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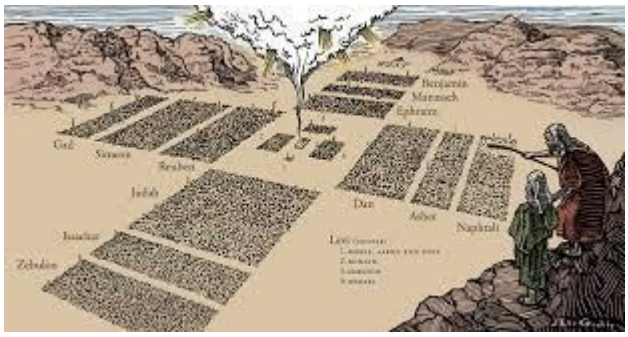
The Four Camps of Levites
3: 21-39

The four camps of Levites DIG: Why are there three sons listed when there are four camps. Why would anyone else who approached the Sanctuary be put to death? What is the Sh'khinah and where was it within the camp of Isra'el?

REFLECT: God has given every believer a spiritual gift, and thus, a ministry. How are you using your spiritual gift? Are you bitter that someone else has a better gift than you do? What was the difference in ritual purity and holiness from one clan to another?

The three sons of Levi are mentioned in order of their birth.

As stated earlier (**to see link click Am – The Camp of the Twelve Tribes of Isra'el**), **the Levites** camped directly around **the Tabernacle**. As with the rest of the nation of **Isra'el**, **their** encampment was divided into **four camps**. The **three sons** of **Levi** are mentioned in order of their birth: **Gershon** (meaning *exile* or *a sonourner there*) was born first, **Kohath** (meaning *congregation*) second, and **Merari** (meaning *bitter*) was born third.



The Gershonite Camp (3:21-26): Gershon fathered the clans of Levi and Shim'i; these were the Gershon clans. Among the **7,500 males,** only **2,630** were between the ages of **thirty** and **fifty (4:40). These** were required to serve under the supervision of **Ithamar, the son of Aaron (4:28). The Gershon clans**

were to camp behind the Tabernacle, toward the west. In other words, their tents were between **the Tabernacle** and the encampment of **Ephriam**. **The chief of the Gershon clan was Eliasaph, the son of La'el. Their** principal duty was to assemble, disassemble and carry the **white curtains of finely twisted linen (4:25-26). In connection with the Tabernacle, the descendants of Gershon were to be in charge of the following: Its inner and outer coverings** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fl – The Goat Hair Curtains on the Sanctuary**)**, the veil for the entrance of the Tabernacle** (see **Exodus Fj – The Outer Veil of the Sanctuary**)**, the curtains surrounding the courtyard** (see **Exodus Ey – The Size of the Courtyard in the Tabernacle**)**, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen** (see **Exodus Ez – The Gate of the Tabernacle: Christ, The Way to God**) **and the bronze altar, all the fixtures and ropes for these items, and their maintenance.**

The Kohathite Camp (3:27-32): Kohath fathered the clans of Amramirtes, Izharites, Hebronites and Uzzielites; these were the Kohathite clans. The number of males a month old or more was 8,600 (4:34-36). The Kohathites were responsible for the Sanctuary. The Kohathite clans were to camp on the south side of the Tabernacle, between **the Tabernacle** and the encampment of **Reuben. The leader of the Kohathite clans was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. They were responsible for the care** and transportation **of the Ark** (see **Exodus Fr – The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**)**, the Mercy Seat** (see **Exodus Fs – The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**)**, the Menorah** (see **Exodus Fn – The Menorah in the Sanctuary: Christ, the Light of the World**)**, the Altar of Incense** (see **Exodus Fp – Altar of Incense in the Sanctuary: Christ, Our Advocate with the Father**)**, the Bronze Altar** (see **Exodus Fa – Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**)**, the utensils the priests used when they serve in the Holy Place, the inner veil** (see **Exodus Fq – The Inner Veil of the Sanctuary: That is Christ, His Bod**)**y), and everything related to their use. The chief leader of the Levites was Eleazar son of Aaron the High Priest. He was appointed over those who were responsible for the care of the Sanctuary.**

The Merarite Camp (3:33-37): To Merari belonged the clans of the Mahlites and the Mushites; these were the Merarite clans. The number of all the males a month old or more who were counted was 6,200. The leader of the

families of the Merarite clans was Zuriel son of Abihail, and they were to serve under the supervision of **Ithamaer, Aaron's** other remaining **son**. **They were to camp on the north side of the Tabernacle,** between **the Sanctuary** and the encampment of **Dan. Their** primary duty was the disassembly, carrying and reassembly of the **frames of the Tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, bases, all its equipment** (see **Exodus Fm – The Structure of the Sanctuary**)**, and everything related to their use, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs and ropes.**[49]

The Camp of the Sh'khinah (3:38): The fourth and final **camp** of **the Levites** was **the camp** of **the Sh'khinah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ju – The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**), were **Moses, Aaron and his sons camped.** Please note that the word **Sh'khinah** doesn't appear in the Bible. **It is a word used by the rabbis to speak of the glory of God as it was seen in the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus Hh – The Glory of the LORD Filled the Tabernacle**) **and the Temple** (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Bo – Fire from Heaven**)**.** To say that it is not a word found in the Bible, however, is not to say that it is a bad or wrong word to use. On the contrary, it is a convenient word which describes in short-hand what was manifested in the Most Holy Place. **It is interesting that the Babylonian Talmud mentions that there were three encampments. The outer one was called the camp of the Israelites, the middle one was called the camp of the Levites, and the innermost one was called the camp of the Presence, or Sh'khinah.** The image being formed by these terms is that this was not really **Isra'el's camp**, but **God's camp**! The other two **camps** that surrounded **it** were merely guarding **His Presence**. And just as **the Sh'khinah** was a physical manifestation of **YHVH** seen in **the Tabernacle/Temple**, so was **Yeshua** the physical manifestation of the unseen **YHVH** made visible on planet earth: **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).**[50]

This **camp of the Sh'khinah** was a small encampment positioned to **the east, toward the sunrise,** between **the Tabernacle** and the camp of **Judah.** The tents of **Moses** and **the priests** opened directly into the entrance of **the Tabernacle** courtyard (see **Exodus Ex – The Courtyard and Gate of the Tabernacle**). **They were responsible for the care of the Sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites. Anyone else who approached the Sanctuary was to be put to death.**[51]**The total number of Levites whom Moshe and Aaron counted by their clans,**

including all the males a month old and over, was 22,000 (3:39).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise you that **You** are a Holy and Loving **God** who does everything wisely and orderly **(First Corinthians 14:40).** All of creation functions in an orderly way, following your commands – from birthing of baby mountain goats **(Job 39:1)** to hawks and cleaning up the dying carnage, putting the earth back in order **(Job 39:30)**. Even stars are guided by **Your Word** and respond in an orderly manner to your commands. **Can you bind the chains of Pleiades or loosen the belt of Orion? Do you bring out the constellations in their season or guide the Bear with her cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set up dominion over the earth (Job 38:31-33)**?*

***You** have wisely given order to all the different types of weather. **Your** mighty wisdom and power stores up hail for the day of battle and war. **Have you entered the storehouses of snow or seen the storehouses of hail, which I reserved for a time of distress, for a day of battle and war (Job 38:22-23)? You** created the womb that frost comes from and guided the birthing of dew. **Does the rain have a father, or who has birthed the drops of dew? From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost of heaven (Job 38:28-29). You** laid the foundations for the earth, determining its measurements (**Job 38:4-7).** Darkness and light are both under your command and follow the orders you give (**Job 38:12-21**). Praise **You**, that **You** never slumber, nor sleep **(Psalms 121:3-4)** and all that **You** created in order, remain exactly as **You** have ordered them. **You** are a wise, orderly and magnificent Creator **Father** and we love **You** and bow at **Your** feet! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*