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ARTICLE

Genetics Helping Restore Priestly Lineage Of Levites For Third Temple Service



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BY JOSHUA MARKS/JNS.ORG JANUARY 16, 2026

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The wind cuts down from the Mount of Olives as three Jewish men named Cohen hunch their shoulders against the cold and start up the wooden ramp to the Temple Mount, breath clouding in the Jerusalem air.

In a scene that could stand in for countless real family journeys, their grandparents' stories trace lines through Poland, Tunisia and Iran, but here the paths merge: walking the worn stone their Israeli forefathers once crossed in white linen, lips shaping the same psalms those priests sang when the Temple still stood and the smoke of offerings climbed into the winter sky.

If this trio had wanted more than a symbolic ascent--if they had wanted to learn how to bless, to sing and to serve as their ancestors once did--they could now find a place to do it.

An emerging effort to revive the Aaronite priests and Levitical assistants of ancient Israel has grown into a nearly 100-strong professional community of Kohanim and Levites in just a month, led by a young Israeli doctor and Temple Mount activist.

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EXERCISE									
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7			
Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Squats Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	CHEAT DAY	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups			
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14			
CHEAT DAY									
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18						
Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Squats Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups	Morning: 10 Push-ups Noon: 10 Lunges Evening: 10 sit-ups						
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Nathan Huberman, 32, a Canadian-born physician, Israel Defense Forces veteran and longtime Temple Mount guide who lives outside Jerusalem, recently talked to JNS about his work turning ancient hereditary roles into a concrete program of training, identity and public engagement.

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The Kohen community operates under Mamlechet Kohanim, which runs a basic training course using life-sized replicas of Temple vessels--including an altar and menorah--and brings in specialists to teach practical workshops. The aim is to grow both the number of participants and their level of professional preparedness for traditional priestly functions.

The Levite community is organized through the Beyadenu organization and is centered on the Temple Mount, where members ascend to areas permitted under Jewish law and sing, echoing the role of Levites in the ancient Temple ensemble. Huberman is working to formalize this track as well, consulting musicologists and performers from Levitical families to design a dedicated course in Levite liturgical song that is still in development

Because both groups are identity-based ethnic communities, Huberman says there is significant work to be done in structuring them along traditional lines. He notes that biblical, rabbinic and archaeological sources describe how the Temple workforce was divided, and that some families today claim descent from the Second Temple-era mishmarot, or service divisions.



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In theory, he adds, modern genetic research could be used to help sort contemporary priests and Levites into their ancestral family lines, further refining how the two communities are organized.

"I'm here just connecting dots," said Huberman. "There are people out there doing great work, and these communities invite people to take part in those dots that are already there and connect to them."

The Levi project rests on what Huberman calls a quiet revolution in Jewish access and religious expression on the Temple Mount over the past decade. Where once Jews risked being expelled or even arrested for closing their eyes too long or appearing to pray, he says it is now possible to sing and even dance openly under the eyes of Israeli police without interference.

As a board member of Beyadenu, Huberman works to ease access and improve the experience for non-Muslims, arguing that a broader cross-section of Israeli society now ascends the Mount, including religious Zionists, haredim and others.

He points to a growing, if often discreet, roster of rabbis who halachically permit ascent under strict guidelines, citing figures such as the late chief rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu and Shlomo Goren and promising to publish a detailed list of supportive authorities.

"Most of the people going up are not very homogenous," he said. "It's shared among many different demographics, which is very interesting."

The communities' development coincides with cutting-edge research into the Y chromosome of Kohens that, in Huberman's view, could transform how priestly families organize themselves for renewed Temple service. A recent high-resolution sequencing study, currently available as a preprint, found that roughly 80 percent of tested Kohens cluster into nine major paternal lineages, with about 20% remaining

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workforce. He hopes to work with researchers to map well-documented Kohen dynasties--from families in Israel and Tunisia to Middle Eastern clans that preserve scrolls tracing their ancestry back to biblical figures such as Ezra and Eli the High Priest--onto these genetic lines for practical division of future Temple labor.

"You can use the genetic code to recreate family trees," Huberman emphasized. "You can prove that a Kohen from Algeria and a Kohen from Eastern Europe actually descend from the same person, and that has huge implications for how the Temple service could be organized!"

Huberman situates his initiative within a larger theological and national conversation in Israel about what Jewish sovereignty is ultimately for beyond physical protection from antisemitism. Drawing inspiration from Bar-Ilan University's professor Hillel Weiss, whose writings on practical steps toward Temple restoration deeply influenced him, he argues that the Temple and its priestly institutions are meant to expand Judaism's contribution to the world, socially and spiritually.

To that end, the communities collaborate with groups such as the Temple Institute, whose altars and ritual equipment could, in Huberman's telling, be deployed rapidly if circumstances allowed, making a pool of trained Kohens and Levites a strategic religious asset.

He emphasizes readiness and professionalism over messianic rhetoric, inviting skeptics and supporters alike to visit courses in person and watch Levites sing on the Temple Mount, in the hope that transparency will build trust and normalize what he sees as a grassroots return to Temple-centered Jewish identity.

"The Israeli population in general, Jewish people in general, are grappling with the question," said Huberman. "We get it, we have a country that's supposed to protect us from antisemitism, but beyond just protection and creating a country, what are we supposed to do with this country?"

Although still in their earliest stages, the communities already mimic aspects of Chabad-style outreach, with Huberman fielding daily calls from Kohens in Israel and abroad who want to join, including those who are not observant. He portrays the project as a way to "fix historical fractures," including his own complicated Levitical family story in the shadow of the Holocaust, by rebuilding broken chains of memory and practice.

Next steps include expanding course offerings, formalizing workshops with academic and ritual partners, and building an international network of identity-based priestly and Levitical communities.

Huberman encourages any self-identified Kohen or Levi interested in reconnecting with this heritage to reach out directly through his existing contact details, promising that the door is open to all who wish to turn an inherited status into lived responsibility.

"I want it to be the most inviting that it can be to every Kohen," Huberman said. "It's sort of like an outreach movement, like a Chabad for priestly families, bringing this part of Judaism back to Jews all over."

Originally published at JNS.org (<https://www.jns.org/priestly-and-levite-guilds-prepare-for-temple-revival/>)



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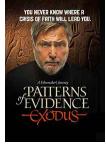
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