Hebrews 7:11- 28

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Hebrews 7:11–28*** (ESV)  
**11** Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? **12** For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. **13** For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. **14** For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. **15** This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, **16** who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. **17** For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” **18** For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness **19** (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. **20** And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, **21** but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “YHWH has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’ ” **22** This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. **23** The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, **24** but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. **25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. **26** For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. **27** He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. **28** For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

1. Summarize the previous discussion of Melchizedek from Hebrews 5:1 - 7:10). What is the overall purpose of the author’s discussion about Melchizedek? What is the point of his argument, and how does it relate to why he is writing to Hebrews?

He is setting the stage for another argument of why Yeshua is better than anything else in their past. Of the Torah given my Moses was important, how much more so should the word of God given by Yeshua. If the action of the high priests was important, how much more so the action of Yeshua as a new and different high priest. But how could Yeshua be high priest since they had to be sons of Aaron, who was a Levite? The author shows there is precedence for another type of high priest that was greater than those of the Levites. This high priest, Melchizedek, was in some ways similar to Yeshua, and foreshadowed Yeshua’s coming as the ultimate high priest.

This is crucial for the Hebrews to understand, since we surmise that in their present situation the existing religious leadership (including Levitical priests) are urging them to return to “the traditional fold” and reject the teachings of Yeshua and his followers called the Way.

1. In Heb. 7:11, the Greek word translated “perfection” is **teleisos**. What does this word really mean?

Maturity, completion, perfection – the state of reaching the end goal

1. Why wasn’t “perfection” attainable through the Levitical priesthood? Related to this is Heb 7:11 “the Torah made nothing perfect”. How is that the Torah was not sufficient? How were the people of Israel forgiven of their sins, and made righteous before God? Find Scriptures to support your answer.

***Malachi 1:6–10*** (ESV)  
**6** “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says YHWH of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ **7** By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that YHWH’s table may be despised. **8** When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says YHWH of hosts. **9** And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says YHWH of hosts. **10** Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says YHWH of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.

***Malachi 2:2–8*** (ESV)  
**2** If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says YHWH of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. **3** Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. **4** So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says YHWH of hosts. **5** My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. **6** True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. **7** For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of YHWH of hosts. **8** But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says YHWH of hosts,

***Isaiah 1:11–17*** (ESV)  
**11** “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says YHWH; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. **12** “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? **13** Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. **14** Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. **15** When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. **16** Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, **17** learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.

***Hebrews 10:1–4*** (ESV)  
**1** For since the law has ~~but~~ a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. **2** Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? **3** But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

***Romans 3:28–31*** (ESV)  
**28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. **29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, **30** since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. **31** Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

***Romans 4:9–12*** (ESV)  
**9** Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. **10** How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. **11** He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, **12** and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

***Romans 4:13–14*** (ESV)  
**13** For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. **14** For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

The Torah was never intended to “save” people. God’s people made a covenant with him, in faith, that they would be his people, and He would be their God. The covenant was based on faith, as Paul makes clear in Romans 4. In response to God’s care and protection, His people agree to live lives pleasing to God by obeying his “instructions for life” (the Torah). Because God knew people would sin and thus be separated Him, he made a way in his Torah for them to be forgiven and brought back into right relationship with him. But the entire relationship is predicated on faith and a true desire to follow God’s instructions out of love and thankfulness. Acts of “obedience” (the works of Torah) in and of themselves never “saved” anyone.

1. Hebrews 7:12 says there is “a change in the Torah”. Is God’s word changeable? Does that mean the Torah (God’s instructions for life) is no longer applicable? What exactly in the Torah has changed? Why do you think the author may be bringing this point up?

The answer is clear from context of the following verses:

***Hebrews 7:13–14*** (ESV)  
**13** For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. **14** For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

What necessarily changed was that **all priests must come from Aaron**. If there is to be another type of high priest after the order of Melchizedek, this means that something changed, since the Torah specifies that all priests come from the line Aaron. Yeshua is of the tribe of Judah not Levi.

This has no implications on the rest of God’s instructions for life. The author is simply pointing out that Yeshua is not a Levitical priest. That is different. It is a change, but it is OK. There is in fact precedence in the Torah for another order of priests.

I think the author is acknowledging that Yeshua is not a Levitical priest because the “religious influencers” may have been using this argument to persuade the Hebrews that Yeshua had no authority to teach and act as he did, and any claim that he was acting as a high priest (as the Way must have teaching) was contrary to Torah. The author counters that argument by agreeing that in this case the specific requirement of priests being of the order of Levi was “placed aside”. And just as Torah also teaches of another priest outside that order, it is in this way that Yeshua has come as high priest. He is not an earthly high priest, but a heavenly high priest. Better!!

1. On what basis are priests chosen? Contrast the Levitical priests with Yeshua.

Levitial – blood line decendants

Yeshua (and Melchizedek) – an indestructible life

1. Heb 7:17 is a quote from David from Psalm 110. What is the context and relevance of this Psalm?

***Psalm 110:1–7*** (ESV)  
**1** **YHWH says to Adonai**: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” **2** YHWH sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! **3** Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. **4** **YHWH has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**”

**5** Adonai is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. **6** He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. **7** He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

YHWH is speaking to Yeshua. “YHWH has sworn” (made an oath/promise) that Yeshua is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The author is again showing that Yeshua’s priesthood is not contrary to Torah, but actually in accordance with Torah.

1. Hebrews 7:18 says “a former commandment is set aside”. Some cite this verse to teach that the Torah has been set aside, “because of its weakness and uselessness”. What exactly is the former commandment that is set aside? Why was that commandment weak or “useless”? What is an alternate translation for the Greek **anopheles** “useless”?

**Anopheles** is literally “not profitable”.

The former commandment that was set aside because it was weak was the commandment that all priests must be from the line of Aaron. It was weak because the men appointed as priests were weak (see Heb 7:28). **These priests sinned and died, and had to sacrifice continually.** The system was therefore imperfect, and was replaced by a “better hope”, “a better covenant” (see Heb 7:22) that appointed the Messiah, who was sinless and lives forever, and offered the ultimate sacrifice once for all, to be our high priest forever.

***Hebrews 7:22*** (ESV)  
**22** This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

***Hebrews 7:28*** (ESV)  
**28** For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

1. Consider Hebrews 7:19. How do we “draw near” to God? Thinking in terms of the Hebrew Scriptures (old testament), what action does the phrase “draw near” imply? Consider the meaning of the Hebrew קָרַב (karav). Why might this be important for the author to communicate given the situation of the Hebrew readers?

קָרַב “karav” to draw near, **to bring an offering**

***Leviticus 1:2*** (ESV)  
**2** “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

How had the people “drawn near” to God all their lives prior to Yeshua? Through their offerings. But now this path was probably being blocked by the religious leadership. So the author says we have an even better path open to us. How are we now able “draw near” to God? Through Yeshua! Because of his offering, once and for all, we can draw near.

1. Hebrews 7:20-21 speaks of “an oath”. What is the oath, and why is this important?

***Psalm 110:1–7*** (ESV)  
**1** **YHWH says to Adonai**: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” **2** YHWH sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! **3** Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. **4** **YHWH has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**”

The oath is the promise of YHWH, that Yeshua is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

None of the Levitical priests were installed with an oath from YHWH. None of the Levitical priests were installed as priests forever. Thus, the author argues, the priesthood of Yeshua stands out as better / greater than that of the Levitical priesthood. Point being, **if you have to choose one to follow, which should it be?**

1. What is a “guarantor” (Hebrews 7:22)? How is that Yeshua is a guarantor of a better covenant?

Greek **engyos** “fulfill, assure, secure, guarantee, pledge, provide”. This word only used once (here) in Scripture.

The “better covenant” refers to the new / renewed covenant of Hebrews 8:6ff, which references Jer 31:31.

***Hebrews 8:6*** (ESV)  
**6** But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

Better promises because he puts Torah into people’s minds and writes it on their hearts. Recall that before, the people did not follow God’s Torah. The fault was the people, not the Torah. The convent is a promise between two parties. The covenant was faulted because one of the parties was faulted. Don’t make the mistake of equating covenant with Torah. The Torah provides a record of the covenant. The Torah contains the covenant.

“This” makes Yeshua guarantor… what is the “this”? The oath by God, and the “forever” nature of his priesthood. Plus, implied also is the forever nature of his sacrifice. Yeshua is high priest, mediator, of this new covenant. He acts on our behalf in accordance with the new covenant. His sacrifice is the atonement that is needed, once and for all time, to provide redemption for God’s people.

1. Look at Hebrews 7:23-24 which further expounds on the reasons Yeshua is the guarantor of the new covenant. What are the reasons given here, and how are they connected with the prior verses?

It is really an expansion of what was just stated above. Death (Levites) vs forever (Yeshua). Many (Levites) vs One (Yeshua).

1. Consider Hebrews 7:25. What does the word “uttermost” mean (Greek **pan-telos**)? When you read the phase “those who draw near to God through Him”, what comes to mind? What does it mean to “make intercession”?

Pan + telos – all/every + complete/goal/perfect/mature = “completely, totally, **reaching every aspect of goal.**

Drawing near = HB **karav** “present an offering”.

**Our salvation is brought to total and full completion when our offering / sacrifice to God is the one that Yeshua made on our behalf.**

Intercede = to go between on behalf of someone, to approach, appeal, petition.

Yeshua lives forever to always approach YHWH on our behalf. As the high priest went into God’s presence, once a year, after making the appropriate sacrifice, so too Yeshua is continuously in YHWH’s presence, having made the ultimate lasting sacrifice.

1. Looking at Hebrews 7:26-27, what are the characteristics of our high priest? What do they each mean? Why is that “fitting” or “proper”?

Holy – set apart for God’s purposes

Innocent – without fault

Unstained - lit. undefiled

Separated from sinners – lit. “apart” from sinners. Not that he was isolated or lived without contact with sinners, but rather that he totally different from sinners. He was one set apart from sinners.

Exalted above the heavens – he has been lifted up to a place higher than the heavens, into God’s presence (recall Heb 4:14 “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”)

This was fitting, because it had to be in order for his priesthood to be eternal, the effectiveness of our sacrifice complete, and his presence in at the right of God continuous.

1. In Hebrews 7:28, why does the author say that the “word of the oath” came later than the Torah? Was Melchizedek before or after the Torah?

Melchizedek came before the Torah was given. But the promise (oath) regarding Yeshua as high priest after the order of Melchizedek was made to David (Ps 110) which was ~400 years after the Torah was given.

1. This section closes (Hebrews 7:28) by stating that God appointed as high priest “a Son who has been made perfect forever.” What does the word “perfect” recall to mind? Contrast this closing phrase with the very first phrase in this section (Hebrews 7:11).

Heb 7:28 - Greek **teleioo** “to make complete, reach the goal, fulfillment, maturity”

***Hebrews 7:11*** (ESV)  
**11** Now if **perfection** had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

Heb 7:11 - Greek **teleiosis** – The noun form of the verb **teleioo**.

YHWH, true to his promise (oath), appointed his Son to be our high priest forever. His sacrifice was complete. He completed/fulfilled all the requirements. Holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

This is the answer to the problem referred to in Hebrews 7:11, that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood, given weaknesses of the human priests.