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The Clan of Gershom
4: 21-28

The clan of Gershom DIG: What were the duties assigned to the Gershomites? How did they compare to the Kohathites? Given the mobile nature of the Tabernacle, how important would the work of the Gershomites be in the religious life of the Israelites? What does this passage teach us about treating the things of ADONAI with respect?

REFLECT: What are your spiritual gifts? Are you using them? How are believers like a spiritual Tabernacle? Who takes care of the physical aspects of worship in your church or Messianic congregation. Ask God to show you His particular purpose for your life. Ask God to help you know how to work more effectively with other believers for His Kingdom.

Parashah 35: Nasso (Take) 4:21 to 7:89

(See my commentary on **Deuteronomy, to see link click Af – Parashah**)

The Key People are Moshe, all the Levites, sons of Gershom, Merari and Kohath, the unclean, jealous husbands and their wives, Nazirites, Aaron, and the leaders of all the tribes.

The Scene is the wilderness of Sinai.

The Main Events include tasks for the Gershomites and Merarites, census totals for Levites, instructions to keep tsara'at (see the commentary on **Leviticus to see link click Bv – The Test of Tsara'at**) **out of the camp, mitzvah of jealousy, Nazirite vows, the Aaronic benediction, altar dedication, offerings of the tribal princes, donations for the Levites, and Moshe entering the Tabernacle to hear ADONAI speak.**

The Gershomites were responsible for the cloth, fabric and skins that covered and enclosed the Tabernacle.

Nasso opens with a continuation of the numbering of **the Levitical families**. **ADONAI said to Moshe, "Take a census of the descendants of Gershom also, by clans and families; count all those between thirty and fifty years old, all who will enter the corps doing the work of serving in the Tabernacle (4:21-22).** The previous portion began this numbering process with **the clan of Kohath** (see **At – The Clan of Kohath**)**.** The main function of **the Levites** was to guard **the Tabernacle** from **the people and the people** from **the Tabernacle** (see **Ar – The Four Camps of Levites**)**.** With the living **God** in **their** midst, a step in the wrong direction might prove fatal (see the commentary on **Leviticus Bh – The Death of Nadab and Abihu**). **The Levites** camped around **the Tabernacle** to protect **the Israelites** from blundering into **the Tabernacle** and being struck down dead for inadvertent trespassing**. Their** encampment protected **the Tabernacle** from defilement and desecration.

Fundamental to **their** mission of guarding **the Tabernacle** was making sure that worshipers were in a state of ritual purity before entering. During the Second Temple era (called Herod's Temple), **Levitical** guards checked those entering into **the** inner **Temple** area to determine if they had passed through **the middle wall of separation** and were in a state of ritual purity (see the commentary on **Acts Cn – Paul's Advice from Jacob and the Elders at Tziyon**). In **his** vision of the New Jerusalem, **John** sees **a City** in which there is no **Temple**, for **the** whole **City** will be declared holy. **The** entire **City** is **the Temple**. Nothing unclean will be allowed to enter it. **The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. Its gates will never close, they stay open all day because night will not exist there, and the honor and splendor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure may enter it, nor anyone who does shameful things or lies; the only ones who may enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:24-27).**[67]

One of the main themes of this portion is **Isra'el's** preparation to travel through the wilderness and enter the Promised Land. Among these preparations was the delegation of the various responsibilities among **the Levites**. It is important to note that in every case where a particular **Levite** family's duties are described, the Bible says that those responsible are called *mishmeret*. This term comes from the root, *shomer*, which means *to guard* or *to keep*. The idea behind this root is protection. As applied to the work of the Levites, we see that **God** considered **their** ministry not to be one of meaningless physical labor, but rather, that of guarding, caring for,

and protecting both the precious objects and precious calling. The precious objects were **the Tabernacle** and everything associated with its service. Not just anyone was entrusted with its care. It was a special family who could devote **their** entire lives to doing the work that **ADONAI** called **them** to do. And as we take joy in serving our **Lord** in what **He** has called us to do, I am sure **they** took great joy in **their** ministry also.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being such a wonderful Heavenly **Father**! It is a joy to minister before **You**, serving **You** in various ways! Taking care of **Your** Church is similar to **the Gershomites** taking care of the cloth, fabric and skins that covered and enclosed **the Tabernacle**. The physical labor to care for the church building is meaningful and a joy as we seek to provide a clean and orderly place where all may worship **You Your** holiness and Almighty power. Thank **You** that all may worship **You** as their **Lord** and **Savior** (**Romans 10:9-10).** All who love **You** are welcomed into **Your** family, for it is the heart that **You** look at **(First Samuel 16:7). You** are an orderly **God** and so we keep your house in order. **But let everything be done decently and in orde**r **(First Corinthians 14:40).** How amazing that you put the stars in place and the planets in orderly orbits around the sun! **You** are a **God** of order in all you do and we delight in worshiping you in an orderly way. In the holy **Name** of **Yeshua** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The Tabernacle was the sacred "home" where **YHVH**, **the Divine Husband**, met with **His bride, Isra'el**. Because of the special functions of **the Tabernacle**, **the Levites** were granted a unique privilege. The precious work was, of course, to function as **priests** in **Isra'el**. **The Levites** helped **the Israelites** come close to **God** and properly relate to **Him**. In return, **ADONAI** used **the Levites** to reveal some of **His** heart and mind to **Isra'el**, as well as to teach **Isra'el the Torah**.[68]

The Gershomites were responsible for the cloth, fabric and skins that covered and enclosed the Tabernacle (4:21-28): Although **Gershom** was **Levi's** firstborn, **Kohathite** received the first job assignment. **Gershom** was still honored, however, by placement at the head of this new parashah. **Gershom's** duties concerned the physical work of dismantling, loading onto wagons, and reassembling the cloth, fabric, and skins that covered and enclosed **the Tabernacle**. **The Kohathites** had already removed the holiest items, which **they themselves** were solely responsible for. Now **the Gershomites** removed the coverings, exposing the framework. **The Merarites** entered next (see **Av – The Clan of Merari**), doing the heaviest work of dismantling, packing, and unpacking

the frameworks for **the Tabernacle** and outer court.[69]

ADONAI said to Moshe, "Take a census of the descendants of Gershom also, by clans and families; count all those between thirty and fifty years old, all who will enter the corps doing the work of serving in the tent of meeting (4:22-23).



The Gershom families are to be responsible for serving and for carrying the curtains of the Tabernacle, its covering, the fine yellow-orange leather covering (Exodus 26:14) above it, the outer veil (see the commentary on **Exodus Fj – The Outer Veil of the Sanctuary**)**, the curtains for the courtyard, and the curtains for the gateway to the courtyard** (see **Exodus Ez – The Gate of the Tabernacle: Christ, The Way to God**)**, along with the ropes and all the utensils they need for their service; and they are to do the work connected with these things. Aaron and his sons are to supervise all the work of the Gershom clan in carrying loads and serving, and to assign them who is to carry what. This is how the Gershom clans are to serve in the Tabernacle.** However, they were not to do their work alone. Even as they worked, **Aaron** was still responsible to see that **their** work was done properly. Hence, **he** delegated some of that responsibility to **his** fourth **son Ithamar (4:24-28).**[70]

Three words are used in connection with **their** tasks. The first is *abode*, which, in this case, describes the physical work of dismantling **the curtains**, etc., loading them on **wagons**, and reassembling **them** in due course. In the story, one month earlier **the Gershomies** had been given **two wagons** and **four oxen** to carry **the curtains**, etc. (see **Bd – Carts and Oxen for the Levites**). The second word, here translated **carrying** (Hebrew: *massa*), is literally "*a burden*." The third word is *mismeret*, which means *guard duty*, and indicated that **the Gershomites** were

responsible for watching over **the curtains**, etc., as the coverings, exposing the framework of the Tabernacle traveled on the carts.[71]

The Spiritual Tabernacle: One of the best examples of this organization is found in the teaching of **First Corinthians** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Ch – Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts**), **Romans** (see the commentary on **Romans Dc – Responding to the Mercies of ADONAI: Spiritual gifts**), and **Ephesians** (see the commentary on **Ephesians Bf – The Gifts of Messiah to His Church**) concerning spiritual gifts. There are many parallels between spiritual gifts and the organization of **the Levites**. To begin with, both have been given because **ADONAI's** people are called to accomplish **God's** work on planet earth. In the case of **the Levites**, it was to administer over **the Tabernacle** and the sacrifices (see **Leviticus An – The Offerings from the Priests Perspective**). However, **the Body of Messiah** is also **a "Tabernacle" –** we are a place where the glory of **God** reveals itself on earth. It is also a place where sacrifices are offered daily. Unlike **the** ancient **Tabernacle**, however, **the Body of Messiah** does not offer animals in order to become close to **God** by atonement or fellowship. Instead, we are to **offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, set apart for God**, continually presenting our bodies to **Messiah** in order to worship and serve **Him**.

As far as the maintenance of this spiritual **"Tabernacle," the Body of Messiah**, is concerned, **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** gave very specific abilities to every believer in **Yeshua . . . their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of Messiah (Ephesians 4:12). He** did not give all of the gifts to one person. Instead, **He** so crafted **His** body that each and every person would have an extremely vital part to play – just like **He** divided the work of **the Tabernacle** among all of **the Levites**, each having a very specific part to do for the whole. As a result, we are told that **YHVH** gave certain supernatural spiritual abilities to **His Body** (see above) in order for **His Body** to function properly. The result is that each of us does exactly what **the LORD** assigned to us in the way **He** designed it to be done. Thus, **God's** work is carried on effectively – just like the ancient **Levites** worked to have a smooth and effective **Tabernacle** service for **Isra'el**.

In addition, just as Sh'khinah glory of **God** filled the Most Holy Place when **the Tabernacle** was functioning (see **Exodus Hh – The Glory of the LORD Filled the Tabernacle**), so also does a bit of that same glory fill us when we are functioning correctly for **the Lord**. We are meant to be a physical expression of **Messiah** here on earth so that instead of people physically looking **at Yeshua**

(Ephesians 1:22-23), they would instead look upon **His Body** – us. The idea is that they would see the same beauty, glory, and honor, and love, and justice, and truth they would have seen if our **Lord** was present among us today.[72]