because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’, when there is no peace.’”

“Are there priests like that?”

“Unfortunately, yes. They don’t take their priesthood seriously, they try to ‘sell blessings’, wrongly use the gifts that God gave them, live to dispute power, they think more of themselves than about their sheep, they disappoint those who believe in them and their words; often, they kill dreams in people’s hearts because they let their flesh prevail and don’t reach the correct view of God. In fact, they don’t consecrate themselves as they should. But you should not be worried about it; God takes care of them.”

“And that one, why is he so angry?”

“It’s the prophet Ezekiel, who is also a priest. He is telling the people what God would do with the shepherds who didn’t walk correctly before Him, who tended themselves and left their sheep at the mercy of false prophets and false teachings. They

only performed religious acts that did not please the Lord and they were not honest in heart. Religiosity is an abomination to Him and does not take anyone to the *altar*.”

“Look! That one looks like you.”

“The prophet Ezekiel was talking about me, as the Good Shepherd who would come really to care of my flock.”

“How is that? You ‘would?’ What do you mean?”

“Did you forget that we are on a journey through time? At that time they still did not know me, they didn’t yet see me how you’re seeing. The prophet was saying that they would be delivered into the hands of their enemies, but once freed, would know someone, a true priest, who would come to teach them the Word and show them the way to the *altar*.”

“I know those clothes; they are the priestly garments.”

“Yes. Ezekiel was reminding his people the duties of the priest: they would not wear clothes of wool inside the temple; they would put linen headbands on the head and the linen undergarments on their thighs; by leaving the interior of the temple, they would change their clothes. He is saying, ‘look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the Lord and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary.’”

“It seems that there is an interpretation behind these words, Good Shepherd, isn’t it?”

“You’re getting smarter, Jonathan. God did not want any person to enter His sanctuary because they were not properly prepared for it. Later in our trip, you will realize that the true temple and sanctuary of the Lord is within you. Thus, it is not any person that you can let to participate in your dreams and your communion with God, because he doesn’t have the Spirit of the Lord in his heart; he could harm you. The linen represents the righteous acts of the children of God, therefore holiness, which cannot mix with the robes of the sin from the world. That’s why he talked about changing clothes to get close to others who were not priests, that is, we cannot talk or discuss the word of God on equal terms with those who do not yet understand it, because they would mock it and would scorn it. It would be like giving finest pearls to pigs. Thus, keep the precious treasure that you have and give only to those who can give value to it too, do you understand me? In Ancient times, the sweat was a sign of impurity, so the orientation for the priests was not to use wool, lest they sweat. For us, this means that a priest must not to carry heavy clothing, that is, knowledge that doesn’t have the wisdom of God, neither impure thoughts and feelings of the world because they bring an unnecessary burden to his life, besides not to please the Lord.”

“How deep! It’s hard to be a real priest.”

“Don’t worry, Jonathan. I know whom I have chosen.”

“Did you choose me to be a priest one day? Please help me to get to the *altar*.”

“Wait a little longer and you’ll see for yourself. Look down there, Jonathan.”

“What is that?”

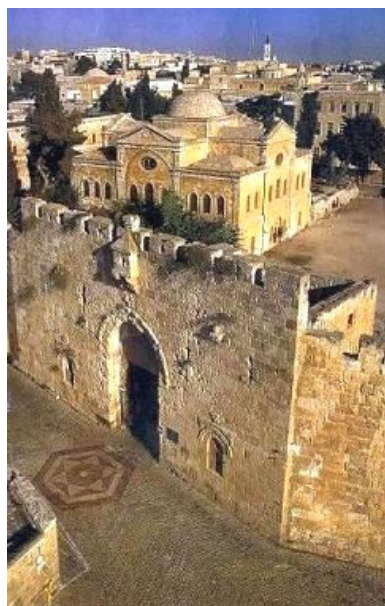
“Aren’t you seeing a big building?”

“Yeah! It looks like the first temple, but it is smaller in size, isn’t it?”



“Yes. This is the temple that was built after the release from captivity by order of King Cyrus of Persia. He ordered the people to return to Israel and rebuild the house of God which had been destroyed. He also gave back the vessels of Solomon’s temple that had been transported to Babylon. First they erected the *altar*. After one year it began the reconstruction of the temple, but it was interrupted for sixteen years because of threats from the people around. After that time, they resumed the work of reconstruction that lasted four years. Those two men who you see there encouraging the people of God are the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. Then, years later, in the reign of another Persian king, Ezra the priest was sent to minister in the new temple. He brought the Levites who had also been in bondage to inaugurate the new House of God in Jerusalem. Then they offered burnt offerings to the Lord, and confessed the sins of the whole nation before the *altar* and expelled the foreign women who were living in their midst, because it might bring them back to idolatry.”

“A priest must have much authority to guide the people too, and care for the sanctity of the temple. Gosh! Look, Shepherd! What a beautiful city!”



“Do you think so? Let’s see if you guess its name!”

“It’s Jerusalem.”

“Indeed! Its walls were restored many years after the rebuilding of the temple by Nehemiah, who was cupbearer of the Persian king who sent Ezra to officiate as a priest. They took fifty-two days to repair the walls, in a hard fight against the foes who tried in all manners to prevent the work; but they succeeded at last. Several priests came to Jerusalem to dedicate the walls to the Lord; they sang and danced in praise to God. They were appointed by Nehemiah for all offices of the temple, as David did.”

“Who is that prophet who is rebuking the priests?”

“Ah! You can already recognize a prophet, Jonathan. Good! That is Malachi. The Lord sent him to remind the priests, once again, what He wanted of them. It seems they had forgotten the divine laws and were not paying attention to the holiness in God’s House. They were not teaching the people properly about tithes and offerings, besides that the true knowledge of the Word was being forgotten.”

“Why do they forget so much of the orders of God? A true priest must care for the things of the Lord. He must know the Word very well and teach it to his flock with truth. I already know about it. They are offering defective sacrifices on the *altar*, aren’t they? That’s why the prophet is angry with them. And they are stealing the Lord, failing to give tithes and offerings. Shout, Malachi! Speak the truth.”

“Let’s go back to our pasture, Jonathan? The horses look tired from running so much.”

“Yes. Thank you, angels of the Lord, for the wonderful ride.”



A bridge to the Altar

A bridge to the Altar

“Phew! How nice we arrived; I was tired, but it was a funny trip.”

“I’m glad you liked it! Let’s rest and eat a little, okay?”

“Good Shepherd! I never thought there was so much to learn to be a true priest.”

“That is why the walk often seems to be long.”

“Aren’t you worried about your sheep? They must be tired of waiting for you.”

“I never arrive late, I always arrive on time.”

“Tell me more about priests. Did they disappear after the second temple was built?”

“No, of course not! The priests will never cease to exist. You know, my little friend, God needs them too much to do His work.”

“Let’s keep walking?”

“Yes, have you finished eating?”

“Yes! I am ready. Will you show me more of your book?”

“Later we’ll read it again.”

“You were telling me about the priests. What happened after Malachi called his brothers back to the laws of the Lord?”

“After that, God stayed a long time without speaking to His people until they were ready once more to hear His voice and obey Him.”

“How long was that? Was God angry with His children?”

“This lasted about four hundred years. God was not angry or away of His children, He was only disciplining them.”

“Is it like when our father scolds us once in a while? ‘A slap on the wrist?’”

“It’s something like that.”

“And speaking of ears, how is mine? Has it grown a little more?”

“I had already forgotten it, but let me see. Yes, it has grown a lot since we met. By the way, do you know the spiritual meaning of having ear, Jonathan? I can also see that the spot on your wool is much smaller now. There is almost no sign of it.”

“What do ears mean? If my withered little ear is growing, is it good?”

“Ear symbolizes *a receiving channel of divine revelation*, do you understand? Your little ear was so small, but now it is growing and this means that you are receiving more revelation from God during this trip, as well as being prepared to be a priest as you always wanted. A priest needs to have much revelation from the Lord to lead his flock. The little spot is also decreasing, which means that your soul is being cleansed from the sick and lying patterns and gaining the sanctity and knowledge of the truth.”

“Whoopee! I’ll be a priest. Hey, Good Shepherd, what is that thing in front of us?”

“That is a bridge, Jonathan. Let’s cross it and then you will realize what the four hundred years of silence of God regarding His people meant.”

The sun was strong and the air was dry, which seemed to leave the soil hot and sandy. The two friends set foot on the bridge and began to cross it. Jonathan felt as if he was in a desert, such was the thirst that afflicted him. He only was not afraid because his powerful friend was there with him. When he saw the bridge, it did not seem so big and so long to cross; however, now that he walked on it, it seemed that it would never end. How strange! Everything around him was so quiet that he could almost hear the so-called ‘silence of God.’ Jonathan began to realize that the silence could also be heard and, along with it, it brought a shortage that he could not describe in words. It’s as if the heart felt thirsty. The Good Shepherd watched him as they walked and admired his curiosity and attention. As they approached the end of the bridge, Jonathan’s face showed a genuine relief and joy. The ground beneath him became a very green grass

and wet and he inhaled the smell of the field as if he were breathing for the first time in his life. The birds began to sing and the wind whistled in his ears. Ah! Now, yes, everything was all right again. Great learning!

“Did you understand what you lived, my little friend?”

“Yes, Good Shepherd. When God stops talking to the priest, everything becomes a desert, but when He speaks, life returns to his soul.”

“How poetic! Well, Jonathan. I’ll tell you what happened to the priests after *God’s period of silence*. Those who remained faithful to YHWH longed for the Messiah who had been prophesied by the men of God in the past. They went to the temple to offer sacrifices, believing that one day things would start to be different for Israel.”

“What name is this, Messiah?”

“It means ‘*anointed*’. He was the great prophet of whom Moses had spoken; he was the *Branch* who would come bringing deliverance to His people, of whom Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied; he was the *Sun of Righteousness* prophesied by Malachi and that would bring salvation in His wings; he was the true high priest that would put an end to the sacrifices of the past, making with the chosen people a new covenant, now definitive, showing the way to the *altar*.”

“I would like to know this high priest. He must be a nice guy.”

“Certainly, you will know him. But let me talk about the priests. There was one priest called Zechariah, other than the one we talked earlier, and he was very old. He and his wife never had children. One day Zechariah was serving in the temple, for it was his turn. Then, when he was burning incense at the *altar* an angel of the Lord appeared to him saying that God had heard his prayers and would give him a son who would prepare the way for the Messiah. At first Zechariah doubted, so the angel told him that he would be mute until his son was born, as a sign that what he was saying was true.”

“I know! When Zechariah saw that he could not speak, he believed; but it was too late. Hah, hah, hah!”

“Yeah! Nine months later his son was born, and as he had been chosen by God to be a Nazirite from the womb, that is, to be *a separate* for Him from the womb of his mother, he grew up in a way unlike any other children. His name was John. He lived in the desert till he called to preach to the people. He wore clothes of camel’s hair and ate only locusts and wild honey.”

“Yuck! And what did he say?”

“He said, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

“I’m not sure that I would like to meet him. Wasn’t he who called everybody a brood of vipers? I’m not a viper, I’m a little lamb.”

“This strong word was to the sinners and hardened of heart who didn’t want to accept the word of God or repent of their sins.”

“Oh, good! Let’s walk. It seems that we are arriving to the town.”



The revelation

The revelation

They were almost coming to Jerusalem. The caravans came and went with many pilgrims to visit the temple and offer sacrifices to the Lord. Many people walked around the two travelers. Jonathan came a bit closer to the Good Shepherd not to lose him. Now that he had a shepherd, he never wanted to get lost again. Suddenly, the lamb got scared. A bearded man with fierce look walked toward him preaching in a loud voice to those who were there, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Was he the famous John the Baptist? Two men walked beside him seeming to be his disciples.



He pointed to the Good Shepherd and told the disciples, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Jonathan didn’t understand what this meant. Surely it was not about him that he was speaking; he was very tiny and very unable to bear the sins of the world. John continued, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Jonathan thought, *“How awful! How could anyone be baptized with fire? Fire burns and hurts.”* Everything became strange in his mind; confusion involved him. He saw the Good Shepherd far away, in a place where there were three crosses, with two criminals crucified beside him. Suddenly the Good Shepherd became a lamb that was sacrificed on the *altar*, but he didn’t scream, he didn’t struggle nor didn’t say anything. The curtains of the temple were torn from top to bottom and the Ark of the Covenant in the *Holy of Holies* could be seen. However, the place was not dark like the priests described. On the contrary, it was filled with light, and in a blink of an eye the Good Shepherd emerged from within this light and sat on a golden throne.

When the vision ended, they found themselves alone again, Jonathan and the Good Shepherd, sitting in a quiet place where one could see the city walls. The Good Shepherd spoke quietly to the lamb. His face was bright and smiled at him tenderly. He said,

“Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the

Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd... My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Jonathan was speechless. His friend was great! He was the Good Shepherd and at the same time the Lamb of whom John had spoken. It was He who had come to die for the sins of the world.

"You are the Lamb of sacrifice and at the same time, the high priest who offers the blood of the lamb on the *altar*. Now everything is clear to me. Only you know the way to the *altar*, don't you? But how can I enter this *altar*?"

"Just one word from you, Jonathan. Do you believe in me? Do you believe that my sacrifice was to save you and give you eternal life? Do you believe that I rose from the dead?"

"Yes, I believe."

"Well then, let me embrace you, my sonny Jonathan."

He no longer called him 'my little friend', but 'my sonny.' This meant that if He was the high priest, Jonathan would now be a priest too. What an embrace was that! The lamb felt His arms around him and saw himself on the *altar*. It was quiet in there, cozy too. A table was set and the Good Shepherd was inviting him to sit with Him.

"Do you want to dine with me?"

"Yes, Father."

"Eat my bread and drink my wine. Now you know the way to the *altar*; just call on me and I come to fetch you, did you understand?"



Jonathan was euphoric. He had never seen anything like this. He saw when the Good Shepherd stood up and took a ram's horn. He poured all the oil that was inside the *shofar* upon him. He, Jonathan, was being anointed a *priest*. He would have his own sheep henceforth, but the Good Shepherd would always be there by his side to help him to hold the staff.

The little lamb opened his eyes and saw himself again in the green grass beside his great and precious friend. What a day!

"Did you understand what I did with you, my little friend?"

“Of course. I am a shepherd and a priest now. Look at me! Do you see what I am seeing?”

“What you are seeing, Jonathan?”

“I grew up, my stain is gone and my withered little ear became normal, like the other. I am a young lamb, not a child anymore. Wow! How nice you came to make a definitive covenant; we no longer need to sacrifice animals. Your blood is enough to cleanse us. What wisdom is this that seems to exist inside me?”

“It’s my Spirit, Jonathan. He will never leave you; on the contrary, He will be with you till the end and will teach you everything you need.”

“He is hot like fire.”

“Do you want to meet your sheep, young priest?”

“If you come with me, I do.”

The two stood up and walked toward the flock. There were sheep, lambs, rams, goats and young goats, animals of all ages. Their bleating was a sweet sound to the ear of Jonathan. They were his family from this moment. He would guide them, but he would be sustained by them; they would be his comfort too.



Time to preach

Time to preach

Jonathan was feeling very important that moment. After all, he was a priest, and the Good Shepherd stood at his side to give him help. He took the book from His hands and read to his flock,

“Here am I and the children whom God has given me... Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested... Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need... Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek... For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself... Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up... For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf... And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy... you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth... Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar?... Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain’, and, ‘The laborer deserves to be paid’... In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”

Jonathan looked at the Good Shepherd by his side and opened his mouth with confidence. He felt the words coming out without hindrance from within himself. He could see a great truth: the Good Shepherd lived inside him and it was He that spoke through his mouth. He, Jonathan, was the sanctuary of the Lord here on earth. The *altar* was inside him. The teaching was real because his sheep testified it through their faces and their prayers. He now knew how to lead them to the *altar*; he just should tell them about the Good Shepherd and He Himself would teach them, as he did with the little priest lamb.

He looked at the flock and blessed it.

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.”*

Biblical references

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Ex. 20: 22-26	1 Sam. 16: 1; 7; 13	Jer. 8: 10-11
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