

Joshua 21:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for their's was the first lot.

Analysis

Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for their's was the first lot.

This verse emphasizes the Aaronic priesthood's priority: **"their's was the first lot"** (כי להם היתה הגורל ראשונה, *ki lahem hayah hagoral rishonah*). Though lot-casting involves apparent chance, God sovereignly ordered outcomes so Aaron's descendants received first allocation. The term *rishonah* (ראשונה, "first") signals honor and priority—those serving directly at God's altar received precedence in city distribution.

The phrase **"children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi"** provides genealogical precision: Levi → Kohath → Aaron. This three-generation descent established priestly legitimacy. Only those tracing lineage through Aaron could serve as priests (Exodus 28:1, Numbers 3:10). Genealogical precision mattered profoundly in Israel—after the exile, priests unable to prove Aaronic descent were excluded from ministry (Ezra 2:61-63).

The "first lot" principle demonstrates that God honors those serving in positions requiring greater holiness and responsibility. Aaron's descendants bore unique burdens—entering the Holy of Holies, offering sacrifices, teaching Torah with authority. Greater responsibility warranted first consideration in material provision. This models the New Testament principle: elders who rule well deserve

double honor, especially those laboring in preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

Historical Context

The Aaronic priesthood's first-lot priority ensured they received cities nearest the worship center (Tabernacle at Shiloh, later Temple at Jerusalem). This proximity facilitated priestly rotation—priests served in courses/divisions (1 Chronicles 24:1-19), requiring regular travel to the worship site. Cities like Hebron, Libnah, and Anathoth (verse 18) clustered around Jerusalem, making priestly service logistically feasible. After 70 AD when Rome destroyed the Temple, the Aaronic priesthood ceased functioning—but Christ's eternal priesthood continues, and He forever intercedes for believers (Hebrews 7:23-25).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the 'first lot' principle—honoring those with greater spiritual responsibility—inform how churches should support pastors and elders today?
2. What does the genealogical precision required for Aaronic priesthood teach about the importance of legitimate calling and proper qualifications for Christian ministry?
3. How should understanding Christ as your eternal High Priest (replacing the Aaronic order) shape your confidence in approaching God and your assurance of intercession?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| וְהָיָה | מִבְנֵי י | אֶהְרֹן | מִמִּשְׁפַּח וְ | הַקָּהָת י |
| H1961 | Which the children | of Aaron | being of the families | of the Kohathites |
| | H1121 | H175 | H4940 | H6956 |
| מִבְנֵי י | לְיִי | כִּי | לֵאמֹר | הָיָה לְ |
| Which the children | of Levi | H3588 | H1992 | H1961 |
| H1121 | H3878 | | | lot |
| | | | | H1486 |

רָאִישׁוֹנָה:

had for theirs was the first
H7223

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 21:4 (Parallel theme): And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, which were of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.