

Thesis: The appearance of the phrase “these are the generations of” in Numbers 3 reveals that Israel’s priesthood is (1) the continuation of Adam’s priestly vocation, (2) situated within the life of God’s gathered people, and (3) a sign of new creation—ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the true High Priest.

The *toledot* Formula in the Pentateuch

- “*toledot* formula” refers to the phrase “these are the generations of...”
- The *toledot* formula appears in:
 - Gen. 2:4 - Heavens and earth
 - Gen. 5:1 - Adam
 - Gen. 6:9 - Noah
 - Gen. 11:10, 27 - Shem and Abraham (via Terah)
 - Gen. 37:2 - Jacob (Israel)
 - [No appearances until...]
 - Num. 3:1 - Aaron and his sons (Israel’s priests)
- Why does the *toledot* formula appear in Numbers 3:1?
 - Reason 1: “By use of the *toledot* formula the Pentateuch’s narrative builds a highway from Adam (as archetypal priest) to Aaron the high priest (as cultic Adam).”¹
 - Reason 2: The *toledot* formula helps us see that Israel’s priesthood is *for the sake of the people*.

The significance of the Camp of Israel is seen in the Pentateuch’s reserving of the priestly *toledot* formula until this point. Rather than placing it earlier at the consecration of the priesthood [in Leviticus 8] or before the Day of Atonement [in Leviticus 16], the priestly *toledot* is placed in relation to the construction of Israel’s Camp. Whereas in Leviticus, the role of the priests is given in terms of their necessity for the operation of the cultus, in Numbers their role is set within their true context—within the life of the community of Israel as architecturally embodied in the Camp, for the sake of Israel’s well-being and peace with YHWH (cf. Num. 6:22-27; 25). Moreover, whereas Leviticus, with few exceptions is static and timeless, Numbers will follow the priestly line from Aaron to his son Eleazar to his grandson Phinehas, a progression signaled by Aaron’s genealogy (Num. 3:1-4) [...] *Numbers presents Aaron’s priesthood in relation to the nation’s survival of the wilderness sojourn, a paradigm for their role in the land.*²

- Reason 3: The *toledot* formula connects Numbers 3 to Genesis 2 and reinforces the theme of *new creation*.

¹ Morales, *Numbers*, Vol. 1, pg. 120

² Ibid., 121.