And a Fire Came Down From Before the Lord:
Examining the Relationship between Leviticus 10 and Numbers 16–18

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by

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Introduction

The priestly story in Leviticus 10 about the death of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s eldest two sons, is enigmatic, and has been studied by many throughout the generations. Scholars have examined the text from historical, sociological, literary, theological, and a variety of other methods. There has been a considerable amount of scholarship on the topic utilizing inner-biblical exegesis, for the most part focusing on the relationship between Leviticus 10 and the golden calf episode of Exodus 32, as well as the golden cows of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12.

There is, however, another relevant biblical parallel with which it has been little studied in depth—that is, the Korah rebellion and the narrative and laws that follow in Numbers 16–18. That the two narratives share basic similarities has been noted by many. Such observations usually highlight only the offering of incense and the subsequent death by divine fire of the incense offerers, which occur in both narratives. Many studies point out the striking similarity of the language used to describe these events.

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There appears to be a general understanding that the stories share a “similarity of theme,” as Baruch Levine puts it in his commentary on Lev 10.\(^7\) The connection between the stories is often taken for granted by scholars, or posited on the sole basis of the similarities mentioned above. The consensus that the texts are related is well founded, but deserves a deeper study. As will be demonstrated below, the major conclusions of this study are that there are several more textual parallels between Lev 10 and Num 16–18 than are typically noted, which further strengthen the argument for allusion between the texts. While the argument for allusion is strong, the evidence regarding the direction of dependence is often inconclusive, but may point to Num 16–18 as the source of allusion in Lev 10.

This study will be presented in three main sections. The first will define the texts in question, and examine them from a source-critical point of view. The texts contain several redactional layers, which could impact their interpretation and our understanding of their relationship. The second section of this study will illustrate the numerous similarities between the two texts, thereby establishing a stronger basis for the claim of a genetic relationship between them. The third section will examine the evidence for the direction of dependence between the two texts, and will be followed by a summary and conclusion.

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Chapter 1: Defining the Texts

1.1: Source Criticism of Leviticus 10

Leviticus 10 can be read as a cohesive textual unit that, while connecting with the previous and proceeding chapters, is also self-contained. The chapter is not entirely uniform in theme or style, however, and many scholars argue that at least some parts of the chapter are late additions.

The chapter follows the story of the inauguration of the Tabernacle, and opens with Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s two eldest sons, offering incense and being struck down by God (vv. 1–2). Moses then addresses Aaron, and has his cousins remove the dead bodies from the sanctuary, which they promptly do (vv. 3–5). Moses then again addresses Aaron and his remaining two sons, and gives them instructions not to show any signs of mourning (vv. 6–7). This is followed by a direct speech by God to Aaron, in which He tells Aaron that priests should not work while intoxicated, and are to serve as cultic decisors and as teachers among the Israelites (vv. 8–11). Moses then gives the priests instructions regarding the proper handling of several sacrifices (vv. 12–15). He follows up with an inquiry into the minḥā offering, and realizes that it was burnt, not eaten as it was supposed to be (v. 16). This makes Moses furious, and Aaron must justify this activity, which he does by invoking the death of his sons (vv. 16–19). This answer satisfies Moses (v. 19).

Scholars have noted a chiastic structure amidst the narrative and law of Lev 10. I will bring just two examples, of varying length and detail. Christophe Nihan, while noting the
various approaches to presenting the structure of the chapter, opts for a shorter analysis of the chiasm:

A. 10:1–5 Transgression of cultic laws by Aaron’s elder sons, sanctioned
B. 10:6–7 Instruction by Moses to Aaron and his two remaining sons
X. 10:8–11 Instruction by Yahweh to Aaron alone
B’. 10:12–15 Instruction by Moses to Aaron and his two remaining sons
A’. 10:16–20 Transgression of cultic laws by Aaron’s younger sons, not sanctioned

In contrast, Watts provides a lengthier analysis of the chiasm, with more components:

10:1–2 Priests’ ritual failure
10:3 Oracle: Moses quotes YHWH to Aaron
10:4–5 Moses rectifies priests’ ritual failure
10:6–7 Moses tells priests not to mourn
10:8–11 Oracle: YHWH grants Aaron authority for ritual interpretation
10:12–15 Moses tells priests to eat offering prebends
10:16–18 Moses criticizes priests for not eating offering prebends
10:19 Ruling: Aaron defends priests for not eating offering prebends
10:20 Moses Accepts Aaron’s ruling

Verses 8–11 serve as the center of the chiasm, and thus the narrative, in both models.

Remarkably, or perhaps not so, it is those very verses which are believed to be later additions by the majority of scholars. The verses read as follows:

8) Yahweh spoke to Aaron: 9) “Do not consume wine or alcoholic beverages—you and your sons with you—when you are going to the ’ohel mô’êd, so that you will not die. [It shall be] An eternal law, for your generations. 10) And to distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the pure and the impure, 11) and to instruct the children

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of Israel regarding all of the laws which Yahweh God dictated through the hand of Moses.” (Lev 10:8-11)\(^\text{10}\)

Jacob Milgrom makes the case that these verses are later than the rest Lev 10 in his commentary to Leviticus. He states that vv. 8–11 are “a heterogeneous piece, which was probably added at a later date.”\(^\text{11}\) While the entire section is believed to be late, it is heterogeneous because vv. 8–9 and 10–11 seem to be independent of one another. Verses 8–9 contain an injunction against priests entering the sanctuary while under the influence of alcohol. Verses 10–11 seem to change tack, and detail how the priests are to serve as cultic decisors (deciding between holy and profane, pure and impure), as well as teachers of the law.

Milgrom finds further proof for the heterogeneity of Lev 10: 8–9 and 10–11 in Ezekiel 44.\(^\text{12}\) In that chapter, instructions for priests are laid out in a manner similar to the way in which they are in Lev 10. Ezekiel 44:21 contains an injunction against alcohol within the sanctuary: וְיַֹ֥יִן לֶֽא־יִשְׁתֹּ֖וּ כּ ל־כּ הֵֻ֑ן בְּבוֹאָֹ֖ם א ל־ה ח צֵֹ֥ר הַפְּנִימִֶֽית – “And no priest should drink wine when he goes to the inner room” (Ezek 44:21). Ezekiel 44:22 then lists forbidden and permitted marriage partners for priests. Following this, Ezek 44:23–24 dictate that the priests shall distinguish between holy and profane, and pure and impure, and shall serve as cultic decisors. The language of Ezek 44:23, בֵֹּ֥ין ק ֹ֖וד שׁ לְח ֻ֑ול וּבֵין־ט מֵֹ֥א לְט הֹ֖וֹר “between sacred and profane, and between pure and impure,” is remarkably similar to that of Lev 10:10.

Thus, Ezek 44:21 closely parallels Lev 10:8–9, and Ezek 44:23–24 closely parallel Lev 10:10–11. While the Ezekiel verses parallel the Lev 10 verses, they are separated by the verse

\(^{10}\) All translations are my own.

\(^{11}\) Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 611.

\(^{12}\) Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 615, 617.
about who priests are permitted to marry (Ezek 44:22). Milgrom and others argue that the separation of the ideas contained in Lev 10:8–9 and Lev 10:10–11 in the Ezekiel passage points to the fact that they were not originally a unit, and were brought together in Lev 10, just as they were brought together as part of a larger unit in Ezekiel 44.13

Israel Knohl agrees that vv. 8–11 of Leviticus 10 are later additions—in his opinion addition of HS (Holiness School) to the main PT (Priestly Torah) text. However, he thinks that the HS layer is larger than just vv. 8–11, in that it also includes vv. 6–7. These verses contain Moses’ commandments to Aaron and his remaining sons to not show signs of mourning, and to not leave the ‘ohel mô‘êd. These prohibitions are remarkably similar to those found in Leviticus 21:10–12, which are directed to the high priest alone. Because Knohl understands the Lev 21 section to belong to HS, he argues that Lev 10:6–7’s similarity with Lev 21 indicates that it is HS as well.14,15

Some German scholars have attempted to go even further and find more than two layers within the text. Nihan notes the work of Baentsch, who saw four layers: P (Lev 10:1–5,

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15 It is worth noting here that the vv. 6–7 fit very well in the narrative of Leviticus 10. If they are a later insertion, they were inserted with great editorial skill. One example is the use of the verb יִקְצ ֹ֑ף in v. 6, where Moses uses it to speak of God’s fury. The verb returns in v. 16, where Moses is the one who gets furious. This wordplay of Moses acting on God’s authority is a theme of the chapter, and can also be seen in the last section of the chapter. Aaron rhetorically asks Moses, “would it be good in God’s eyes” for him to have eaten the ḥaṭṭāt offering (v. 19)? The chapter ends by stating that Moses heard, and “it was good in his eyes” (v. 20). Here again Moses performs the action that the reader anticipates God to do.
12–14), Ps (Lev 10:6–7), Pss (Lev 10:8–9), and Px (Lev 10:16–20). Scholars with similar views include Wellhausen and Elliger.17

While these scholars have attempted to define the editorial layers within Leviticus 10, there are also many scholars who think that doing so is a futile task. James Watts accepts that while it is “likely” that several editors contributed to the chapter, “there is not sufficient evidence of their work to reconstruct its stages of development, much less separate it chronologically from the preceding chapters.”18 To Watts then, the editorial process in Lev 10 is so distant and muddled that it is of no value to attempt to recreate it.

Nihan and Noth argue similarly. Nihan acknowledges that “Lev 10 has traditionally been regarded by critics as a highly composite text.”19 To Nihan, however, it is “pointless” to distinguish between the layers of Leviticus 10, because the entire text is so late.20 Noth, writing about Lev 10:8–20, describes it as a collection of “loose and unsystematically attached additions that were gradually appended, probably one after another, in an order which can no longer be determined.”21

In conclusion, most scholars agree that Leviticus 10 is to some degree a composite text. Some refuse to go further, arguing that there are not enough textual clues to identify the various layers. It has similarly been argued that it is pointless to attempt to isolate the sources within Lev 10 because the entire chapter is so late, that a source critical analysis would not contribute anything to the dating of the text. It would though, of course, contribute to our

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16 Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch, 567.
17 Ibid.
18 Watts, Leviticus 1–10, 511.
19 Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch, 576.
20 Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch, 577.
understanding of the evolution of Lev 10 itself. To this end, some scholars have tried to isolate redactional layers in the text. Many, such as Jacob Milgrom, argue that Lev 10:8–11 is a later insertion into the chapter. Others such as Knohl accept this, but go further and postulate that more verses, such as 6–7, are also later additions. An extreme version of this analysis can be seen in the work of the few scholars, such as Baentsch, who identify up to four or more distinct historical layers within the text.

1.2: Source Criticism of Numbers 16–18

Why Numbers 16–18

In some analyses of the Korah story, only Numbers 16 and 17 are dealt with. This study will treat chapters 16–18, rather than just 16–17, as a literary unit. This is not without reason or precedent—taken together, the three chapters were already identified as one פרשה unit by the Tiberian Masoretes.

Chapter 18 delineates the roles of the priests and the Levites, with an emphasis on the role of the Levites in guarding the Tabernacle. These prescriptions are without doubt a response to the end of chapter 17, where the people state: “All who approach the Tabernacle of Yahweh will die. Will we perish to death?” (Num 17:28). An illustrative example of the response to this complaint in the beginning of chapter 18 can be found in Num 18:4, which states, ‘וְנִלְוֵ֣וּ ע ל ָ֔יךָ וְשׁ ֶֽםְרָ֗וּ א ת־מִשְׁמ ֶ֙ר תֶ֙ א ֵ֣ה ל מוֹעֵָ֔ד לְכ ֹ֖ollipop אֲלֵיכ ֶֽם עֲב דֵַ֣ת ה א ֻ֑ה ל וְז ֹ֖ור לא־יִקְרַֹ֥ב א לָיְ֣ין ו תַֹּ֖ם תַֹּ֖מְנ ו ל גְוֶֹֽעַ י ל ק אמ ה י מ ֻ֑וּת הַאִֹ֥ם תַֹּ֖מְנ ל גְוֶֹֽעַ (Num 17:28). An illustrative example of the response to this complaint in the beginning of chapter 18 can be found in Num 18:4, which states, “And they [the Levites] will be joined to you, and they will guard the protected of the ‘ohel mô‘êd, for all of the work of the tent, so that a stranger should not
approach towards you.” Such a patrol would ease the worry of the people as expressed in Num 17:28, as it would ensure that non-Levites/Priests would not be killed for encroaching upon the Tabernacle.

The continuity between Num 16–17 and Num 18 is further strengthened by Num 18:5, which makes explicit reference to the events of chapter 17. The verse states, וּשְׁמַרְתּ ָ֗ם אֵֵ֚ת מִשְׁמַ֣ר ת הַקּ ָ֔ד שׁ וְאֵֹ֖ת מִשְׁמ ֵ֣ר ת הַמִּזְבֵֻ֑חַ וְלֶֽא־יִהְי ֹ֥ה עֶ֛וֹד ק ֹ֖צ ף עַל־בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂר אֵֶֽל, “and you should guard the protected of the holy, and the protected of the altar, so that there will not be another fury against the children of Israel” (Num 18:5). This verse refers to a measure meant to ensure that there will not be another fury. The original fury that is referenced here, and is trying to be avoided in the future, is described in Num 17:9–15. Moses explicitly identifies the fury as קצף—the same term in Num 18:5—in Num 17:11, when he urges Aaron to act swiftly, כִֶּֽי־י צ ֹ֥א הַקּ ֶ֛צ ף מִלִּפְנֵ֥י יְהו ֹ֖ה, “for the fury has come forth from before Yahweh.”

An additional support for taking Num 16–18 as a unit is the high number of textual parallels with Lev 10 found in each of the three chapters. These parallels will be examined in chapter two, below.

Thus, while Num 18 is a legal text, in opposition to the preceding two chapters, its laws continue the narrative of chapters 16–17, and appear to be a part of the same broader textual unit.23

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22 For a lengthier analysis of קצף, see below, 2.6.
23 It has been treated as such by several modern scholars. See, for example, Baden’s comments on the continuity between Num 18 and the Korah story in Baden, Joel S. The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. 163. Frankel also considers the three chapters to be a unit in Frankel, David. The Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School: A Retrieval of Ancient Sacerdotal Lore. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002.
Source Criticism in Numbers 16

While we have established that Numbers 16–18 will compose the second textual unit of this study, we must now separate the verses that will be of value for this study, and those which will not. In other words, the P text must be separated from the non-P text.

While Num 17–18 belong entirely to P (or PH), the analysis of Num 16 is more complex. It has been understood by many that there are several stories from at least two sources intertwined in chapter 16. One of those is that of the rebellion of the Reubenites Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab. This story stands against the other main rebellion narrative of Num 16, which features the rebellions of Korah, the chieftains, and the Levites. It is clear that the story of Dathan and Abiram is separate from the other stories: Dathan and Abiram are addressed apart from the other rebels, and similarly seem to suffer a different final fate. In addition to linguistic, stylistic, and narrative evidence within Numbers 16, other biblical evidence points to the existence of a time when the two rebellion stories were still completely separate texts.

For example, Deuteronomy 11 begins by recounting God’s miraculous activities during and after the Exodus. Verse 6 talks about how God destroyed Dathan and Abiram:

וַתִּבְל עֵם וְאֲשַׁר פִּיה, רוּבֵן-בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב בֵּן-אֵלִיאָב, אֲשַׁר פִּיתָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת-פִּיה, וְהָבַּלְעֵם אֵת-
בְּתיֵם אֵת-אֲבָלִים אֵת-כָּל-הָאֹלֶם אֲשָּׁר בָּרָגְלֵם, בָּהֲרֵב כָּל-שְּאר

And that which was done to Dathan and to Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, that the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses and their tents, all that lived by their feet, from the midst of all of Israel. (Deut 11:6)

This verse references only one of the punishments found in Numbers 16 (earth swallowing, and not death by fire), and describes only the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, without any mention of Korah, or any of the other rebellious parties mentioned in Num 16.
This rebellion story of Dathan and Abiram is identified as belonging to a non-P tradition. Some documentarians identify the non-P narrative with the J source, while others identify it with E. What is most important for our study is that the Dathan and Abiram narrative is non-P material, while the Korah rebellion narrative is ascribed to P (or PH). There is some disagreement between scholars regarding which verses or phrases are from the P and non-P sources, but for the most part there is agreement.

Frankel understands the non-P verses of chapter 16 to include vv. 12–15, 25–26, and 27b-34. Within those verses, he views 27a as a later editorial addition, and the first three words of 26, 32b, and the last three words of 33 as Priestly material which were added to synthesize the non-P account with the P text.

In addition to Frankel’s identifications, Baden, in The Composition of the Pentateuch, identifies v. 1b and the first three words of v. 2 as belonging to the non-P source. Baden takes the verbal clause at the beginning of v. 2, “and they rose up before Moses,” as belonging to the non-P text, which solves the difficulty of understanding the first word of the chapter. In the MT, וַיִּקְחוּ - “and he took,” does not have a clear object. Some have understood the verb to mean that Korah “took himself.” Under Baden’s model, this type of difficult postulating is no longer necessary, as the story would begin as follows: “Korah, son of Yitzhar son of Kehath son of Levi, took men from the sons of Israel....”

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25 See Baden, Composition of the Pentateuch, 117.
26 Frankel. Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School, 204–205.
27 And the conjunctive wáw on the beginning of the fourth word.
28 Baden, Composition of the Pentateuch, 158–159.
Other differences in Baden’s division of the text and Frankel’s are that Baden classifies the last three words of v. 33 as non-P material, and that he views v. 26 as wholly P. Aside from these disagreements, Baden and Frankel’s reconstructions are in agreement. In sum, Baden understands the non-P (to him, E) text of Num 16 as verses 1b (without the wāw), 2a (first three words of v. 2), 12–15, 25, and 27b-34. The P text according to Baden is accordingly verses 1a, 2 (beginning with דְּשַׁנְנָה- no wāw)–11, 16–24, 26–27a, and 35.

Israel Knohl, in *Sanctuary of Silence*, offers a reconstruction of the P and non-P texts that can be seen as a middle position between Frankel’s and Baden’s identifications. Like Frankel, Knohl does not include any of verses 1 or 2 as part of the original non-P text. However, his understanding of the rest of the chapter is virtually identical to that of Baden. More specifically, Knohl understands the non-P text of Dathan and Abiram as comprising Numbers 16:12–15, 25, and 27b-34, with the exclusion of 32b, which explicitly mentions Korah, and is clearly a later addition.29

There is therefore general agreement about the identification of the vast majority of the non-P text, while there is some disagreement about specific phrases, and one entire verse. The agreed-upon assignment of 12–15, 25, and 27b-34 to non-P can be easily explained by the content of the verses and their context in the chapter.

The unit of vv. 12–15 is initially identified with Dathan and Abiram with their explicit mention in v. 12. Their complaint appears to only address Moses in his capacity as leader, and does not involve Aaron or reflect any religious tension, both of which are features of the P text. The events that begin in v. 12 then flow through v. 15 without interruption. Verse 16 addresses

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29 Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 75–76.
Korah and his crowd, and this narrative continues through v. 24; therefore these verses are P rather than non-P texts. The non-P narrative resumes with the mention of Dathan and Abiram in v. 25, from which the narrative continues almost without interruption to its conclusion in v. 34.

The disagreements between scholars regarding vv. 1, 2, and various parts of 27, 32, and 33 deal mostly with questions of whether the verses or phrases were original to the non-P source, or were later editorial additions. While important, these questions are more important for the study of the non-P text than the P text, and therefore do not have much bearing on the P text of Num 16.

The most relevant disagreement then is whether v. 26 is part of the P or non-P text. There are no clear indicators as to which source this verse belongs. The P text of Numbers 16, then, reconstructed to the best of our abilities, is as follows, with the brackets marking uncertainties or disagreements:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Num. 16:1} & \quad \text{וַיִּקֵַּ֣ח קוֹּ֥רַח בּ ‡קַּ֖ת בּ †יִצְה} \\
\text{v. 2} & \quad \text{אֲנ} \quad \text{שִֹׁ֥ים מִבְּנֵֶֽי־יִשְׂר אֵ֖ל חֲמִשִֵּׁ֣ם וּמ את} \\
\text{v. 3} & \quad \text{וַיִֶּֽקּ הֲלָ֞וּ עַל־מ שׁ ֵ֣ה וְעֶַֽל־אַהֲר} \\
\text{v. 4} & \quad \text{וַיִּשְׁמֵַ֣ע מ שׁ ָ֔ה וַיִּפּ ֹ֖ול עַל־פּ נ} \\
\text{v. 5} & \quad \text{וַיְדַבֵֶּ֨ר א ל־ק ֹ֜רַח וְא ֶֽל־כּ ל־עֲד} \\
\text{v. 6} & \quad \text{ז ֹֽ֖את עֲשֻׂ֑וּ קְחוּ־ל כ} \\
\text{v. 7} & \quad \text{וּתְנֵ֣וּ ב הֵֵ֣ן אֵֵ֡שׁ וְשִׂימוּ֩ עֲלֵיה} \\
\text{v. 8} & \quad \text{וַיּ ֹ֥אמ ר מ שׁ} \\
\text{v. 9} & \quad \text{הַמְעֵַ֣ט מִכּ} \\
\text{v. 10} & \quad \text{וַיַּקְרֵבֶ֙ א ֶֽתְךָָ֔ו וְא ת־כּ ל־} \\
\text{v. 11} & \quad \text{ל כֵן אַתּ} \\
\text{v. 12} & \quad \text{וְאַהֲר} \\
\text{v. 13} & \quad \text{לַעֲב} \\
\text{v. 14} & \quad \text{וַיּ} \\
\text{v. 15} & \quad \text{וַיִּאמְר מ שׁ ה} \\
\text{v. 16} & \quad \text{וַיּ} \\
\text{v. 17} & \quad \text{וַיְדַבֵֵּ֣ר יְהו ה} \\
\text{v. 18} & \quad \text{יְהו הֵֵ֤וּא הַקּ} \\
\text{v. 19} & \quad \text{כִּי} \text{תלִינוּ (תַלִּינוּ) טַלְיוּ} \\
\text{v. 20} & \quad \text{וַיּ} \\
\text{v. 21} & \quad \text{ךְוֹ} \\
\text{v. 22} & \quad \text{וַיִּפְּלוּ} \\
\text{v. 23} & \quad \text{וַיְדַבֵּר יְהו ה} \\
\text{v. 24} & \quad \text{דַּבֵֹּ֥ר א ל־ה עֵד} \\
\text{v. 25} & \quad \text{וַיַּקְהֵֶ֨ל עֲלֵיה} \\
\text{v. 26} & \quad \text{וַיְדַבֵֶּ֨ר א ל} \\
\end{align*}
\]
1) Korah son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi took 2) men from the children of Israel—250 leaders of the congregation, those who are called in the assembly, men of renown. 3) They gathered against Moses and Aaron and they said to them “You have enough! All of the congregation—all of them—are holy, and God is among them. So why have you elevated yourselves above the community?!” 4) Moses heard and fell on his face. 5) He said to Korah and to his entire congregation, “Morning, and God will make known who is to Him and is the holy one—He will bring him near to Him—and the one who He will choose, he will offer to Him. 6) This is what you should do: All of you—Korah and his entire congregation—take fire-pans. 7) And put coals in them and place incense upon them before Yahweh tomorrow, and it will be that the man whom Yahweh chooses, he will be the holy one. Enough, for you, sons of Levi!” 8) Moses said to Korah “Listen, sons of Levi! Is it too little for you that the God of Israel separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you close to Him to do the work of the Tabernacle of Yahweh and to stand before the congregation to minister them? 10) And he brought you and all of your brothers the sons of Levi close, but you desire also the priesthood?! 11) Therefore you and all of your congregation who are gathered against Yahweh...and Aaron—who is he, that you murmur against him?!” 16) And Moses said to Korah “You and all of your congregation, be before Yahweh tomorrow. You, them, and Aaron. Tomorrow. 17) Each man should take his firepan and you should put incense upon them and you should bring them before Yahweh, each individual his own firepan—250 firepans—and you and Aaron, each with his firepan.” 18) So they took, each man his firepan, and they put coals on them, and they placed incense upon them, and they stood at the entrance to the Tent of Assembly, and so also Moses and Aaron. 19) Korah gathered all of the congregation against them at the entrance to the Tent of Assembly, and God’s glory was made visible to the entire congregation. 20) God said to Moses and Aaron: 21) “Withdraw from the congregation, and then I will instantly consume them!” 22) They fell on their faces and they said “El, God of the life-spirit of all flesh, one man will sin, and you will rage against the entire congregation?!” 23) Yahweh spoke to Moses 24) “Speak to the congregation as such: ‘Go away from the surroundings of the dwelling of Korah.’” 26) And he spoke to the congregation, “Turn away from the tents of those wicked men, and do not touch anything that is theirs, so that you do not get carried away in all of their sins.”] 27) And so they went away from the surrounding of the dwelling of Korah. 35) And a fire came from before Yahweh and consumed the 250 men, offerers of incense.
Layers Within the P Text of Numbers 16

While there is general consensus regarding the separation of the P and non-P sources within Numbers 16, there is little consensus regarding the understanding of the complexities within the P text.

Even once the Dathan and Abiram rebellion story is separated out, inconstancies remain in the text. For example, there are still several rebels, which include Korah, the 250 chieftains, and Levites. While it is possible, it is difficult to read the text as a unitary composition. Why would chieftains join a rebellion led by Korah—a Levite—that seems to be arguing for greater power for the non-Aaronide Levites? Additionally, Moses’s instructions to the rebels regarding the incense showdown are spoken twice, in vv. 6–7 and again in v. 17.

Aside for reading the text as a unity, the simplest understanding of the P text of Numbers 16 is that it is a combination of two distinct rebellion stories—a rebellion by chieftains against the Levites, and a separate rebellion by Levites against priestly domination.

Many scholars have put forth nuanced theories of the layers within the P text, as well as the stages with which it was combined with the non-P text of Numbers 16. The discussion below will briefly summarize some of the positions taken by scholars.

David Frankel lays out the logic behind his attempt to isolate layers within the P text. He writes that Numbers 16:3, in which the protestors proclaim the holiness of the entire nation, “stands in striking opposition to” 16:7–11, which describes a battle for priestly privilege between the Levites and Aaron. Other difficulties listed by Frankel include that in v. 2 the

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For a lengthy list of references to attempts of identifying the P layers in Numbers 16, see Baden, Composition of the Pentateuch, 292 note 7.
protestors are not identified as Levites, nor are the offerers of incense in v. 35, while they are in vv. 8–11; and the repetition of Moses’ instructions for the incense offering, as detailed above.\textsuperscript{31}

Using similar observations, G. B. Gray posited the existence of three unique conflicts in Numbers 16. The first being “the revolt against the civil authority of Moses under the leadership of Dathan and Abiram” and possibly On; the second “the revolt of representatives of the whole people under Korah against the Levites (represented by Moses and Aaron) in vindication of their equal holiness;” and the third, “the claim of the Levites to priestly privilege.”\textsuperscript{32} The first two were originally separate, and represent to Gray the JE and P\textsuperscript{g} sources. The final theme, the conflict between the Levites and the Priests, belongs to P\textsuperscript{S}, and was added as a supplement—it “was never more than a parasitic growth on the combination of the two original stories.”\textsuperscript{33}

A similar, but different view is advocated by several scholars, including Frankel and Knohl. Like Gray, they argue that the P text originally contained the conflict between the nation and the Levites, and was then combined with the non-P Dathan and Abiram story, after which the Levite rebellion against the Priests was added. They disagree with Gray, however, in their placement of Korah amidst the redactional layers. While Gray saw Korah as the leader of the original P, or P\textsuperscript{S} layer, Frankel and Knohl argue that Korah is only brought in with the final redaction and addition of the conflict between the Levites and Priests. Thus Frankel and Knohl believe that Korah is only introduced later in the development of the text, as a Levite, while

\textsuperscript{31} Frankel, Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School, 206.
\textsuperscript{32} Gray, George B. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903. 188.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Gray believes that Korah was present in the original P narrative, but as an Israelite, and is reclassified as a Levite in a later recension of the story.\textsuperscript{34}

Milgrom attempts to read Numbers 16 in several recensions, although he only claims ability to reconstruct the penultimate recension. He argues that the penultimate recension contained three rebellions: one led by Dathan and Abiram, one led by the 250 chieftains (and Korah), and one led by the וֹדֵע, the people. The final recension changed several aspects of the narrative, according to Milgrom, including Korah’s place of death, and more importantly, the addition of the Levite rebellion.\textsuperscript{35}

Levine reacts against this sort of analysis. In his commentary, he briefly summarizes G. B. Gray’s opinion that the P text of Numbers 16 reflects two conflicts—one featuring the Levites and Priests versus the people, and the other as a conflict between the Levites and Aaronides. He states that he finds this “difficult to agree with,”\textsuperscript{36} and that all of the aspects of the P story are intended to reflect on one theme, that of the “exclusive election of the Aaronide priesthood.”\textsuperscript{37} Even still, Levine speaks of “Priestly writers,” and of a “progression” of the text, leaving open the possibility of redactional or editorial layers within the P text.\textsuperscript{38}

Joel Baden explicitly says what Levine might have intended: “I see no need to assume more than one priestly author in this text.”\textsuperscript{39} He understands the P story, as well as the non-P (E, to Baden) story, as written to serve as the final establishment of the authority of the Israelite

\textsuperscript{34} Frankel, \textit{Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School}, 224 and Knohl, \textit{Sanctuary of Silence}, 74.
\textsuperscript{35} Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 417-418.
\textsuperscript{36} Levine, \textit{Leviticus}, 405.
\textsuperscript{37} Levine, \textit{Leviticus}, 428.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Baden, \textit{Composition of the Pentateuch}, 292.
leadership, and therefore it includes challenges to both Aaron and Moses, as well as their vindication.\textsuperscript{40, 41}

**Source Criticism of Numbers 17–18**

Unlike Num chapter 16, chapters 17–18 appear to be completely P. The source critical analysis then is focused not on separating the P texts from the non-P texts, but on identifying different layers of P within the text.

On a basic narrative and thematic level, the chapters can be broken down into several sections. Num 17:1–5 is about Eleazar’s collection of the firepans used by the chieftains and the subsequent beating of the pans into plating for the altar. 17:6–15 recount another complaint by the people against Moses and Aaron, a resulting plague from God, and its resolution by Moses and Aaron. 17:16–26 tell the story of the competition of the rods of the tribes, which Aaron and the Levites “win,” so to speak. The chapter concludes with vv. 27 and 28, in which the people express concern about the danger of coming near the Tabernacle.

Chapter 18 can be divided into four basic units, each beginning with a verb of speech from God. The first unit, 18:1–7, tells of the responsibilities of the priests and Levites in guarding the Tabernacle. The second unit, 18:8–19, explains all of the offerings that the priests are to eat or keep for themselves. The final two sections, 18:20–24 and 18:25–32, both deal with the laws of the tithes for the Levites and priests.

\textsuperscript{40} Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 165.
\textsuperscript{41} Baden’s argument for a unitary composition is aided by his analysis of Num 16:1–2, which seamlessly combines the 250 chieftains and Korah. Still, there are other difficulties and redundancies in the P text, such as Moses’ twice repeated instructions for the incense challenge.
Frankel, continuing with his model for Numbers 16 of an original P layer, an editorial layer combining P and non-P, and a “post-editorial” layer—sees three layers in the narrative and law of Num 17–18. To Frankel, the original P text is preserved in 17:27–28, which make little sense in the story as it is preserved—why would the people be afraid to come near the Tabernacle? According to Frankel’s reconstruction of Num 16, the chieftains were killed in front of the sanctuary, thus making the people’s complaint in 17:27–28 understandable, once it is read as following the chieftain story of Num 16. Num 18—or at least its beginning—is also then part of the original P text, as it responds to the complaint of 17:27–28.\textsuperscript{42} Further, it gives the Levites positions guarding the Tabernacle—why would it do so if it was part of the later layers in which the Levites are aggressors and violate cultic norms? In a deeper analysis of Num 18:1–7, Frankel posits that vv. 3b-4a and 6–7 are post-editorial additions, with the rest belonging to the early stratum.\textsuperscript{43} Frankel does not address what layers the other sections of chapter 18 belong to.

To sum up Frankel’s position regarding chapter 17, he understands vv. 1–5 as part of the early P stratum, with the exception of 17:5b, which mentions Korah, as a later addition.\textsuperscript{44} The plague story of 17:6–15 is more mixed, according to Frankel. He sees vv. 11–14 (with 14b as a post editorial insertion)\textsuperscript{45} as part of the early layer, and the rest as editorial insertions. The story of the rods, Num 17:16–24, is part of the early P layer, with the exception of v. 20b.

Knohl reconstructs the layers in Num 17–18 differently. Because of the mention of Korah in 17:5, Knohl believes that all of 17:1–5 must be part of what he calls the “editorial

\textsuperscript{42} Frankel, \textit{MurmuringStories of the Priestly School}, 226–227.
\textsuperscript{43} Frankel, \textit{MurmuringStories of the Priestly School}, 258.
\textsuperscript{44} Frankel, \textit{MurmuringStories of the Priestly School}, 233.
\textsuperscript{45} Frankel, \textit{MurmuringStories of the Priestly School}, 258.
stratum,” the late layer which added Korah to the stories. He believes that the other two narratives of chapter 17, that of the plague and of the rod-challenge, are part of the earlier stratum (minus v. 14b, which also mentions Korah).46 The last two verses, and subsequently Numbers 18, are also part of the original stratum according to Knohl.

Noth also sees multiple layers in chapters 17 and 18, but believes that the layers were added to Num 16, and were never part of an original stratum together with parts of chapter 16. He argues that Num 17:16–26, the story of Aaron’s rod, is “phrased in the style of P, but is probably of somewhat later origin.”47 This, along with 17:1–5, correspond to the Levite segment of the narrative of Num 16, according to Noth. Num 17:6–15 conversely corresponds to the chieftain narrative of Num 16. Still, Noth regards each of the units of chapter 17 as successive additions, in the order that they are found in the MT—“in no case, however, is it a question of necessary or even likely continuations of one of the versions of 16:1–35.”48

Regarding chapter 18, he believes that it was originally “certainly an independent unit, not intended from the outset for the present context.”49 “From the point of view both of language and subject matter, this section belongs to the late period.”50 “...This composition, clumsily and inconsequentially and carelessly put together as it is in many respects, certainly does not belong to the original P-narrative. This is also borne out by its subsequent connection with the P-narrative by means of all kinds of secondary additions.”51

46 Knohl, Sanctuary of Silence, 79.
48 Noth, Numbers, 122.
49 Noth, Numbers, 133.
50 Noth, Numbers, 134.
51 Ibid.
Levine succinctly disagrees, and writes that “Numbers 17 is comprised of three sections, two of which surely belong to the priestly source.”\(^{52}\) In his view Num 17:1–5 as well as 17:6–15 belong to P, while 17:15–26 “may derive from a different priestly archive.”\(^{53}\)

Num 17–18 thus seem to have undergone several P recensions—the exact order of which is unknown, and is debated by scholars. Some basic elements of the chapters may have existed separate from one another, and were subsequently combined. The text as we have it now contains a basic narrative flow throughout, but also contains several seemingly repetitive or disjointed verses.

**Chapter 2: Textual Parallels**

Now that we have established the texts, as well as a brief overview of the scholarship on their redactional history, we will turn to a textual comparison of Lev 10 and the P text of Num 16–18. As noted in the introduction, the fact that there is a relationship between these two texts has been observed by many.

However, nearly every analysis limits the comparison to the two obvious narrative similarities—the offering of incense (treated here in 2.1) and the death of the incense offerers (2.2). This does not mean that scholars and commentators have not noticed other parallels between the texts. On the contrary, many have, and these observations will be noted below when known to us. Still, when scholars have made such observations, they rarely put them in

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.
the context of the broader relationship between Lev 10 and Num 16–18, and miss the larger pattern that begins to emerge.

2.1 The Offering of Incense

The offering of incense occurs in Leviticus 10:1, and Numbers 16:18. Moses’s instructions regarding the incense contest are also given in Num 16:6, 7, and 17. Lev 10:1 reads:

"The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, each took his own firepan, and they placed coals in them and they placed incense upon them, and they brought before Yahweh a foreign fire, which He did not command them" (Lev 10:1).

This verse can be broken down into various elements. The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, perform four actions: they take (ויקנו) fire-pans, they place (ויתנו) fire upon them, they put (וישינו) incense upon the pans, and they offer (ויקרבו) it before God. This same structure can be seen in the offering of incense by Korah and his followers in Numbers 16. Verses 6 and 7 read as follows:

6) “This is what you should do: All of you—Korah and his entire congregation—take firepans. 7) And put coals in them and place incense upon them before Yahweh tomorrow, and it will be that the man who Yahweh chooses, he will be the holy one. Enough, for you, sons of Levi!” (Num 16:6-7)

Here, the same sequence of actions can be found. Korah and his congregation are to take (נחלו) firepans, place (ставить) fire upon them, and put (שימו) incense upon them. The only
action that is missing is to offer (קרבו) it before God. Although the verb is missing, the rebels are told to put incense upon the firepans before God. Thus Lev 10:1 states ישימו עליה קטרת לפני יהוה, and Num 16:7 states והם ישימו עליה קטרת לפני יהוה. The stark similarity between the two verses suggests that while the verb קרב is explicitly mentioned in Lev 10:1, it is to be taken as implied in Num 16:7.

All four of the verbs can be explicitly found later in the chapter in vv. 17 and 18.

17 וַיַּקְרִֹ֜בוּ לִפְנִֵ֤י יְהוּדֹ֙ ה אִֵ֣ישׁ מַחְתּ תָ֗וֹ וְהִקְרַֽבְתּ ָ֞ם לִפְנִֵ֤י יְהוּדֹ֙ ה אִֵ֣ישׁ מַחְתּ תָ֗וֹ חֲמִשִֹּׁ֥ם וּמ אתַֹ֖יִם מַחְתּ ֻ֑ת וְאַתּ ֹ֥הָ וְאַהֲר ֹ֖ן אִֹ֥ישׁ מַחְתּ תֹֽוֹ׃
18 וַיִּקְחָ֞וּ אִֵ֣ישׁ מַחְתּ תָ֗וֹ וַיִּתְּנִ֤וּ עֲלֵיה םֶ֙ אֵָ֔שׁ וַשִֹׂ֥ימוּ עֲלֵיה ֹ֖ם קְט ֻ֑ר ת וֶַֽיַּעַמְדָ֗וּ פּ ֶ֛תַח א ֹ֥ה ל מוֹעֵֹ֖ד וּמ שׁ ֹ֥ה וְאַהֲר ֶֽן׃

Verse 17 has Moses telling the rebels again to take (קחו) firepans, place (נתתם) incense, and offer (היקרבתם) it before God. Verse 18, which recounts the actual doing of the action by the rebels, offers the verbs קחו, נתנו, וישימו, thus including all four of the verbs within this set of two verses.

We see, therefore, that there is a tight parallel in the offering of incense between Leviticus 10:1 and Numbers 16:6–7, 17–18.
2.2 The Death of the Incense Offerers

The other commonality that is usually pointed out is the similarity in the demise of the offerers of incense in both of the passages. This is recorded in Lev 10:2, and Num 16:35. Lev 10:2 reads as follows: וַתֵֹ֥צֵא אֵֶ֛שׁ מִלִּפְנֵ֥י יְהו ֹ֖ה וַתּ ֵ֣אכַל אוֹת ֻ֑ם וַיּ מֹ֖תוּ לִפְנֵ֥י יְהו ֶֽה

“And a fire came from before Yahweh and consumed them, and they died before Yahweh.” Num 16:35 reads: יָ֔שָׁה יְהוָ֣ה מֵאֵֵ֣ת יְהוָ֣ה וַתּ ָ֗אכַל אֵֵ֣ת הַחֲמִשִִּׁ֤Israelmenָךְו וּמאתֶַ֙יִםֶ֙ אִישׁ מַקְרִיבֵֹ֖י הַקְּט ֶֽר ת

“And a fire came from before Yahweh and consumed the 250 men, offerers of incense.”

The verses are extremely similar. In both, a fire comes (יצא) from God and eats (אכל) the offerers of incense. The appearance of God as a consuming fire is not uncommon; for example, in Ex 24:17, the כבוד of God is described as an “eating fire,” אִשָּׁת אֱכָלָת. The fire is described in Lev as coming מֵלפני יהוה, and in Num as מאת יהוה. These two phrases are semantic parallels—לפני and מאת serve the same function and have the same meaning here. This reading is strengthened by the translations of the Septuagint and Onkelos, both of which use the same preposition to translate both מאת יהוה and מֵלפני יהוה, thus rendering the two phrases identically in translation. In Lev 10 the offerers of incense—Nadab and Abihu—are referred to with the pronoun אתם—them,” while the 250 chieftains are explicitly mentioned in Num 16.

54 See also Deut 4:24.
55 The fire in Lev 10:2 can thus be a fulfilment of לְפֹנֵי כל הָעָם אֲכָל of Lev 10:3.
56 As noted by Heger, The Development of Incense Cult in Israel, 73 note 57.
The two verses then have the same structure, and share five basic elements:

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<tr>
<td>Lev 10:2</td>
<td>A fire came</td>
<td>From before</td>
<td>Yahweh</td>
<td>And it ate</td>
<td>Them/incense offerers</td>
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<td>Num 16:35</td>
<td>וַתֵּ֥צֵא אֵ֥שׁ מִלִּפְנֵ֥י יְהוָ֖ה</td>
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The only significant difference between the two verses is the final clause of Lev 10:2, יִמְתּוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָ֖ה - “They died before Yahweh.” This is an unusual phrase, which is repeated about Nadab and Abihu in Num 3:4 and 26:61. The phrase of “dying before God” is used in reference only to other people or groups of people killed by God. The first usage of the phrase is in Num 14:37, נֶפֶשׁ יָֽהֳעַו, in regards to the scouts who brought back an unflattering report of the land of Canaan. They were killed in a plague, נֶפֶשׁ יָֽהֳעַו, “before Yahweh.” The only other time the phrase appears is in 1 Chron 13:10, about Uzzah, who dies נֶפֶשׁ אָלָֽהִים, “before Elohim [God].” The inclusion of the phrase in Lev 10 seems arbitrary. The phrase appears to have a negative connotation, as it is only used in contexts where individuals are killed for violating a divine commandment. Still, it is unclear why the rare phrase is used only in these particular instances and not in others—and more pertinently, why it is used in Lev 10 and not Num 16.

57 This is also a P text.
58 This is of particular interest because the story of Uzzah contains other parallels to Lev 10 (see below).
59 Perhaps it is implied in Num 16, as Korah and the chieftains offered incense לפני יהוה, “before Yahweh.” See Num 16:7, 16, and Num 17:3.
2.3 Wordplay with אש זרה

The reason for the punishment of Nadab and Abihu is that they offered a “foreign fire,” or, as clarified in the ending of v. 1, a fire which was not commanded by God. The language of the verse used to describe the bringing of the offering is יָֽקְרִ֥בוּ לְפִּנֵֵ֣י יְהוֹ הֶ֙אֶשׁ זְרֵ֔ה, “They brought before Yahweh a foreign fire” (Lev 10:1). The phrase אש זרה, foreign fire, is important to the understanding of the passage. As argued above, this simply represents a sacrifice not commanded by God, and thus “strange” or “foreign,” but nevertheless, commentators both medieval and modern have struggled to understand what made the fire “foreign.” Many suggest that the foreignness was brought in through the firepans or the fire itself. If the pans belonged to Nadab and Abihu personally, and not to the Tabernacle, perhaps that is why it was foreign. Alternatively, the pans may have been fine, but they may have taken the fire/coals from an inappropriate source. Regardless, the fire or the incense offering (שָׂן), was deemed strange or foreign (זרה).

As mentioned above, Numbers 17:1–5 continues the narrative from Numbers 16. In those verses, which immediately follow the death of the 250 incense offerers, Moses instructs Eleazar, Aaron’s son, to collect the incense pans used by the offerers, and to plate the altar with them. In this short passage, there are two possible references to אש זרה.

The first can be found in Num 17:2. In 17:1 Yahweh instructs Moses to speak to Eleazar. The words he is to speak are enumerated in v. 2: אָמַ֥ר אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָ֖ה אֶל אֵלֶּֽהָ֗יו אֲשֶֽׁר הִזָּֽהֲתָֽה, “Speak to Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, and he shall pick up the firepans from among the charring, and the fire—to toss it there, because they are holy” (Num 17:2). Eleazar is to collect the firepans, and is also supposed to toss aside the fire—
coals or embers—from them. The syntax of this verse is troublesome. While Moses is instructing Eleazar, the verse begins in the third person voice of a narrator, but shifts to direct speech on the part of Moses. "toss," is an imperative, or direct speech, while "he should pick up," is third person, jussive form.

A possible reason that the verse ended up in this awkward format is that the author wanted to ensure that the pair of words “אש זרה” appeared next to each other. These words when vocalized in Num 17:2 have the meaning of “toss the fire.” This same phrase—אש זרה, when taken without vowels, is almost identical to the “foreign fire” of Lev 10:1.

This theory gains support from the Septuagint’s reading of Num 17:2. As noted by Milgrom, the Septuagint reads καὶ τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀλλότριον τοῦτο σπείρων ἔκει, “And the alien fire, seed it there,” for Num 17:2b. If the Greek were transposed into Hebrew, it would read ואש זרה זרה הלאה “And the foreign fire Zera’ah.” The Septuagint thus reads the verse as actually containing the phrase אש זרה. It is possible that this was the “original” reading, and the זרה was deleted in all other manuscripts in an act of haplography. However, because only the Septuagint retains this version of the verse, there is not enough evidence to confidently hypothesize as such.

Regardless, the presence of the phrase in the Septuagint reinforces the claim that the language as it appears in MT, והאש זרה זרה הלאה, is evocative of the phrase אש זרה הלאה.

The only times that אש and זרה appear together are in association with the death of Nadab and Abihu. Of course, they appear in Lev 10:1. They also appear in Num 3:4 and Num 26:61, which both contain the same exact phrase:

60 Milgrom Leiticiaus 1-16, 598.
61 The alternative is that the Septuagint was based off of a manuscript which contained an instance of dittography.
The presence of a remarkably similar form—the exact same form, according to the Septuagint—in a different context in Num 17:2 points towards punning between the two texts.

Building off of the wordplay now identified in Num 17:2, a continuation of the same wordplay might be seen only a few verses later in Num 17:5. This verse explains why Eleazar was to collect the firepans used by the incense offerers, and was to beat them into plating for the altar. The plating is to serve as a reminder to the people, that only those who are descendant from Aaron may offer incense at the altar. The verse explains it is to be done אֲשֶׁר לֶאֵי יְהוֹ ה, “so that a foreign man will not offer [or approach]” (Num 17:5).

It should be noted here that אש, “fire,” which looks masculine in its singular form, is a feminine noun. The hypothetical masculine form of אש זרה would be אֲשֶׁר זר. In a few rare instances, the noun in indeed actually treated as masculine. Thus, the phrase איש זר which appears in Num 17:5 is reminiscent of איש זרה, and is also nearly identical to the hypothetical masculine form of “strange fire”, which would be אֲשֶׁר זר. The correspondence between איש זר and איש זרה has also been noted by Watts, who comments that the two phrases are “strikingly similar.”

The remarkable similarity between the foreign fire of Lev 10:1 (איש זרה) and two phrases in Num 17:2–5 (אֲשֶׁר זרו, “foreign man,” and אֲשֶׁר זר, “toss the fire”) indicates that

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62 The phrase איש זר appears only one other time in P, in Lev 22:12, where it also refers to a non-priest.
63 See Jer 48:45, Ps 104:4, and Job 20:26. These occurrences are usually understood as mistakes, but it is not difficult to understand how a writer (or Hebrew speaker) might be tempted to treat אש as masculine, due to its total lack of feminine markers.
64 Watts, *Leviticus 1–10*, 527.
there is cross-textual wordplay occurring here. For an analysis of the direction of these puns, see chapter three below.

2.4 קרוב and קדוש

The next parallel between the two texts comes right on the heels of the previous parallels. Leviticus 10:3 reads as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיוּ אָהָרֹן הָאֲרֵרָדְבֶר יְהוָה לֵאמֶר יְהוָה לֵאמֶר בִּקְרָב אֶלֶף עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶלֶף אֲשֶׁר־דִּיבָר יְהוָה לֵאמֶר וַיִּדְמֹן אָהָרֹן:

In this verse, Moses addresses Aaron and recites an oracle received from Yahweh, which stuns Aaron. The oracle, בִּקְרָב אֶלֶף, is cryptic and difficult to understand—perhaps intentionally so. The interpretation of the oracle can be seen as the key for understanding the chapter as a whole.

A basic translation of the oracle would be something like “through those close to me I will be holy, and before the entire nation I will be glorified” (Lev 10:3). Nearly every word in this phrase can be scrutinized in an attempt to better understand it. קרוב, “those who are close to me,” has been interpreted from nearly every possible angle. The most common understanding of the phrase is that it should be read as “through those who are close to me [read: well-behaved priests] I will be sanctified,” with the implication that Nadab and Abihu were not close to God—i.e. did not serve God properly. A variation on this understanding is that Nadab and Abihu came too close to God—i.e. they encroached upon God when they should not have.

Note that in Num 18:7 we also have the phrase וְהַזּוֹר הַקּוֹרֶב יִפְתָּח, “and the foreigner who approaches will be killed” (and a similar phrase in Num 18:4). This phrase, while similar to the others explored above, does not share the same wordplay qualities of the previous phrases. This is not surprising, as this phrase is not unique to Num 18; rather it is used somewhat commonly in regard to the Tabernacle (cf. Num 1:51, 3:10, 3:38).
Early Jewish commentators, such as Philo, interpreted Nadab and Abihu’s deaths as positive.\textsuperscript{66} This reading gains support from the last verse of chapter 9, which describes the acceptance of the inaugural offering in the Tabernacle, and closely parallels the language used to describe Nadab and Abihu’s death. Their death, therefore, could be theologically interpreted as a sacrifice. Such an understanding would read Lev 10:3 as “through those who are close to me,” quite literally, not facetiously. This understanding would see Moses as trying to comfort Aaron, rather than insult his dead sons, as the other explanations implicitly have it.\textsuperscript{67}

The oracle has also been recently understood in light of similar passages in Ezekiel. Peretz Segal notes the use of כבד, and sometimes קדש, to refer to God’s glory through divine retribution.\textsuperscript{68} Ezek 28:22, which appears in the context of a prophecy against Sidon, reads:

\begin{quote}
אמרת כל אמר א’hui יוהי הנני עליך צדוק ומכבדתי ידוקו. יאני יוהי ושועתי יהיה שפטים והקרשתו ינה.
\end{quote}

“You should say, ‘so says the lord Yahweh, I am coming against you, Sidon, and I will be glorified among you, and they will know that I am Yahweh because of my making judgment in it, and I will be sanctified through it’” (Ezek 28:22). This verse is especially relevant as it uses both קדש and כבד to indicate the glorification of God through the punishment of Sidon.\textsuperscript{69} If a similar meaning is to be understood in Lev 10:3, the verse should be understood as communicating that God will make his glory known through his punishment of Nadab and Abihu.

While there are many theories for understanding the oracle, such as the enlightening approach of Segal cited above, few scholars have noted the similarities between the cryptic

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{66} Kirschner,"Rabbinic and Philonic Exegeses."
\item \textsuperscript{67} For an explicit example of someone telling a friend that his sons died because of their sins, see Job 8:4.
\item \textsuperscript{69} See also Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 601–602.
\end{footnotes}
quote in Lev 10:3 and Moses’s challenge to Korah in Num 16:5, which reads as follows:

וַיְדַבֵֶּר א ל־ק ֹ֜רַח וְא ֶֽל־כּ ל־עֲד תוֹ֮ לֵאמ ר֒ בּ ֹ֠ו ק ר וְי דֶַ֨ע יְהו ֶ֧ה א ת־אֲשׁ ר־לֶ֛וֹ וְא ת־הַקּ דֹ֖וֹשׁ וְהִקְרִֵ֣יב אֵל ֻ֑יו
וְאֵֶ֛ת אֲשׁ ֹ֥ר
יִבְחַר־בֹּ֖וֹ יַקְרִֹ֥יב אֵל ֶֽיו
, “Come morning, Yahweh will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He shall bring him near to Him, and he that He will choose, He will bring him near to him” (Num 16:5). Just like Lev 10:3, this verse prominently features the verbs קדש and קרב, and requires interpretation to be understood—it seems to be repeating the same thing over and over again.

The contexts of the two verses are clearly different. One is an oracle from Yahweh, as retold by Moses to Aaron, after its fulfillment. The other is also spoken by Moses, but is issued as a challenge, and comes before the action by God, rather than after. Still, the key elements of both of the verses deal with the consequences of incense offering and centrally involve קרב and קדש.70

Num 16:5 does not contain mention of third main element of the oracle in Lev 10:3, but the centrality of the כבוד יהוה in both passages will be demonstrated below.

2.5 נפל על פנים (Falling upon one’s face) and נראת כבוד יהוה (Appearance of Yahweh’s glory)

These phrases do not explicitly appear in Lev 10, but they remain central to the narrative. As discussed above, Moses says to Aaron in the name of Yahweh: בקרבי אקדש על-פיי: כל-העם אכבד, “Through those close to me I will become holy, and I will be glorified upon the entire nation” (Lev 10:3). The second half of this oracle, על-פיי כל-העם אכבד – “and I will be glorified upon the entire nation,” contains parts of each of the phrases under examination here.

70 Nihan touches upon this connection in From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch, 585–6, although only with קרב.
This might seem like a farfetched association between the oracle and these two priestly phrases, were it not for the occurrence of these very phrases immediately prior to the Nadab and Abihu episode.

As noted above, Leviticus 10 is set within the narrative of the inauguration of the Tabernacle. Lev 9 describes the final day of the inauguration ceremony, which culminates in the final two verses of the chapter, Lev 9:23–24:

23) Moses and Aaron came to the ‘ohel mô’ēd, and they came out and blessed the nation, and Yahweh’s glory was revealed to the entire nation. 24) And a fire came from before Yahweh and consumed to ‘olah and the fat offering on the altar, and the entire nation saw and cried out and fell on their faces. (Lev 9:23–24)

In these two verses, the כבוד of Yahweh appears, and then a fire from God consumes the sacrifice, causing the people to fall on their faces. The display of the כבוד of God is described elsewhere as a “consuming fire,” אש אוכלת,71 and here seems to be immediately foreshadowing God’s fire, or perhaps actually is the fire itself. The language used to describe the fire is exactly the same as the language used in Lev 10:2, ותצא אש מהולא יוהו כולם, “a fire came from before Yahweh and ate.” The usage of this language in Lev 10 was surely intended to evoke Lev 9:24, which appears only two verses before it.


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71 Such as Ex 24:17, Deut 4:24, and Deut 9:3.
The result of God’s expression of his כבוד is that the people fall on their faces. With the importance of the phrases נפל על פנים in Lev 10 (and 9) established, we may now examine the occurrences of the phrases in Num 16–18.

appears three times in Num 16:4. When Moses hears the complaints of the rebels, he falls on his face in anguish: "Moses heard and he fell on his face" (Num 16:4). The other two appear after God tells Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the people so that he may kill the people. These are in vv. 16:22—וַיִּפְלִ֤וּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶֽם and 17:10—וַיִּפְלִ֤וּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶֽם.

The appearance of the כבוד is mentioned in 16:19, following the gathering of Korah and his congregation (עדה) in front of the Tabernacle—וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד יְהֹוָה אֵלֶּֽיהֶם. "The glory of Yahweh was made visible to the entire congregation" (Num 16:9). Num 17:7 shares a similar structure, in that the congregation (עדה) gathers against Moses and Aaron, and subsequently the כבוד of Yahweh is seen—וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד יְהוָה.

When the occurrences of the two phrases are analyzed together, a loose pattern emerges. The כבוד of Yahweh is seen, and this is followed by people falling on their faces. In Lev 9, these actions appear back to back in vv. 23 and 24, and there appears to be a direct correlation and causation between the two. In Num 16 and 17, the appearance of the כבוד does

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72 It is worth noting that the language used in both Num 16:21 and Num 17:10 is יאכילה אוכלים, which uses the same “consuming language” used in the consumption of the sacrifice in Lev 9, the death of Nadab and Abihu in Lev 9, and the death of the incense offerings in Num 16.

73 Baden notes that נפל על פנים seems to mark impending danger in P, with the exception of its use in Gen 17 (Composition of the Pentateuch, 293).
not bring about the falling on the face as directly as it does in Lev 9, but it is certainly related.\textsuperscript{74} The כבוד shows God’s presence, which is further confirmed with speech from God to Moses and Aaron. It is the speech which ultimately causes them to fall down in despair. In both instances in Num 16 and 17 the appearance of the כבוד is followed by Moses and Aaron falling on their faces three verses later. Num 16:19 has the appearance of כבוד, and Moses and Aaron fall on their faces in Num 16:22. Similarly Num 17:7 mentions the appearance of the כבוד while Moses and Aaron fall on their faces in 17:10. As mentioned above, the only thing separating them in both cases is communication from God to Moses and Aaron.

Not counting Gen 17, where it is used slightly differently (see note above), the phrase נפל על פנים only occurs in P in the passages from Lev 9 and Num 16–17 cited above, and in Num 14:5 and Num 20:6. Including the two occurrences in Gen 17, half of all occurrences of the phrase are in the passages that are the focus of this study. נראת כבוד יהוה is likewise an uncommon phrase, and only appears outside of Lev 10 and Num 16–18 in Ex 16:7,10, Num 14:10, and Num 20:6.

As noted above, the language of both נפל על פנים and נראת כבוד יהוה is only used in Num 14 and Num 20, and while Ex 16 does not use נפל על פנים, it does employ נראת כבוד יהוה twice. These three chapters all contain P “murmuring,” or rebellion narratives. Therefore it seems that while these phrases were not common P language, they were utilized in a specific subgenre of P—the rebellion stories. This makes the dual occurrence of these phrases in Lev 10 and Num 16–18 notable, but not entirely unique.

\textsuperscript{74} For another back-to-back occurrence of the phrases see Num 20:6. Note that there the order is inverted from what we have seen in Lev 9 and Num 16–17.
However, the phrases are perhaps more central to Lev 9–10 and Num 16–18 than the other rebellion narratives. The phrases only appear together outside of Lev 9–10 and Num 16–18 in Num 14 and 20, and within those chapters, each phrase is written only once. In contrast, נפל על פנים appears three times in Num 16–18, and נר אувּוּה יִהוָה and נפל על פנים each appear once in Lev 9:23–Lev 10:20, but נר אוהּו is also a key component of the oracle which Moses relates to Aaron in Lev 10:3. The appearance of this language, which is characteristic of the murmuring stories, in Lev 10 at all is surprising. This use of the phrases outside of their usual context makes it more unique and notable.

2.6 קצף/Fury

Another parallel between the passages is the centrality of the root קצף, which has the meaning of fury or rage. The root appears twice in Lev 10, and it appears three times in Num 16–18, once in each of the three chapters. The first occurrence of the verb in Lev 10 is in v. 6, amidst instructions from Moses to Aaron and his sons to not show signs of mourning, lest they do so “and He will rage against the entire congregation” - וְעַֹל כּ ל־ה עֵד ֹ֖ה יִקְצ ֻ֑ף (Lev 10:6). The verb appears again in v. 16, where Moses is the subject of the verb: וַֹ֠יִּקְצ ף עַל־א לְע ז ִ֤ר וְעַל־אִֶֽית מ רוּב (Lev 10:16). Here, Moses gets angry with Eleazar and against Ithamar for not eating the ḥaṭṭāt sacrifice as he had instructed them to do.76

קצף appears once in Numbers 16, in the phrase וְעַֹל כּ ל־ה עֵד ֹ֖ה יִקְצ (Num 16:22). This

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75 I would like to thank my father, Larry Cohen, for initially pointing out this parallel to me during one of our discussions regarding the topic of this thesis.
76 See note 14 above.
phrase is nearly identical to the first occurrence of the phrase in Lev 10:6.

The only difference is that the verb is in second person in Numbers, and in third person in Leviticus. This phrase is not a common one, and appears nowhere else in the Pentateuch.\footnote{There is a similar phrase in Num 1:53, but that phrase parallels the similar phrase found in Num 18:5, rather than that found in Num 16:22 and Lev 10:6.}

The fury that Moses and Aaron so desperately wanted to avoid in Num 16:22 arrives anyway in Num 17:11. Moses instructs Aaron to take an incense pan and to offer incense to atone for the people in order to save them, “for the fury has come forth from before God—the strike has begun” - (Num 17:11).

This tragedy, which was anticipated in Num 16 and was actualized in Num 17, is referenced in Num 18, thereby demonstrating at least one coherent narrative thread throughout the three chapters. In the beginning of chapter 18 Moses instructs Aaron that the priests and Levites are to guard the Tabernacle, and one of the primary reasons for doing so is “so that there will not be another fury against the children of Israel” - (Num 18:5).\footnote{The only other time the phrase appears is in Joshua 22:20.}

The threefold occurrence of קָצַף in Numbers 16–18 suggests its importance, and its equal distribution across the chapters might indicate that it serves as a leitwort of sorts. In his commentary to Numbers Milgrom points out that “common to all of the accounts” of Num 16–17,\footnote{See Num 1:53.} “is the theme of divine wrath...”\footnote{And we might add, Num 18.} As argued above, קָצַף is also deliberately repeated in Lev 10.

\footnote{Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 406.}
The three occurrences of קצף in Num 16–18 and the two occurrences in Lev 10 are even more remarkable when it is noted that קצף appears only three other times in P. Outside of Num 16–18 and Lev 10, the root appears in Ex 16:20, Num 1:53, and Num 31:14. The rarity of the root קצף, its repetition in both Lev 10 and Num 16–18, and its usage in nearly identical phrases in Lev 10:6 and Num 16:22 make this one more remarkable connection between the texts.

2.7 God Speaks Directly to Aaron

God speaks to Aaron alone in just three chapters in the Hebrew Bible. The first occurrence is in Exodus 4:27, where God tells Aaron to meet his brother Moses in the wilderness. However, this passage is part of a non-P narrative. This leaves only two priestly passages in which God speaks directly to Aaron alone.

The first time God speaks directly to just Aaron in the P source is in Leviticus 10:8 which reads: וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֶר "Yahweh spoke to Aaron saying...” The content of the actual speech is instructions to Aaron that he and his sons are not to consume alcohol before working in the ‘ohel mô‘ēd, and that they are to serve as cultic decisors and teachers (Lev 10:9–11).

In various analyses of Leviticus 10, vv. 8–11 are seen as the center of a chiasm. Indisputably, the verses do appear at the center of the chapter. If they are indeed meant to stand at the center of a chiasm, the structure of the chapter is intended to highlight the

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82 Milgrom notes the two P occurrences of God’s speech to Aaron in Leviticus 1-16, p. 146.
83 See above, chapter 1.1.
The significance of God’s oracle to Aaron. Even if one is not convinced by the chiastic structure, the extreme rarity of God’s speech to Aaron is surely intended to catch the reader’s attention.

The only other P passage in which God speaks directly to Aaron alone is Numbers 18. The chapter can be divided into four subsections, three of which begin with יָאִמר יְהוָה אֵל־אַהֲרָן or יָדַבֵר יְהוָה אֵל־אַהֲרָן לֵאמֶר, both of which mean “(and) God spoke to Aaron.” The first section begins in Num 18:1 with יָאִמר יְהוָה אֵל־אַהֲרָן. The second section begins in v. 8 with, יָדַבֵר יְהוָה אֵל־אַהֲרָן לֵאמֶר. The third section begins in v. 20, and uses the same language as v. 1, יָאִמר יְהוָה אֵל־אַהֲרָן. A fourth section begins with God’s speech to Moses in v. 26.

In the first section—Num 18:1–7—God tells Aaron about the priestly and levitical duties in working and caring for the ’ohel mô’ēd. The second section—Num 18:8–19—deals with the proper ways to consume sacrifices, and the third section—Num 18:20–26—deals with the Levites’ lack of inheritance, and tithes.

The oracles to Aaron in Lev 10 and Num 18 are not topically similar, but they do indeed share similarities. Of course, they share a similar context in that they both come after traumatic episodes in which the authority of Aaron and his sons seems to have been questioned, and the oracles could therefore been intended to reinforce Aaron’s authority. Both oracles also follow deaths that occur in a ritual contexts—the death of Nadab and Abihu in Lev 10:3, and the death of the chieftains in Num 16:35. The oracles both respond to such cultic deaths by issuing warnings on how to properly behave in cultic matters, and thus avoid death.

Lev 10:9 states יֵיָּהוּא אֵל־תַּשְׁתָּה אֱלֹהִים אַל־אָכְלוּ אֶת־הֶנְעִי מְעָדָה אֶלָּא נֹשַׁם הָעָם אֲכֵלֵם עָלֵם לְדוֹרֵיֶם, “Do not consume wine or alcoholic beverages—you and your sons with you—

84 This is true even if these verses are a late addition.
when you are going to the ‘ohel mô’êd, so that you will not die. [It shall be] An eternal law, for your generations” (Lev 10:9). Similarly, Num 18:3 states "וְשָׁמְר֥וֹ מִשְׁמַרְתְּךָ וּמִשְׁמַרְתְּתֵלֵּךְ לַאֲלֵּכַּתְּךָ, וּלְאַלְכַּתְּךָ לִקְרַּבְוֹ וְלֶא־מֵתוּ גַּם־הֵם גַּם־אַתָּתְּךָ גַּם־אַל־כְּלֵּי הַקָּדֶשׁ וְלֶא־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְאֵזֶּּה יִקְרָּבֵו וְלֶא־מֵתוּ גַּם־הֵם גַּם־אַתָּתְּךָ"; “And you should guard your keeping, and all of the keeping of the tent, just do not come close to the holy implements and the altar, so you do not die—both you and them” (Num 18:3). Thus, in the oracle in Lev 10:3, and in the first oracle from God to Aaron in Num 18 (in Num 18:3), one of the central points of the oracle is that Aaron and his relatives should observe certain cultic rules so that they will not be punished with death.

Direct speech from God to Aaron alone was clearly not perceived by the biblical authors to be a common occurrence. Because Lev 10 and Num 18 are the only two occurrences of this phenomenon in the P material, it is likely that the usage of this motif in both texts was intentional, and was meant to make readers associate the two passages. In other words, once the phenomenon appeared in one text, its usage in another would undoubtedly allude to the first text. This would be true regardless of the context of the oracles within P, and is especially true here as the two appear in similar contexts and both contain warnings on proper, life-preserving cultic behavior.

**2.8 Laws of Offerings**

The laws of sacrifices are a central concern of the P text, as sacrifice was the main duty of the priests. While the ’olah sacrifice and some ḥaṭṭāt sacrifices were completely burned,

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85 This is the source of one of the midrashic explanations for the death of Nadab and Abihu—that they were drunk when they offered incense. One can understand this logic, especially in light of Num 18:3, which seems to be a response to the preceding narrative. Lev 10:9 is more difficult to understand contextually, and the midrashic explanation attempts to solve this problem.
most sacrifices contained a component that was to be given to the priest to eat. In addition to the meat they received from sacrifices, priests were also given tithes, first fruit, and first born animals and humans (for redemption).

In both Lev 10 and Num 18, following the conclusion of the incense-offerer narratives, laws are given regarding what foods the priests are entitled to, and how they are to eat them. After the death of Nadab and Abihu, Moses’ subsequent injunction to Aaron and his remaining sons not to show signs of mourning, and God’s direct speech to Aaron, Moses addresses Aaron and his sons with sacrificial laws. In vv. 12–15, Moses instructs the priests about how to properly eat the minḥâ, the tēnûpâ, and the tērûmâ offerings:

12) Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazar and to Ithamar his remaining sons: “Take the minḥâ, which remains from the offerings of Yahweh, and eat it with flatbread next to the altar, because it is very holy. 13) And you shall eat it in a holy place, for it is your law and the law of your sons, from among the sacrifices of Yahweh, so I have commanded. 14) And the breast of the tēnûpâ, and the thigh of the tērûmâ you shall eat in a pure place—you, and your sons and your daughters with you—for it is your law, and the law of your sons, that they shall be given to you from the well-being sacrifices of the children of Israel. 15) They shall bring the thigh of the tērûmâ and the breast of the tēnûpâ, in addition to the sacrifices of the fat, to raise the tēnûpâ before Yahweh, and it will be for you are your sons with you as an eternal law, as Yahweh has commanded.” (Lev 10:12–15)

This instruction is immediately followed in v. 16 by an inquiry by Moses into the haṭṭāt sacrifice (which he had previously given instructions about in Lev 6:17–19), “And Moses investigated regarding the goat of the haṭṭāt— and it was burnt!” - (Lev 10:16). Moses then rages against Eleazar and Ithamar, until Aaron responds and allays his concerns.

Following the narratives of Num 16 and 17, which detailed the rebellion of Korah (and others) and its aftermath, Num 18 contains several series of laws. The second set of laws, directed to Aaron by God, are given in Num 18:8–19. Like Lev 10:12–15, these laws are all about what foods the priests are given from the sacrifices and offerings. These foods are referred to as têrûmâ, literally “offering” or “contribution.” The list in vv. 8–19 includes the minhâ, haṭṭāt, and āšâm sacrifices (verses 9–10); the tēnûpâ offering (v. 11); the first fruit, grain, and oil offerings (vv. 12–13); things dedicated to the temple (v. 14); and first-born animals and men (vv. 15–18).

8) Yahweh spoke to Aaron: “And I, I have given to you the keeping of my têrûmâ; all of the consecrated items of the children of Israel, to you and to your sons I have given them as a portion, as an eternal law. 9) This will be for you from among the most holy,
from the fire—all of their offerings, all of their minḥâ offerings, all of their ḫaṭṭāt offerings, all of their āšām offerings, which they give back to me—they shall be most holy for you and for your sons. 10) In the holy of holies you shall eat it, every male may eat it—it shall be holy for you. 11) This is for you—the tērûmâ of their gift, each tēnîpâ of the children of Israel are given to you and to your sons and daughters with you as an eternal law. All of the pure of your household may eat it. 12) All of the choicest of oil, all of the choicest of wine and of grain, the first of them which are given to Yahweh are given to you. 13) The first fruit of all of their land which they will bring to Yahweh shall be for you, all who are pure in your household may eat of it. 14) Everything which is dedicated [to Yahweh] among Israel shall be for you. 15) The first-born of every living thing which they bring to Yahweh, be it man or animal, shall be for you, just you must redeem the first-born of man, and redeem the first-born of impure animals. 16) And its redemption: You shall redeem it when it is a month old, with its value in silver—five shekels worth in Holy Shekels, which is 20 gērā. 17) But the first-born of a bovine and the first-born of a sheep and the first-born of a goat, do not redeem, they are sanctified, throw their blood on the altar, and offer their fat as a sacrifice, a pleasing odor to Yahweh. 18) But their meat shall be for you; just like the breast of the tēnîpâ and the thigh of the tērûmâ and the right thigh, it shall be for you. 19) All of the consecrated gifts that the children of Israel will elevate for Yahweh I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you, as an eternal law; it shall be an eternal covenant of salt before Yahweh for you and for yours sons with you.” (Num 18:8–19)

That there is sacrificial literature appended to both the Nadab and Abihu and Korah stories is not entirely surprising, as both are part of the P narrative, and sacrifices and offerings are essential to the priestly experience. When the two relevant passages (Lev 10:12–15 and Num 18:8–19) are analyzed, however, the occurrence becomes more remarkable. Not only do both texts deal with offerings, but they both deal with what foods the priests are given to eat. Lev 10:12–15, the shorter of the two passages, relates only to sacrifices, while the more comprehensive Num 18:8–19 relates also to the first-fruit offerings and the redemption of the first-born. 87 Neither of these passages is like the more typical priestly texts which describe at

87 Num 18:21 also deals with consumable offerings, although there it is in regard to Levites, not priests, and therefore has not been mentioned above.
length the procedures of the sacrifices and offerings—rather, these texts are only concerned with what the priests may eat of them.

Why these passages appear after their respective stories is not entirely clear. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that after traumatic episodes in which priests and Levites were killed while bringing offerings, the laws of offerings were enumerated. This is not entirely convincing, though, as we might have expected detailed laws about the bringing of the offerings, not about the eating of the offerings.

It should be noted that while there are several other textual parallels between Lev 10:12–15 and Num 18:8–19, such as the use of the phrase חָלְּקָה יִרְעֹם , these parallels can be mostly or entirely explained as common P (or H) language, and are therefore not cited here as evidence.

**Reviewing the Evidence: Establishing a Genetic Relationship**

In sections 2.1–2.8 we have explored various textual connections between Lev 10 and Num 16–18. Textual connections themselves do not indicate much. Two texts can be similar because they have similar themes. They may share similar language simply because the words in question are common. Certainly, similar language alone is not enough to establish a genetic relationship between texts.

Rather, a relationship between texts must be evaluated based on the strength of the connections between the two texts, instead of the mere existence of the parallels. The criteria for doing so have been explored by various experts of inner-biblical allusions, literary
dependence, and intertextuality. Still, there are no common criteria used by biblical (or literary) scholars to evaluate the strength of perceived literary allusions.

In an attempt to establish such a methodology, Jeffrey Leonard created a list of eight rules to be used in the attempt to evaluate textual dependence or allusion:

(1) Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection.
(2) Shared language is more important than nonshared language.
(3) Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used.
(4) Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms.
(5) The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase.
(6) Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone.
(7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection.
(8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.

Leonard’s rules, with some adaptations to our scenario, are a good starting point for evaluating textual dependence between Lev 10 and Num 16–17. Chapter two has demonstrated that there is much shared language between the two texts (rule 1). The themes of the two texts are also remarkably similar, and some of the parallels appear in similar contexts (rule 6).

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88 Many words have been written differentiating between these phrases. We prefer, and will deal primarily here with allusion and dependence rather than intertextuality, which is more concerned with the reader than authorial intent. This is not to say that intertextuality is not important, and the conclusions of this study can certainly be put to use in intertextual analyses of Lev 10 and Num 16–18.

The two texts contain much language that is similar, but not all of it is distinctive (rule 3). Shared language (between Lev 10 and Num 16–18) that is common, or common P language, has generally been excluded from this study, unless the usage of such language is unusual (see 2.9, for example). An example of extremely rare shared language is the use of אֲשֶׁר זָרָה (see 2.3) in both chapters. This phrase is very uncommon, and appears in different forms in both texts (Leonard’s rule 8).

Examples of nearly identical uncommon phrases can be found in examples 1–7. The 8th example contains more generic language used to describe offerings, but its theme, regarding what priests may eat, and the appearance of these texts in similar contexts in both texts still make the connection relevant for determining dependence (Leonard rule 6).

**A Common Tradition?**

Some are reluctant to identify texts as alluding to each other, and prefer to identify them as part of a similar tradition—in other words, the two texts come from a common ancestor, but are not necessarily in dialogue with each other. This claim is not to be dismissed, and must be examined to assess its relevance here.

Paul Noble, for example, writes that in addition to the claim of dependence, “...there are still a number of ways in which the resemblances might be explained: They could be purely coincidental; or, each text might have independently drawn upon the same stream of traditions
(written or unwritten); or, the second, later text may be alluding to yet a third text, which independently treats themes similar to those in the first text.⁹⁰

We must first ask, what would the parent text or tradition look like? Lev 10 and Num 16–18 are similar, yet still very different. Surely, it would involve somebody offering incense and being struck down by God. At some point it would contain an oracle or challenge involving בָּרֶב and שִׁדֶּת, Aaron would be given revelation, there would be a fury, and for some reason there would be laws of what priests may eat from offerings.

This reconstruction does not reveal an archetypal text, which Lev 10 and Num 16–18 could be based on. What would the main story be? Of priests offering invalid incense? Of Levites offering invalid incense? Of a rebellion?

It may be insightful to look for other biblical stories that are similar in plot to Lev 10 and Num 16–18, to see if we can identify an archetype. There is one instance where somebody is punished for attempting to offer incense when they should not have—in 2 Chronicles 26 king Uzziah attempts to offer incense, but is reprimanded by the priest Azariah, and is struck with leprosy. A similar scene can be found in 1 Kings 12–13, where Jeroboam ascends the altar and is prophesied against, and the altar breaks and spills ashes.

A story similar to the death of Nadab and Abihu, who are killed for a (seemingly) minor cultic offense, can be seen in 2 Samuel 6, where a man named Uzzah is killed by God for touching the ark. He only touched the ark though, because it appeared to be falling, and he tried to keep it upright.

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A story similar to the Korah rebellion can be seen in 1 Kings 18. In this chapter Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a sacrificial contest. They are both to offer an animal sacrifice, and the one whose sacrifice gets accepted by god through its consumption by divine fire is the one chosen by god, and therefore the one worshipping the true god. The prophets accept, and Elijah wins the contest, even after soaking the wood on his altar with water to make it more difficult for it to burn. After the sign is given, he kills the prophets of Baal. This is similar to the Korah story in that it features a contest between two parties who claim closeness to god, and the contest is to be decided by acceptance of an offering. The main differences are that the offering is sacrificial in 1 Kings 18, and is incense in Num 16, and that the chieftains are killed by God in Num 16, while Elijah himself kills the prophets in 1 Kings 18.

As noted above, the Korah rebellion is often identified as part of a genre of wilderness “murmuring” stories. These narratives, which will be explored further below, all relate stories in which the Israelites complain to or against Moses and Aaron. The stories are to varying degrees rebellion narratives. In light of its similarity with the other murmuring stories, Korah can perhaps be classified chiefly as a rebellion story.

Thus far, we have identified two stories with illicit incense offering and punishment which could therefore relate to both Lev 10 and Num 16–18: the story of king Uzziah in 2 Samuel 6, and the story of king Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12–13. Additionally, there is a story of a sacrificial contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, which is similar to the Korah rebellion story, and the story of the death of Uzzah, which is similar to the story of the death of

91 P. 34.
92 P. 54.
Nadab and Abihu. The Korah story has also been preliminarily grouped with other rebellion wilderness narratives in a “murmuring” genre.

In sum, the possibility that Lev 10 and Num 16–18 share similar language and themes because they come from a shared tradition or urtext is unlikely for two reasons. Firstly, the texts contain similar plots, but they are also very different. This becomes even clearer when the stories are compared with other biblical parallels. Num 16–18 might be classified as a rebellion narrative, much like the Elijah and prophets of Baal story, and perhaps even more like the other wilderness rebellions. Lev 10 is better classified simply as a story about inappropriate incense offering, or more broadly inappropriate cultic activity (like that of Uzzah and Uzziah). Thus, while the stories are similar, they do not appear to be from the same archetypal genre—the two narratives appear to represent two different types of stories.93

Secondly, the texts identified above share similar themes to our primary texts, but they do not appear to share similar language with both Lev 10 and Num 16–18, as those two texts do with each other.94 Due to their thematic similarity, we might have expected some of the textual parallels to be found among those texts as well. Thus, there does not seem to have been an urtext or tradition from which both Lev 10 and Num 16–18 have come. Rather, the remarkable similarities in both theme and language are better explained through direct or genetic literary dependence.

93 Of course, it is possible that two stories of two different genres could both come from a third, parent text. This situation is possible, but there would need to be compelling evidence for one to argue for such a situation. It is less difficult to imagine one of the texts borrowing features from the other, as opposed to the two drawing from a common archetype, in which case we might expect more genre/type conformity.

94 This cursory claim will be examined in the next chapter.
We have identified eight instances of shared phrases and themes between Lev 10 (including 9:23–24) and Num 16–18. The language noted is generally language that is uncommon, or at the very least used in an uncommon way in the two texts. Due to the strength of these parallels, and the lack of a convincing argument for a common ancestor or stream-of-tradition, this cluster of shared language is enough evidence to point to a genetic relationship between the texts.

Chapter 3: Evidence for the Direction of Dependence

Now that we have demonstrated the likelihood that Lev 10 and Num 16–18 are genetically related, we will examine the evidence for the direction of dependence. Some instances of dependence may be clear, but in many instances, including here, it is not clear at all. Again, most scholars seem to work under a certain set of assumptions, but rarely set out to develop a methodology. And again, Leonard offers basic rules, or in this case questions to ask when attempting to determine the direction of dependence. He lists six such questions:

(1) Does one text claim to draw on another?
(2) Are there elements in the texts that help to fix their dates?
(3) Is one text capable of producing the other?
(4) Does one text assume the other?
(5) Does one text show a general pattern of dependence on other texts?
(6) Are there rhetorical patterns in the texts that suggest that one text has used the other in an exegetically significant way?95

These analytical questions, taken broadly, will underline the analysis found in this chapter. The following analysis will deal with the evidence in two categories: internal and

external evidence. Internal evidence includes evidence found only within the two texts themselves, while external evidence is evidence that is gleaned from sources and knowledge beyond the two texts. Leonard’s questions may also be divided among these categories—questions 1, 3, 4, and 6 reflect internal evidence, while the examination of external evidence can be found in questions 2 and 5.

3.1: Internal Evidence

Before looking elsewhere, we must first examine the internal evidence, or in other words, only the data from Lev 10 and Num 16–18. It should be initially stated that the answer to Leonard’s first analytical question—“does one text claim to draw on another?”—is no. While there is significant internal evidence, which will be examined below, there is no claim of dependence in either text. Consequently, a deeper study is required.

We may then turn to the issue addressed by Leonard’s third question—are the texts capable of producing each other? In some instances, the length of texts can be very useful in determining the direction of dependence. As an illustrative example, Leonard cites the narrative Gen 12:10–20 which features Abram and Sarai’s decent to Egypt due to famine, the seizure of Sarai by Pharaoh, and a resulting plague against Pharaoh and his household which leads him to send Abram and Sarai out of Egypt. This narrative has a basic plot that is nearly identical to the exodus myth,⁹⁶ and as such we might posit that there is allusion between the texts. However, it is much more likely that Gen 12 is alluding to the exodus myth, rather than

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⁹⁶ Broadly: the descent to Egypt due to famine, the seizure of the Israelites by the Egyptians, the striking of Pharaoh and the Egyptians with plagues, and the release of the Israelites.
the exodus myth being a tremendous expansion of the Abram story. In such a case, the size and scope of the stories seem to make the direction of dependence clear.

Even without reading our two texts in depth, it can be noted that Num 16–18 is a much larger text than Lev 10. Lev 10 contains a total of 20 verses, while Num 16–18 contains a total of 95 verses—or closer to 75 when the Dathan and Abiram verses are removed. Thus, the P text of Num 16–18 is at least three times, and nearly four times the size of Lev 10.

Our close reading of the texts confirms this to be true on the literary level as well. In other words, Num 16–18 is not just longer because it deals with more matters, but because it also deals with issues at much greater length than Lev 10 does. A few examples: The taking of incense is mentioned once in Lev 10, but twice in Num 16. The list of offerings that belong to the priests is enumerated in four verses in Lev 10 (12–15), and in twelve verses in Num 18 (8–19). God speaks to Aaron once in Lev 10, and three times in Num 18.

We therefore have a shorter, compacter text in Lev 10, and a longer, more expansive text in Num 16–18. The difference in size between Lev 10 and Num 16–18, however, is nowhere near as large as between Gen 12:1–20 and the entire exodus narrative. In our case, Lev 10 can be seen as a summary, and foreshadowing of Num 16–18, or alternatively Num 16–18 can be seen as borrowing and expanding the motifs and language of Lev 10 to create a new story.

We now turn to Leonard’s question 4. The line of inquiry—“does one text assume the other?”— can be examined in several manners. A text may assume another text in the sense that certain premises of the text, written or unwritten, are based in the other text. A second

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98 Some of this might be explained by the more composite nature of Num 16–18 as compared to Lev 10.
way a text might assume the other is in allusion or wordplay, in which one text is written in a certain way so that a reader will relate it to the other text. Wordplays are often ambiguous in terms of direction of dependence, but not always.

Neither of the two texts in question overtly assumes the other, although there are some passages which can be read as employing subtle assumption. In Lev 10:4 Moses asks Mishael and Elzaphan to remove the bodies of Nadab and Abihu from the sanctuary. This request is strange—at first we might have suspected that Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s remaining sons, should remove the bodies. However, they are prohibited from showing any signs of mourning, and likely from removing or burying the bodies as well (Lev 10:6–7). Therefore, Moses had to ask other relatives of Aaron. We might have expected that he would ask Aaron’s (and his own) eldest cousins, the sons of Itzhar, to remove the bodies, but instead it is Aaron’s youngest cousins, the sons of Uzziel, who are asked.

Many have posited that the reason for this unexpected request is that the eldest son of Itzhar is Korah, and Lev 10 knows of the Korah rebellion and did not want to include Korah or his brothers. This is an intriguing idea. However, it must be noted that Korah had two brothers who could have served the role that Mishael and Elzaphan filled. While Milgrom notes that all of Itzhar’s “line was disqualified” because of Korah’s actions, there is room to be

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99 One might think that the lack of reference to Nadab and Abihu in Num 16–18 is evidence for Num 16–18 as knowing Lev 10. This is not the case however, as Ithamar is not mentioned either. Only Eleazar is mentioned, because he is the one who is Aaron’s successor.
100 See the P genealogy of the Levites in Ex 6:16–25.
101 See, for example, Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 604
102 Ibid.
hesitant to assume that the priestly author would not want to include anybody associated with Korah—after all, the “sons of Korah” are well-regarded in the Psalms.

Parallels from Chapter 2

It is well observed that the Hebrew Bible contains much wordplay, of many varieties. One type of common wordplay is punning. Puns, which can be homophonic or homographic, are usually observed within one sentence, or a short unit of text. However, there appears to be a category of puns which pun across texts. In these cases, a later biblical text, which is otherwise dependent upon an earlier text, will use a slightly different form of a word found in the source text.

There has been no systematic study of this class of biblical puns, but a few will be mentioned here. In a forthcoming paper David P. Wright has identified several examples where H puns on words used in the Covenant Code or Deuteronomy. Some of the puns, or what Wright calls “paronymic replacement or echoing,”\textsuperscript{103} include H substituting נקב (Lev 24:16) for CC’s נף (Ex 21:22),\textsuperscript{104} H’s substitution of ראשו, “his head,” for D’s בִּרְאָשִׁים, “first,”\textsuperscript{105} and the


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{105} Wright, “Source Dependence,” 30–31. The wordplay is even great in context, as both deal with the procedure through which witnesses initiate the killing of the individual they heard or saw blaspheme or worship other gods. The H line reads: וְסֶמֶכֶתָּ֧כֶל הַשָּׁמְעִים֙ אֲתֵי הָעַדְתֵּךְ הואֲלָֽם׃ "And the ones who heard should place their hands on his head" (Lev 24:14), while D reads יַד־הָעַדְתֵּךְ תִּהְיֶֽה־בּוֹ "The hands of the witnesses should be upon him first” (Deut 17:7).
substitution by H of שבת (Lev 25:2, 4–6) for CC’s שמח (Ex 23:11) in the laws of the seventh year (שמיטה). Another example is brought by Benjamin Sommer, who reads the use of נר in Psalm 103:9 as a pun on נזר as used in Ex 34:7. It is important to note that in all of these examples, the later text is seen as reinterpreting, or sometimes even rejecting an argument of the earlier text, but it still uses a form of wordplay to connect it with the earlier text.

In light of this body of evidence, the wordplay with אש זרה identified in chapter 2.3 perhaps becomes important in assessing the direction of dependence between Lev 10 and Num 16–18. As noted above, אש זרה appears in the Hebrew Bible only in descriptions of the incense offering of Nadab and Abihu. Its exclusive use with Nadab and Abihu, and the appearance of homographic and homophonic variations in Num 17:2, 5 suggest that the variations in Num 17 are puns on the phrase as found in Lev 10:1.

It would be more difficult to understand the pun as going in the opposite direction, as the phrase appears to be much more natural in Lev 10. In such a scenario, Lev 10 would have picked up on the chance forms similar to אש זרה that are found in the beginning of Num 17. Alternatively, Lev 10 could be playing on the prominence of אש זרה in P, and the prominence of similar phrases in Num 17. Regardless, this piece of evidence points towards a direction of

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107 The last wordplay was also identified by Stackert. See Stackert, Jeffrey. Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007. 159–160.
109 It should be noted that the idea of tossing fire like seed is not entirely manufactured here. See, for example, Lambert, W G. Babylonian Wisdom Literature. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960. 195. The same verbal root is used in line 15 of the Fable of the Fox (b, reverse) in Lambert’s Babylonian Wisdom Literature—“tazarru nabli,” “you spread fire.” There, however, it refers to live fire, while in Num 17 it is usually interpreted to refer to coals/ashes.
influence from Lev 10 to Num 17, as the wordplay can be more easily understood in such a scenario. However, the opposite scenario can been imagined, albeit with some difficulty.\footnote{A third scenario, which will not be treated at length in this study, is that in which the direction of influence goes both ways. In such a scenario, one of the two texts is older, and inspires the second text. A late redactional layer after the establishment of the second text could then add elements from the latter text to the older, original text. Thus, אֵשׁ זָרָה could originate in Lev 10 and influence Num 17, even if Num 16-18 precedes Lev 10.}

We noted above (2.5) that these phrases appear, in addition to Lev 9-10 and Num 16–18, in Ex 16, Num 14, and Num 20. נפל על פנים only occurs in P in the passages from Lev 9 and Num 16–17 cited above, and in Num 14:5 and Num 20:6. נר א ה כבוד יהוה is used in Ex 16:7,10, Num 14:10, and Num 20:6.

The distribution of these phrases in Ex 16, Num 14, and Num 20 is notable. These stories, along with the Korah rebellion, are often identified as belonging to a genre of wilderness rebellion stories, called “murmuring” stories by Frankel.\footnote{Frankel, \textit{The Murmuring Stories of the Priestly School.}} Ex 16 tells of the complaint of the people regarding a lack of food, which is remedied by the sending of manna. Num 13–14 tells the story of the scouts who reported about Canaan, and caused the people to doubt Moses and Aaron. Num 20 tells of a complaint of drought, which is resolved when Moses (improperly) strikes a rock to release water.

Thus, it would make sense for Num 16–18 to share language with these other rebellion stories. However, we might not expect to find similar language in Lev 10, which is not a
rebellion story. Consequently, the use of such language in Lev 10 may point to the fact that it was borrowed from Num 16-18, where we would expect it to naturally be.\footnote{The midrashim that portray Nadab and Abihu as attempting to upstage Moses and Aaron might be drawing on Lev 10’s similarity to the rebellion story of Korah. See Kirschner, “Rabbinic and Philonic Exegesis,” 382.}

This piece of evidence must be taken with caution, however, as the phrases in question do not explicitly appear in Lev 10—rather they appear in the two verses which immediately precede it (Lev 9:23–24), and are alluded to in Lev 10:3.

**Expected Allusion**

It is to be a reminder to the children of Israel that a foreign man who is not of the lineage of Aaron will not come close to bring incense before Yahweh, so that he will not become like Korah and his congregation, as Yahweh communicated through Moses. (Num 17:5)

Numbers 17:5 states that the newly-plated altar is to serve as a reminder to the people that only the sons of Aaron are permitted to offer incense. Anyone else who does so will end up like Korah and his congregation—that is, dead.

The phrase “אַשְׁר לָא מַעֲרַר אֵל יַהֲנָה צוֹרי אַהֲרÓN אִישׁ זַר אֲשִׁר לֶא הַקְטִיר קְט רָ֖וֹן לִבְנֵֵ֣י יִשְׂר אֵָ֗ל לְֹ֠מַעַן אֲשׁ ֶ֨ר לֶא־יִקְרַֹ֜ב אִֵ֣ישׁ ז ָ֗אוֹר אֲֹ֠שׁ ר לֵ֣א מִזּ ִ֤רַע אַהֲר מִזּ ִ֤רַע אַהֲרֺנְוּא לְהַקְטִיר קְט רָ֖וֹן לִפְנֵֵ֣י يְהו ה וְלֶֽא־יִהְי ִ֤ה כְק ֶ֨רַחֶ֙ וְכֵַ֣עֲד תָ֔וֹ כַּאֲשׁ ֶ֨ר דִּ ֥בּ ֶ֧ר יְהו ֶ֛ה בְּיַד־מ שׁ ֹ֖ה לֶֽוֹ" (זִכּ רָ֞וֹן לִבְנֵֵ֣י יִשְׂר אֵָ֗ל לְֹ֠מַעַן אֲשׁ ֶ֨ר לֶא־יִקְרַֹ֜ב אִֵ֣ישׁ ז ָ֗אוֹר אֲֹ֠שׁ ר לֵ֣א מִזּ ִ֤רַע אַהֲר מִזּ ִ֤רַע אַהֲרֺנְוּא לְהַקְטִיר קְט רָ֖וֹן לִפְנֵֵ֣י יְהו ה וְלֶֽא־יִהְי ִ֤ה כְק ֶ֨רַחֶ֙ וְכֵַ֣עֲד תָ֔וֹ כַּאֲשׁ ֶ֨ר דִּ ֥בּ ֶ֧ר יְהו ֶ֛ה בְּיַד־מ שׁ ֹ֖ה לֶֽוֹ)

This phrase in Num 17:5 describing the offering of incense as an exclusively Aaronide prerogative is therefore troubling to a reader who knows the story of Nadab and Abihu.
The use of this phrase begs the question—did the author of the phrase know the story of Nadab and Abihu? If the author did not know the story found in Lev 10, it would make sense why he wrote what he did—he knew of no tradition in which sons of Aaron were killed for offering incense.

Is it possible that he knew of Lev 10 and still wrote the phrase? In such a case the author could have intended “any living descendent of Aaron,” or perhaps the chosen Aaronide successor to the high priesthood. Still, if the author knew the story, we would not have expected this formula to appear as it does here. Thus it is more likely than not that this verse was written without knowledge of Lev 10.

**Thematic Internal Evidence**

Turning from textual parallels, we will now examine thematic parallels between Lev 10 and Num 16–18. Throughout this analysis, it is important to keep Leonard’s sixth question in mind—“Are there rhetorical patterns in the texts that suggest that one text has used the other in an exegetically significant way?” A good starting point is to ask another question: what is the purpose of these texts? The answer for both Lev 10 and Num 16–18 is the same—to make clear the authority of Aaron (and his priestly successors), while maintaining his (and their) subordination to Moses.

This initially may seem to be an unlikely motive for the creation of Lev 10, as it tells of the error and death of two sons of Aaron—hardly a story that would strengthen the position of the Aaronides. However, as many have noted, a deeper analysis of the text indicates
otherwise. Instead of hurting the Aaronides, this narrative strengthens them. The story of Lev 10 demonstrates that if priests deviate from the prescribed cultic service—even with good intentions—they will be killed immediately by God. Therefore, any surviving priests, descendants of Aaron, must be observing the cultic laws to the very letter of the law, or else they would be struck by God. The text therefore serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the (Aaronide) priesthood. It should also be noted that in this chapter, God tells Aaron that he and his descendants are to serve as cultic decisors and as teachers to Israel. This oracle (vv. 10–11) is significant because it expands the authority, powers, and purpose of the priests.

The intent behind Num 16–18 is perhaps more obvious. The narrative features several rebellions against Moses and Aaron, with a focus on the authority of Aaron. Aaron is to offer incense in competition with the chieftains, to see which of them are chosen by God. He is the one who stops the plague, and later in chapter 17 it is his rod which blossoms, and proves his superiority. Still, Aaron is subordinate to Moses. It is Moses who instructs him to offer incense, both in competition with the chieftains, and later to stop the plague. Moses is the one is commanding Aaron, and Aaron responds.

In Lev 10, tragedy strikes Aaron, and he does not react—"and Aaron was unresponsive" (Lev 10:3). This passivity is reinforced by commandments he receives from Moses—not to exhibit any signs of mourning for his sons (Lev 10:6–7). It is only when his remaining sons are threatened by Moses that Aaron speaks up, to defend them, and Moses

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finds his response satisfactory (Lev 10:16-20). Aaron is given some sense of power, though, in the oracle which God gave him (Lev 10:8-11).

In Num 16–17, tragedy strikes, and Aaron is passive. When the congregation confronts Moses and Aaron, it is only Moses who initially falls on his face (16:4). In v. 17 Moses tells the chieftains and Aaron to both prepare incense offerings the next day. In 17:11, Moses again tells Aaron to take incense, this time to stop the plague that God had sent against the people. It is only in chapter 18 that God speaks directly to Aaron, rather than having Moses act as an intermediary. Therefore, Aaron is generally passive in both texts, and responsible to Moses, except when he receives his oracles directly from Yahweh. In this sense, both stories share very similar themes.114

Within the similar themes, however, there are distinctions. In Lev 10, Moses tells Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar that “Your brothers, all of the house of Israel, will mourn for the charring which Yahweh has wrought,” (Lev 10:6). This has a parallel in Num 17:6, where the people mourn the death of chieftains: “וַיְבֹא כֹּל-עָדִית בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חַפְּרוֹת עַל-מוֹת אַהֲרָן לֵאמֹר אֶת-הַמִּתֵּים אֶת-יְהוָה יָם, ‘And the entire congregation of Israel murmured the next day against Moses and against Aaron, saying “You! You killed the people of Yahweh!”’ (Num 17:6). National mourning of the dead is thus a feature of both texts, although in Lev 10 it is predicted, but not recorded, while it is recorded in Num 17.

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114 For an analysis of the role of Aaron in both stories, see Findlay, J. D. “A study of the Biblical Characterization of Aaron” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2005).
A starker difference can be seen in the use of incense in Lev 10 and in Num 16–18. In Lev 10, Aaron does nothing active, with the exception of his speech to Moses at the end of the chapter. In Num 17–18, Aaron is busy, albeit doing things that Moses instructs him to do. It is not trivial that Aaron’s two actions in Num 16–17 are both offering incense. Thus, in Num 17 Aaron offers incense, while in Lev 10 it is only Nadab and Abihu who offer incense.

Another key difference, which has been noted above, is the genre of the stories. While they seem to serve similar rhetorical purposes, the types of stories are very different. Lev 10 is the story of an offering gone wrong—it is a story of inappropriate cultic activity. Num 16–18, while featuring incense offering, is a rebellion story.

We may now bring Leonard’s sixth line of inquiry—“Are there rhetorical patterns in the texts that suggest that one text has used the other in an exegetically significant way?”—back into the forefront.

Can Lev 10 be read as using Num 16–18 exegetically? If that were the case, Lev 10 would then be turning Aaron into a more passive character than he is in Num 16–18. It would also take a rebellion narrative and turn it into an internal priestly cultic issue. Making the inappropriate act in the story a priestly violation, thereby endangering Aaronide authority even more, would then give room for the author to respond by granting the Aaronide priests even greater authority.

If Lev 10 came first, Num 16–18 would be exegetically responding to Lev 10. Num 16 would take the inappropriate priestly incense offering and turn it into an external challenge to

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115 The first instance of incense offering, which Aaron was supposed to perform in competition with the chieftains, is not explicitly stated as having occurred. It either happens “offstage,” or for some reason the competition was abandoned. Regardless, Aaron contains an active role in this part of the story, even if it never plays out.
the priests. Num 17 could also be read as a response to Lev 10, in which Aaron “atones” for the strange fire of his sons by combatting the offering of incense by the rebels, and by using sanctioned incense to stop God’s plague. Aaron would then be doing kippūr for his sons.

Neither of these scenarios is clear from the text, but if either text exegetically responds to the other, it would seem more likely that Num 16–18 is responding to Lev 10. If that is so, Num 16–18 would borrow much from Lev 10, while removing any reference to priestly error, and giving Aaron a more active and authoritative role than he has in Lev 10, as well as a possibly redemptive role for the sin of his eldest sons.

3.2: External Evidence

The external evidence can be divided into two groups. The first evidence will deal with Leonard’s fifth question: “Does one text show a general pattern of dependence on other texts?” The second group of evidence deals with the dating of the texts. Certain phrases may hint towards a certain period of authorship, although as we will see, scholars have divergent theories about which words and phrases indicate what in terms of dating and authorship.

At the end of chapter 2 we very briefly explored biblical stories that are similar to Lev 10 and Num 16–17. Our study found several stories that share similar plots or themes. These texts will be examined further to determine if there is any dependence between them and either Lev 10 or Num 16–17.

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116 Num 18 is not included here because of its lack of substantial narrative.
Allusion with Lev 10

Uzzah: 2 Sam 6/ 1 Chron 13

One of the stories identified above as being similar to the Lev 10 narrative is the story of the death of Uzzah as it is told in 2 Samuel 6:1–8 and 1 Chron 13:6–11. The story tells how David tried bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem, and while it was being transported atop an ox-cart, the Ark almost fell because the oxen stumbled. Uzzah grabbed on to the Ark to stabilize it, but he is struck down by God for touching the ark. This punishment is reminiscent of the death of Nadab and Abihu for their own cultic error, although the method of punishment is different in the two stories. Uzzah is described 1 Chron 13:10 as dying before God, וַיּ ֹ֥ומ ת שׁ ֹ֖ם לִפְנֵֹ֥י אֱלהִֶֽים, which closely matches the description of the death of Nadab and Abihu in Lev 10:2, וַיּ מֹֻ֖תוּ לִפְנֵֹ֥י יְהו ֶֽה.

The real similarities appear in names. Uzzah’s father, in whose house the Ark was stored, is named Abinadab. This name includes the basic elements of both Nadab and Abihu. Further, 1 Sam 7:1 states that Abinadab had a son Eleazar, who was consecrated to take care of the Ark: וְא ת־א לְע ז ִ֤ר בְּנוֶֹ֙ קִדְּשָׁ֔וּ לִשְׁמ ֹ֖ם יְהוֹה, “And they sanctified Eleazar his son to guard the Ark of Yahweh” (1 Sam 7:1). Eleazar is also the name of Aaron’s oldest surviving son, and his successor to the office of the High Priest (see Num 20:23–29). Thus in both stories the names Nadab and Abi(hu) are prominently featured, and a cultically superior son named Eleazar survives. The striking similarities between the passages were not lost on the rabbis, as

117 The only confusing character is the third brother, Ahio, whose name looks tantalizingly close to “brother,” a mere placeholder name. The fact that he is not killed too, however, breaks with the plot of Lev 10.
evidenced by the assignment of 2 Sam 6:1–19 as the reading for פרשת שמיני, which includes Lev 10.

In this instance it appears that if there is dependence, it is 2 Sam 6 that is alluding to Lev 10, rather than the other way around. If the opposite were true, the names of three out of four of Aaron’s children would have been taken from the Uzzah narrative. It would be strange that such a small and somewhat obscure story would be expanded so greatly and have such an influence on one of the central characters in the Pentateuch.

Golden Calf: Exodus 32

There are few parallels between Ex 32 and Lev 10. As noted above, there are some narrative similarities, as both take place in a time intended to be one of historic joy and inauguration, but devolve into tragic episodes of cultic violation. In both, Aaron must defend his actions to Moses, who is angry at what he perceives to be cultic violations performed by Aaron. Linguistically, however, there are few parallels between the texts. One possible meaningful connection is that both feature the rare verb פרע in relation to Aaron, in Ex 32:25 and Lev 10:6. In conclusion, there is not enough evidence to posit allusion or dependence between Ex 32 and Lev 10.

Jeroboam: 1 Kings 12–13

Like Nadab and Abihu, Jeroboam offers (or at least attempts to offer) an illicit offering.

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118 One more similarity is that in both, Moses assumes the very anger that he doesn’t want God to assume. We have seen this in Lev 10 with קצף in vv. 6 and 16. It appears in Ex 32 with חרה אף in vv. 11 and 19.
and is punished for his action. 1 Kings 12:33 states that Jeroboam ascended the altar: יָעַל עָלָי. While the exact form of offering is left unspecified, the verb לְהַקְטִיר implies that it was an incense offering, which would match the offering of Nadab and Abihu. Other parallels in the story include that Jeroboam’s sons are named Nadab and Abiyah, which nearly perfectly match the names Nadab and Abihu. Further, the two sons of Jeroboam die young—Abiyah dies of illness in 1 Kings 14:17, and Nadab, who assumes his father’s throne, is assassinated in 1 Kings 15:28.

Further parallel has been seen by Aberbach and Smolar in the words of Ahiyah the prophet, who says about the deathly ill Abiyah: וְסֶפֶד לוֹ כֵּלָי שִׁירָאָל, אֲחֵיכָם אֵלָי כֵּלָי הַבָּרָא, יְהוָה. “All of Israel will lament him and bury him, but only he himself will go to Jeroboam to the grave. For there has been found something good within him towards Yahweh, the god of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam” (1 Kings 14:13). They interpret this as matching Lev 10:6 וַאֲחֵיכָם כֵּלָי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְכּוּ א ת־הַשְּׂרֵפָה אֲשֶׁר שָרְרָה יְהוָה, “And your brothers, all of the house of Israel, will mourn for the charring which Yahweh has wrought.”

This association is furthered when it is noted that both Aaron and Jeroboam are centrally involved in the creation and cultic worship of cow images. Aaron famously assisted the people in creating the golden calf which was to serve in Moses’ stead, and Jeroboam instituted two bull images in temples in Dan and Bethel, to create cult sites in the Northern kingdom, so that his constituents would not have to go down to Jerusalem. The similarities between these

two episodes are reinforced by the language used to describe the cow images in both stories.

The same phrase is spoken of the golden calf and of Jeroboam's cows: "Here is your God, Israel, which took you out from Egypt." (1 Kings 12:28) vs. "Here is your God, Israel, which took you out from Egypt." (Ex 32:4), both of which mean “Here is your God, Israel, which took you out from Egypt.”

Of course, there are several ways to understand the relationship between these stories.

One can deny that there is any allusion between them, but that would be a very difficult position to take here, with the many narrative similarities, and the near identical phrase found in 1 Kings 12:28 and Ex 32:4. Therefore, some form of dependence seems likely. The question then is one of direction. Many view the Aaron stories as being dependent on the Jeroboam story, in an attempt to polemicize against Jeroboam and the priests of the Northern Kingdom.120 There are some, often traditional religious scholars, who see the direction going the other way.121

Uzziah: 2 Chron 26

As mentioned above, there are also similarities between the story of king Uzziah found in 2 Chron 26 and the narrative of Lev 10. Uzziah generally did what was pleasing to God (v. 4), and was a strong king. However, in an event of apparent hubris, he attempted to offer an incense offering in the temple. He is confronted by the chief priest Azaryahu along with 80 other priests. Uzziah dismisses their warning that the offering of incense is only for those of

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120 Ibid, 134.
121 Ibid, 134.
Aaronide descent, and attempts to continue his offering. However, he is thwarted by God, who
strikes him with leprosy, and he is subsequently kicked out of the temple by the priests.

The narrative similarities between this story and that of Lev 10 are clear. Someone(s) who does not have permission to offer incense does so, and is consequently struck by God.

Edward Greenstein attempts to take the comparison further and demonstrate textual parallels in addition to the narrative parallels. He identifies Lev 10:1 with 2 Chron 26:16, “The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, each took his own firepan, and they placed coals in them and they placed incense upon it,” with 2 Chron 26:16, “He came to the temple of Yahweh to offer incense upon the altar.” He also sees a correspondence to the phrase אֱלֹהִים אֶחָד אֶתָם, “which was not commanded of them,” of Lev 10:1 in 2 Chron 26:18, “It is not for you Uzziah, to offer incense to Yahweh.” Further parallels that he identifies include the usage of לפני יהוה in Lev 10:2 and in 2 Chron 26:19, and the use of קָרֶב and קְרֵב in Lev 10:3 and 2 Chron 26:18. Some of these connections are tenuous, but the two stories certainly share similarities.122

There is not enough textual evidence to posit dependence in any direction here, but it has been argued by Greenstein that this passage is an inner-biblical Midrash, and that it plays on Lev 10. In his article, Greenstein attempts to argue that the similarities between the texts must not be merely a case of intertextuality, but must amount to an intentional allusion on the

part of the Chronicler.\textsuperscript{123} If there is indeed any allusion going on here, it would be in such a direction.

Ezekiel 44

We will very briefly treat this matter, as it has been touched upon in chapter 1. Lev 10:8–11 forbids the priests from entering the ’ohel môʾēd while intoxicated, and describes the priest’s cultic-discernment and educational duties. It has been noted by several scholars that these verses closely match Ezek 44:21–24,\textsuperscript{124} and most scholars would date P (and H) to after the writing of Ezekiel. This has led some, such as Noth, to suggest that Lev 10:8–11 is dependent on Ezek 44:21–24.\textsuperscript{125}

The remarkable similarity between the verses certainly makes this a possibility. However, the subtle differences between the texts, such as the omission of a verse in Lev similar to Ezek 44:22, could point to both Lev 10 and Ezek 44 drawing from a common source. Such a scenario has been argued for by Milgrom.\textsuperscript{126} Even in such a case, however, Lev 10 would still be relying on an older text or oral tradition.

Extra-biblical Allusion

There are no “obvious” parallels to Lev 10 within the non-biblical corpus of Ancient Near Eastern literature. One facet of Lev 10 that does appear in Ancient Near Eastern texts, however,

\textsuperscript{123} Greenstein, “Inner-biblical Midrash,” 75.
\textsuperscript{124} See for example Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 615, 617.
\textsuperscript{125} Noth, Leviticus: A Commentary, 87.
\textsuperscript{126} Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 615, 617. See also above, chapter one.
is death by fire. In a 2009 JBL article, Paul-Alain Beaulieu examines such texts in attempt to find context for the furnace story in Daniel 3.\textsuperscript{127}

One text that Beaulieu focuses on, and eventually argues as a possible direct source for Daniel 3, is a letter from Sippar. The letter claims to be written by the king Samsu-iluna and addressed to Enlil-nādin-šumi, although its modern editors, Al-Rawi and George, note that the letter is “clearly fictitious” and that it was written long after the lifetime of the supposed writer and addressee. According to Al-Rawi and George, the purpose of the letter “was apparently to supply evidence of historical precedent.”\textsuperscript{128} The letter tells that Samsu-iluna has learned of improprieties of the priests of Akkad, and concludes with the command to kill the priests by burning.

The most relevant section of letter is as follows:

Concerning all the cult centers of the land of Akkad, all of those from east to west [which, I have given entirely into your control, I have heard (reports) that the temple officials, the collegium, the nēšakku-priests, the paššu-priests, and the dingirgubbû-priests of the cult centers of the land of Akkad, as many as there are, have taken to falsehood, committed an abomination, been stained with blood, spoken untruths. Inwardly they profane and desecrate their gods, they prattle and cavort about. Things that their gods did not command they establish for their gods....You now, in the presence of your great divinity, on account of evil behavior and the abomination of the gods, destroy them, burn them, roast them,... to the cook’s oven ... make their smoke billow, bring about their fiery end with the fierce flame of the boxthorn!\textsuperscript{129,130}

\textsuperscript{129} Al-Rawi and George, “Two Royal Counterfeits,” 138.
\textsuperscript{130} Italicis are original, underlining is my own.
In this letter, Samsu-iluna details the inappropriate activities of the priests. The final violation of theirs which he lists is that that “Things that their gods did not command they establish for their gods.” This line can be understood to be a final violation, or perhaps more likely, as a summary of all of the violations. Regardless, the punishment of the priests is that they are to be burned.

In Lev 10, the only clear explanation of what Nadab and Abihu did wrong is that they brought an שָׂדֶה זָרָה אֶשֶּר לֹא צִוּה אֶת ה and אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוּה אֶת ה, “a foreign fire which He did not command them” (Lev 10:1). Of course, their punishment is death by divine fire. In both texts, then, priests are punished with death by fire for establishing things not commanded by the god(s). In the letter from Sippar, it is the king who orders their death, while in Lev 10 it is Yahweh, who is often seen as a king in the Hebrew Bible.

These similarities are by no means enough evidence to claim direct dependence or allusion between these two exact texts. Rather they serve as evidence for the possibility that a tradition similar to that of Lev 10 existed within the broader Ancient Near Eastern corpus, and that Lev 10 could have drawn from such a tradition.

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131 In the case of Nadab and Abihu, however, their punishment could be easily explained as an application of talion (מידה כנגד מידה), as it matches their sin.
Allusions with Num 16

Golden Calf: Ex 32

The very first verse of Ex 32 has the phrase ויִקְּהלּ עֵלֶּה אָהֳרִ֖ן, “the nation gathered against Aaron.” This type of phrase, קהל + על with the meaning of “to gather against,” is an uncommon form in the Hebrew Bible. In addition to Ex 32:1, it appears twice in Num 16 (Num 16:3, 19) and once in Num 17 (Num 17:7). The only other usage of the phrase with that meaning in the Hebrew Bible can be found in Num 20:2. Another linguistic similarity is that in Ex 32:5 Aaron declares a holiday מחר, “tomorrow,” just as Moses declares a showdown “tomorrow” in Num 16:7, 16. In both passages God wishes to destroy the entire people.

In Ex 32:10 God says to Moses וְיִחַר אֵפִי בַּהֲמוֹן וָאֲכַלּ וְאֹצַע הָאָוֶת לְגַוְּדְלִי, “And I will become furious with them and consume them, and I will make you into a great nation.” This is similar to what God says to Moses and Aaron in Num 16 and 17, such as הִבָּדֵל מִתּוֹךְ הַעֵדֶת וָאָכַל וָאָעַצְּח הָאֶבֶן לְגַוְּדָל, “Withdraw from the congregation, and then I will instantly consume them” (Num 16:21). In Ex 32:20 Moses burns the golden calf, which may be similar to the burning of the chieftains in Num 16:35. Another similarity is the use of the word נֶגֶף, which can mean “strike” or “affliction.” The word appears in Ex 32:35, יִהְוָה נֶגֶף אֲלֵהֶם, “Yahweh struck the nation.” It is also mentioned twice in Num 17:11–12. Verse 11 has הָאָוֶת נֶגֶף בָּנֵי, “the affliction has begun,” and a parallel phrase can be seen in v. 12, וַהָאָוֶת הָאָוֶת בָּנֵי, “and already the affliction has begun among the people.”
A final similarity can be seen in the use of the verb זרה with the meaning of “to spread,” in relation to ashes. Ex 32:20 tells that Moses burned and pulverized the golden calf, “and he spread [the ashes] upon the surface of the water,” וַיִּזֶּֽר עַל־פְּנֵֵ֣י הַמַָּ֔יִם. As we have seen above, the verb is used in a similar context in Num 17:2, וְא ת־ה אֵֹ֖שׁ זְרֵה־ה ֻ֑לְאָה, “and spread the fire over there.” These are the only two instances in the Hebrew Bible where זרה, with the meaning “to spread,” is used in relation to אש, fire or ashes.

Despite some glaring differences, such as that in Ex 32 the Levites are loyal to Moses (v. 26) and slay the rebels, while they are rebels themselves in Num 16, the two texts share several uncommon linguistic features. This raises the possibility of allusion between Num 16 and Ex 32. Ex 32 was traditionally accepted as belonging to the E source, which represents one of the earliest strata of the Pentateuch. While there are competing opinions regarding the correct dating of P, the vast majority place P as later than E—the real question is how much later. Consequently, if the traditional attributions of the two texts to their respective sources is accurate, Ex 32 must be the older text, and thus if there is allusion, Num 16–18 is alluding to Ex 32.

However, these assumptions have been called into question by some scholars. Some prefer to read Ex 32 as post-P, and in fact dependent on P texts. If this is the case, Ex 32

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133 See especially Num 16:7–8.
134 Such differences do not provide evidence against dependence, and such stark differences can actually be signs of a polemic response by one of the texts to the other.
135 See for example, Friedman, Bible with Sources Revealed, 4.
would seem to be reliant on Lev 10. The direction of dependence, then, cannot be easily determined, and depends on the source-critical dating of each of the texts.

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal: 1 Kings 18

Num 16 shares several basic similarities with 1 Kings 18. There, Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a sacrificial showdown. In v. 22 he belabors the point that he stands alone against many prophets of Baal—450, to be exact. This evokes, but does not perfectly match the showdown between Aaron (alone) and the 250 chieftains. The medium of challenge is different, as in 1 Kings 18 the competition is with sacrifices, while in Num 16 it is with incense offerings.

When Elijah’s sacrifice is accepted, the language used is: "A fire of Yahweh fell and consumed [the offering]" (1 Kings 18:38). In Num 16, the language used is "And a fire came from before Yahweh and consumed" (Num 16:35). The two phrases are similar, but not in a significant way. Also, in 1 Kings 18 the divine fire accepts the offering, but does not kill, as it does in Num 16; rather, in 1 Kings 18 Elijah himself slays the prophets of Baal. A final similarity can be found in the phrase נפל על פנים, which appears in both stories—"The entire nation saw and they fell on their faces" in 1 Kings 18:39, and "They fell on their faces" in Num 17:10, for example.

In conclusion, the stories are of a similar type, but do not share enough textual similarities to posit dependence.

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137 The similarities do not go too far, as the first verb is different in the two phrases.
138 Much like how the Levites slay the perpetrators of the golden calf.
139 Among other occurrences of the phrase in Num 16-18. See chapter 2.5 for a broader discussion on the phrase.
Taking all of these analyses into account, there is little evidence of inner-biblical dependence with Num 16–18 outside of Lev 10—including the dependence in either direction. The closest passage to Num 16-18 is Ex 32, the golden calf narrative, which does share a significant amount of uncommon language with Num 16. It is likely that there is allusion between them, but we are not able to fully examine the direction of such allusion in this study.

On the other hand, Lev 10 appears to be strongly associated with several other biblical stories, although it is difficult to assess if there is dependence, and when there is, its direction. It appears that at least one story is dependent on Lev 10—namely the story of Uzzah in 2 Sam 6. On the other hand, there are several texts which Lev 10 might be alluding to. Some scholars see Lev 10:8–1 as depending on Ezek 44, although others prefer to see them both as drawing from a common tradition.\(^{140}\) It has also been argued by many scholars that Lev 10, in conjunction with Ex 32, relies on the Jeroboam stories. Lev 10 and Ex 32 would thus be later associations of Aaron with Jeroboam, and thus likely attempts to portray Aaron in a negative light.

**Dating the Texts**

Now that we have assessed all of the relative evidence between textual sources, we can turn to the dating of the texts. Relevant here is Leonard’s second investigative question, “Are there elements in the texts that help to fix their dates?”

The dating of Pentateuchal texts is notoriously difficult. Within the framework of the documentary hypothesis, even establishing the relative chronology of the sources can be

\(^{140}\) Even in such a scenario, Lev 10 would still be drawing on an older text or tradition.
difficult, though much recent research has been done on this issue. Some scholars think that P must be a late composition of the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, while others prefer to place P earlier in the eight to seventh centuries BCE.\textsuperscript{141}

As both of our primary texts are P texts, what concerns us is any evidence of relative chronology within P. There have indeed been attempts at such, with the purported identification of an HS (Holiness School) or merely H (Holiness) redactional layer within the P material. While there is some disagreement, most scholars now believe that the H material is later than the P (or PT- Priestly Torah) material.\textsuperscript{142} Some scholars prefer to use the more general terms P and post-P, rather than P and H.

This schema would be valuable in determining the relative chronology between Lev 10 and Num 16–18 if one of the texts is primarily P, and the other is primarily H or post-P. However, no clear distinction can be found in the language of the two texts. Most scholars believe that both stories are primarily H or post-P, thus forcing us to attempt to distinguish between late and very late P (or entirely post-P).

Achenbach argues that Lev 10 is dependent upon Num 16, which he emphasizes is itself a late text, thus making Lev 10 very late. He writes, „Lev 10 ist literarisch jünger als die 250–Manner-Erzählung in Num 16 und diese ist schon nachpriesterschriftlich.”\textsuperscript{143} Achenbach’s argument is subsequently picked up by Nihan.

\textsuperscript{141} Friedman, \textit{Bible With Sources Revealed}, 4.
\textsuperscript{142} See for example Knohl, \textit{Sanctuary of Silence}, 6.
\textsuperscript{143} Achenbach, \textit{Die Vollendung Der Tora}, 94. In English: “Lev 10 is literarily younger than the 250-men-narrative in Num 16 and that [Num 16] is already a late priestly writing.”
Nihan considers Lev 10 to be an entirely post-P composition. Nihan’s primary evidence comes from the usage of the names Mishael and Elzaphan Lev 10:4. He asserts that the presence of their names in what it usually considered to be the oldest part of the chapter is proof that the entire chapter is very late. He reaches this conclusion by looking at Ex 6:22, which mentions Mishael and Elzaphan within the broader genealogical unit of Ex 6:14–27. Nihan argues that the genealogy is understood by most to be a late P addition, but should really be understood as redactional, or post-P.\textsuperscript{144} It must be late because it assumes knowledge of “the following books of the Torah,” in that it does not give genealogies for people who play no future role.\textsuperscript{145}

Nihan’s other two reasons understanding Lev 10 to be post-P are that the verb קדש appears in the nip’al in Lev 10:3, and that Lev 10 must have known Num 16–17 “in its final, post-priestly form.”\textsuperscript{146} The usage of קדש in the nip’al stem is important to Nihan because the only other place it occurs in Leviticus is in Lev 22, which is attributed to H, which itself is post-P.

Watts forcibly responds to Nihan’s central argument. He takes issue with his assertion that Lev 10:4 relies on Ex 6:22 as a faulty logic. He writes that according to the reasoning that the Ex 6 genealogy was written with knowledge of who is mentioned in other parts of the Torah, “since Mishael and Elzaphan appear only in Lev 10:4, this verse must already have been part of the Pentateuch when Ex 6:22 was written, so the Exodus verse cannot help date it.”\textsuperscript{147} In other words, there is no reason to assume that Lev 10:4 is dependent on Ex 6:22, as Nihan

\textsuperscript{144} See Nihan, \textit{From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch}, 148–149.
\textsuperscript{145} Nihan, \textit{From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch}, 149.
\textsuperscript{146} Nihan, \textit{From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch}, 150.
\textsuperscript{147} Watts, \textit{Leviticus 1–10}, 511.
does. Watt’s response to Nihan’s argument about יִפְטַנ in the nip’al is less convincing, however, as he merely notes that Lev 10:3 is “famously cryptic,” and thus not a good source of evidence. In response to Nihan’s final argument, that Lev 10 must rely on Num 16–17 in its post-P form, Watt’s writes that “the direction of dependence is far from clear.”

Knohl believes that Lev 10, with the exception of Lev 10:1–5 is H material, as is the priestly material in Num 16–18. Such an interpretation would see the core of the Nadab and Abihu story as earlier than the Korach story, and thus likely see Lev 10 as influencing Num 16–18. This approach leaves open the scenario in which Lev 10:1–5 influenced the Num 16–18, which in turn influences the structure of the rest of Lev 10, or a similar scenario in which Lev 10:1–5 existed as an independent tradition, and a single author expanded it and also constructed Num 16–18 in a similar vein.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

We have identified eight significant textual parallels between Lev 10 and Num 16–18, in addition to thematic parallels, and have suggested that there is allusion and dependence between the two texts. To assess the direction of influence we examined internal and external evidence. We have also summarized previous opinions on the direction of influence, which are mostly based upon larger models of the dating of biblical texts, which in turn are mostly based on linguistic criteria. What follows below is a summary of the evidence for the two simplest

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148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Knohl, Sanctuary of Silence, 105.
possible scenarios—Lev 10 as influenced by Num 16–18, and Num 16–18 as influenced by Lev 10.\textsuperscript{151}

**Evidence in Support of Lev 10 Being Influenced by Num 16–18**

1) Num 16–18 is much longer than Lev 10, and thus could more easily inspire Lev 10 than vice versa.
2) If Num 16–18 precedes Lev 10, then its lack of acknowledgment of Nadab and Abihu’s death is not strange (particularly in Num 17:5).
3) Lev 10 appears to be dependent on several other biblical passages.
4) Lev 9–10 uses language similar to that found in the wilderness “murmuring” stories, of which Num 16–18 is a part.
5) We might have expected that Korah and/or his siblings would remove Nadab and Abihu’s bodies in Lev 10. The fact that this does not happen may indicate knowledge of the Korah rebellion.

**Evidence in Support of Num 16–18 Being Influenced by Lev 10**

1) אֲשֶׁר צַרְי הָאָדָם is always associated with Nadab and Abihu, and Num 17:2,5 appear to reference the phrase.
2) Num 16–18 may be dependent on Ex 32.
3) It is easier to understand the priestly author’s exegetical motive in adapting a priestly tragedy (Lev 10) to a Levite rebellion (Num 16–18), than vice versa.

In chapter 3.1 we examined the possible scenarios in which the texts could be seen as responding to one another. To recap, if Num 16–18 is in fact alluding to Lev 10, it could be read as taking a story about priestly error which results in greater priestly authority into a story about Levitical/Israelite error which leads to greatly priestly authority. The role of Aaron is

\textsuperscript{151} This study deals primarily with these two possible scenarios, but a more complicated scenario of multiple directions of influence is possible. For a brief exploration of this see note 111 above.
transformed in the two texts, and Aaron in Num 16–18 offers incense himself, including once to stop a deadly plague from God—thus he can be seen as correcting the sins of his sons.

However, if Lev 10 is alluding to Num 16–18, it may serve as a foreshadowing of the later conflict. Additionally, Lev 10 would then modify the paradigm of Num 16–18, turning external challenges to priestly authority into an internal tragedy which threatens the priesthood. This greater tragedy would allow for an even more forceful resolution, in which the Aaronides are given even more authority than before. The responsibilities given to the priests in Lev 10:10–11, and particularly in v. 11, which establishes the priests as instructors of the law, grant additional authority to the Aaronide priests over that which had already been established for them in other texts (such as Num 16–18).

In Conclusion

This study has aimed to present a detailed analysis of the textual and thematic parallels between Lev 10 and Num 16–18. It is often assumed by scholars that there is allusion and consequently dependence between the two texts, but in the vast majority of cases only two parallels are given. Additionally, attempts to date the texts relative to one another have relied primarily on source-critical arguments for which there is little consensus. This thesis attempted to explore additional parallels between the texts, and examine both internal and external evidence that must be taken into consideration when attempting to determine the direction of dependence between two biblical texts.
While there is not enough evidence to confidently assert the direction of influence, the analysis of evidence in this thesis indicates that there is more textual and thematic evidence that points to Num 16–18 being older than Lev 10 than vice versa. As mentioned above, Lev 10 would have then been written to provide even greater authority to the priests, and to serve literally as a foreshadow of the Korah rebellion.152

It is our hope that this study has illuminated the numerous connections between Lev 10 and Num 16–18. These parallels serve as a justification of previous scholarly analyses which have assumed allusion between the texts, and may serve as further reason for readers to strongly consider the potential impact of Lev 10 and Num 16–18 on each other when reading and interpreting these texts.

152 It should be noted that not all of Num 16–18 is paralleled in Lev 10. Most prominently absent of any parallel in Lev 10 is the rod story of Num 17:16–26.
## Appendix 1. Summary of Textual Parallels

The following chart summarizes the textual parallels between Lev 10 and Num 16–18 as outlined above in chapter 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leviticus 10 (and 9)</th>
<th>Numbers 16–18</th>
<th>Commonality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>וַיֵּקְחֵ֣ו בְנֵֶֽי־אַֹ֠הֲרִּ֖ן דֶ֨ב וַאֲבִיהֹ֜וּא אִישׁ מַחְתּ תָ֗וֹ וַיִּתְּנִ֤וּ בֵּ֨הֶן אֵָ֔שׁ וַיּ שִֹׂ֥ימוּ עֲלֵיהֶ֖ם קְטֻרֶ֑ת וַיַּקְרִֹ֜בוּ לִפְנִֵ֤י יְהוָ֙ה אֵֵ֣שׁ זָ֔רָה אֲשׁ ֶ֧ר לֹ֦א צִוּ ֹ֖ה אֶֽם׃</td>
<td>כֹּ֨רָה עוֹלָ֖ת: 7 וּבֵן 30</td>
<td>The taking of incense pans and the offering of incense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יַקְרִֹ֜בְּוּ עֲלֵיהֶ֖ם קְטֻרֶ֑ת וְלִפְנִֵ֤י יְהוָ֙ה אֵֵ֣שׁ זָ֔רָה וְאַתּ ֹ֥ וְאַהֲר ֶֽן אִֹ֥ישׁ מַחְתָּ֖וֹ חֲמִשִֹּׁ֥ם וּמ אתַֹ֖יִם מַחְתּ ֻ֑ת וְאַתּ ֹ֥ וְאַהֲר ֶֽן׃</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וַתֵֹ֥צֵא אֵֶ֛שׁ מִֽלְפַּ֖דֶה וַתּ ֵ֣אכַל אוֹת ֻ֑ם וַיּ מֹֻ֖תוּ לִפְנֵֹ֥י יְהוָ֖ה׃</td>
<td></td>
<td>The death by divine fire of the offerers of incense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְאֵֹ֥שׁ י צְאָֹ֖ה מֵאֵֵ֣ת יְהוָ֑ה וַתּ ָ֗אכַל אֵֵ֣ת הַחֲמִשִִּׁ֥ם וּמ אתֶַ֙יִם אִָ֔ישׁ מַקְרִיבֵֹ֖י הַקְּט ֶֽר ת׃ פ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>בִּשְׂרֵפַּר לַֽאֳשֶׁר לֶֽא־יִקְרַֹ֜ב אִֵ֣ישׁ סִבָּ֖תָה וְאַתּ ֹ֥ וְאַהֲר ֹ֖ן אִֹ֥ישׁ מַחְתָּ֖וֹ לֵאמֶ֙ר בִּקְרֵֽבָּה׃</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wordplay with אש זרה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְאֵֹ֥שׁ זְרֵה־הַמַּחְתֵּ֣ת וְאַת־ה אֵֹ֖שׁ זְרֵה־לֵ֙א מִזּּ ִ֤רְעַ֙ה אָ֣ן אַהֲר ָ֔ו׃</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cryptic verses employing קרב and קדש</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:23</td>
<td>וַיְבִיא אֶלְכָּל בֵּא מ שׁ וְאַהֲרָן מִזְבֵּחַ בְּמַעֲחֵהֶזְוֶתְוּ אֶל־אֹבְרֶכֶה</td>
<td>The appearance of Yahweh’s glory (כבוד), and people falling on their faces (because of Yahweh, with the exception of Num 16:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:24</td>
<td>וַיַּכְבִּית כְּבוֹד יְהוָה אֶל־כּ ל־ה עֶם וַיְרָא כָּל־ה עֶם׃</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:4</td>
<td>וַיִּשְׁמַע מ שׁ וַיָּפֹל עַל־פּ נֵיו׃</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:19</td>
<td>וַיִּשְׁמַע מ שׁ וַיָּפֹל עַל־פּ נֵיו׃</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:22</td>
<td>וַיִּפְלֹו עַל־פְּנֵיה ֶֽם׃</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:6</td>
<td>וְעַֹ֥ל כּ ל־ה עֵד ֹ֖ה יִקְצ ֻ֑ף</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:16</td>
<td>יַטְמַר וַיָּקְצֵף עַל־ףְנֵי יְהוָה</td>
<td>The multiple uses of קצף. Note the similarity between Lev 10:6 and Num 16:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:8</td>
<td>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֶר׃</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:1</td>
<td>יַמֵּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֵל־אָבֹא׃</td>
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<td>18:8</td>
<td>וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֵל־אָבֹא׃</td>
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<td>18:20</td>
<td>וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֵל־אָבֹא׃</td>
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<td>10:14</td>
<td>וַיֵּיאֶר ה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֶר:</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:18</td>
<td>וַיֵּיאֶר ה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֶר:</td>
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</table>

Instructions for the what priests may eat of offerings
Bibliography


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