

interpreting the Law and the Prophets should be: (1) What is this passage revealing about God who is my creator and redeemer? (2) How does this passage teach me to reflect His image and to respond to Him with whole-hearted love? (3) How does this passage teach me to love my neighbor who also is an image-bearer? This seems to be the whole spirit and tenor of covenant teaching. We humbly suggest that by asking these questions, one will avoid the pitfalls of a legalistic frame of mind.

Tôrâ in Priestly Contexts

We turn now to those passages where *tôrâ* is used in connection with priestly functions or regulations for worship. Do they in fact support the instructional emphasis of *tôrâ*? We suggest they do.

The *locus classicus* for such usage is found in Deut 33:8-11, the blessing on Levi. We focus on v19 because their function is clearly stated, i.e., (1) to teach (*yôrû*) ordinances (*mispatîm*) and *tôrâ* and (2) to put incense before God and whole burnt offerings on the altar. Here the sacerdotal functions in the temple seem secondary, while the pedagogical function is primary.

Another function is given to the (high) priest in Deut 17:8. In very difficult judicial cases the (high) priest together with the judge (*hassopet*) who is in office are to render a verdict (*mispat* = "decision, judgment"). Even here, however, though the context is juridical, the decision rendered is given for instruction (*tôrâ*) which "they teach you" (*yôrûka*), vvl0, 11. Micah refers to the teaching function of the priest, but condemns it because Jerusalem's priests "instruct (*yôrû*) for a price" (Mic 3:11).³⁴ Malachi also speaks of the instructional function of the priests. He refers to the covenant with Levi and that early on "the *tôrâ* of truth was in his mouth," i.e., "true instruction" (2:6), for "the lips of priests should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction (*tôrâ*) from his mouth" (2:7). However, in Malachi's day the priests "have caused many to stumble by the instruction" (*tôrâ*), and they have "corrupted the covenant of Levi" (2:8).³⁵

As to the content of priestly *tôrâ* the word is used some 22 times in Lev and Num in expressions such as "This is the *tôrâ* of the burnt offering," (Lev 6:9[2]), "this is the *tôrâ* of the plague" (Lev 13:59), "this is the *tôrâ* of the Nazarite" (Num 6:13). Lindars makes the point that in these passages, *tôrâ* always means "rule" or "regulation," (hence best translated "this is the rule of...") but it never refers to the law as a whole.³⁶ One might go slightly farther and say these "rules" could just as easily be considered "authoritative instructions" having to do with particular ceremonies, people, or diseases.

One further passage in connection with priests and ceremonial institutions may prove helpful. In Exod 12:49, Yahweh is concluding the instructions concerning the celebration of that first passover with this statement: "The same *tôrâ* shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you." We simply point out that the whole chapter is a historical narrative in which God instructs Moses about the institution of