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The Gershonites

First Chronicles 23: 7-11

David started making the arrangements for Temple services several years before the end of his life

Gershon was the firstborn of **Levi's** three sons (**Exodus 6:16; Numbers 3:17; First Chronicles 6:1, 16 and 23:6**). **The Levites** fulfilled the priestly roles in **Isra'el** and bore the responsibility of caring for **the Tabernacle**. **The Gershonites, Kohathites** and **Merarites** each had specific roles within **the Levitical** culture. **The Gershonites** were charged with the carrying of the curtains, coverings, screens, hangings, cords and instruments of **the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus**, to see link click **Au - The Clan of Gershon**) on the journeys in the wilderness, under the supervision of Ithamar the son of Aaron. **The Gershonites** were given two wagons with four oxen-half to help them transport **their** items (**Numbers 7:7**).

Among **the Gershonites** who achieved distinction in later biblical times was the family of Asaph, the singers from the time of **David** to the days of the Second Temple (**First Chronicles 6:31-47, 9:15, 25:1-7; Second Chronicles 25:15; Ezra 2:41; Nehemiah 11:17, 12:35**). Other **Gershonites** named, are the heads of the fathers' houses in the days of **David** in connection with the dividing of **the Levites** into divisions (**First Chronicles 23:7-11**); the superintendents of the treasuries of **the house of the LORD** of the same time (**First Chronicles 26:21-22, 29:8**); and finally, **Gershonites** are mentioned among those who cleansed **the Temple** in the days of Hezekiah (**Second Chronicles 29:12-13**).

As **Levites, the Gershonites, Kohathites**, and **Merarites** did not receive a specific territory in **the Promised Land**. Rather, **they** were given **cities** and pasturelands from among the territories of the other tribes by the command of **ADONAI**. **The Gershonites** received thirteen cities from **Issachar, Asher, Naphtali**, and **Manasseh**. The distribution of **the cities** was decided by the drawing of lots (**Joshua 21:1-8**), and six of **the Levitical cities** were designated as **cities of refuge**.

The list of **the Gershonites** began with **the sons of Gershon, Libni**, also known as **Ladan** (**First Chronicles 23:7 and 26:21**), and **Shim'i** (**Exodus 6:17; Numbers 3:18; First**

Chronicles 6:17 and 20). Therefore, there were two groups, **the descendants of Ladan** and **the descendants of Shim'i**, enumerated in the census taken in the wilderness of Sinai (**Numbers 3:21**) and in the plains of Mo'ab (**Numbers 26:57**).

The names that follow were not the immediate children of **Gershon**, but **men** in **David's** day who came from these two branches and became leaders of **the Gershonites**. **The descendants of Ladan** were **Jehiel, Zetham and Joel - three in all**. And the sons of **Shim'i** (not the same **Shim'i** as below) were **Shelomoth, Haziell and Haran - three in all**. **These were the leaders of the families of Ladan**. The line of **Ladan**, then, produced a total of six **leaders**. **Jehiel, Zetham and Joel** were traced directly to **Ladan**, and **Shelomoth, Haziell and Haran** were traced through a **descendant of Ladan, Shim'i**.

Shim'i, son of Gershon, produced four **descendants** who became Levitical **leaders**, **Jahath, Ziza, (Jeush and Beriah)**. But because **(Jeush and Beriah)** did not have many sons they were counted as one family with one ministry assignment. The line of **Shim'i**, then, produced a total of four **leaders**. **Thus, David secured ten Levitical divisions organized out of the clan of Gershon, six from Ladan and four from Shim'i**.