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The Kohathites

First Chronicles 23: 12-20

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



Kohath was the second of **Levi's** three sons and ancestor of **Moshe** and **Aaron** (**Genesis 46:11; Exodus 6:16-20; Numbers 3:17; First Chronicles 6:1**). Few personal details are recorded about **him**. Being invariably listed between **his brothers Gershon** and **Merari**, **he** lived for 133 years and had **four sons**. The information about **his descendants** is more detailed, since **the Kohathites** were among the most important **Levitical** clans. **The Gershonites, Kohathites** and **Merarites** each had specific roles within **the Levitical** culture. **The Kohathites** were charged with carrying the most holy furniture associated with **the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Numbers, to see link click At - The Clan of Kohath**). They carried the holy things, the ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, the lampstand, the altars, the table for the bread of the Presence, and all the other sacred utensils of **the Sanctuary** (**Numbers 4:4-14, 10:21; First Chronicles 9:32**). The **Sanctuary** objects that **the Kohathites** transported were to be carried on their shoulders with poles made for that purpose (**Numbers 7:9; Exodus 25:26-28**).

In **the Chronicler's** account of the period of the monarchy, **the Kohathites** are mentioned in connection with four kings: **David**, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah, always in relation to service in **the Tabernacle** or **Temple**. According to **Chronicles**, it was during **David's** reign, that the family of **Heman the Kohathite** was among **the Levites** assigned to direct

the singing in **the Tabernacle (First Chronicles 6:16-23; Psalm 88:1)**. Led by **Uriel, the leader, 120 Kohathites** participated in the installation of **the Ark** in Jerusalem (**First Chronicles 15:5**), and **the family** is again listed in **their courses (First Chronicles 23:1-6, 12)**. Another tradition in **Chronicles** reports that in the days of King Jehoshaphat, during the invasion of Judah by the Moabites and Ammonites, it was **the Kohathites** who led the congregation in praise of **God** at the service of intercession (**Second Chronicles 20:19**), and two of **their** men supervised the work of renovation of **the Temple** undertaken by King Josiah (**Second Chronicles 34:12**). In the era of the return to Yerushalayim, the time of **Ezra and Nehemiah**, when functions were being decided for ministry in **the Temple**, several of **the sons of Kohath** were put in charge of the changing of **the bread of the Presence (First Chronicles 9:32)**. The only negative episode in the Bible relating to **the Kohathites** was **the rebellion of Korah**, grandson of **Kohath**, against the leadership of **Moses and Aaron** (see the commentary on **Jude Aq - They Have Taken the Way of Cain, Rushed into Balaam's Error, and have been Destroyed by Korah's Rebellion**).

As **Levites, 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 Kohathites** received thirteen cities from the tribes of **Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon** and ten cities from **Ephraim, Manasseh, and Dan**. The distribution of **the cities** was decided by the drawing of lots (**Joshua 21:1-8**), and six of **the Levites' cities** were designated as **cities of refuge**.

The descendants of Kohath were **Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel - four in all**. So **the Kohathites** consisted of **four families, the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites**. Their place in the wilderness was on the southern side of **the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus Ep - The Camp of the Twelve Tribes of Isra'el**). One of **Kohath's descendants, Amram**, fathered **Aaron and Moshe (First Chronicles 23:12-13)**. The role of these verses is to make clear the differentiation, within the tribe of **Levi**, between the lines of **Aaron's** two sons. **Aaron, of course, was set apart, he and his descendants forever, to consecrate the most holy things, to offer sacrifices before the LORD, to minister before Him and to pronounce blessings in His name forever**. But **the descendants of Moses** were limited to lesser **Levitical** duties even though they were **counted as part of the tribe of Levi**. Through **Moshe's** two sons, **Gershom and Eliezer**, there arose **descendants** who were leaders such as **Shubael and Rehabiah**.

Although it is not explicitly stated, the whole **tribe of Levi** is considered as **holy**, while **the**

priests are considered **most holy**. This is a unique phrase. For although **the Most Holy Place** is descriptive of several holy instruments, **the ark of the Covenant** (see the commentary on [Exodus Fs - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)), and **the mercy seat** (see the commentary on [Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)), it is never applied to humans. In **Exodus**, **YHVH** instructed **Moshe** to prepare **a sacred anointing oil** with which to anoint **the Tabernacle** and all its vessels on the one hand, and **Aaron** and **his sons**, on the other (see the commentary on [Exodus Gf - Dedicate Aaron and His Sons So They May Serve Me as Priests](#)). Therefore, just as **the Tabernacle** and its sacred utensils became **most holy** through **the anointing of oil**, so also **Aaron** and **his descendants** are **most holy**.⁵¹⁹

A second **descendant of Kohath**, **Izhar**, was the source of the line that produced the leader **Shelomith**.

A third **descendant of Kohath**, **Hebron**, was **the father of four Levitical** leaders: **Jeriah**, **Amariah**, **Jahaziel**, and **Jekameam**.

Kohath's last **descendant**, **Uzziel**, fathered the line of **Micah** and **Isaiah**. **Thus, with the descendants of Kohath, ten more divisions are derived for a total of nineteen.**