

Handout: Numbers Lesson 2

Key Hebrew words:

- *Karev*: permissive context “to qualify” (Num 3:6; 18:2); in the prohibitive context “to encroach” as in the negative formula saying *ha-zar ha-karev yumat* “a stranger who encroaches will be put to death” (Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:7).
- *Samar*: to “hedge about” (as with thorns), “to guard”, “to protect.” The idiom *samar mismeret* in Num 1:53 and 3:7 can be literally translated as “guard duty”.
- *Abad*: a prime root meaning “to work, to serve”; *aboda* (from *abad*) means any kind of work or labor or the person who does the work.

The camping order and responsibilities of the Levites in dismantling the Sanctuary, in transporting the Sanctuary, and in reassembling the Sanctuary:

1. The Gershonites (west): All the tenting for the Sanctuary and Tabernacle, the entry curtains to the Sanctuary and Tabernacle, and the cords for lacing the tenting to the poles and fames.
2. The Kohathites (south): The Ark, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, the Menorah, the Incense Altar, the Sacrificial Altar, all the liturgical vessels and the curtain that covered the entrance to the Tabernacle.
3. The Meraites (north): The entire framework of the Sanctuary and Tabernacle including the crossbars, poles, sockets, poles, fittings, pegs and cords.
4. Aaron and his sons (east): Wrapping and setting in place the sacred items and furniture of the Tabernacle and the courtyard.

Census #1 of Levite Clans	Numbers of males one month or older
Gershonite clans	7,500
Kohathite clans	8,300
Merarite clans	6,200
Total number of males over one month	22,000
Census #2 of Levite Clans	Males between 30 and 50 years old
Kohathite clans	2,750
Gershonite clans	2,630
Merarite clans	3,200
Total number of males 30-50 years old	8,580

Summary of the Role of the Levites:

1. The Levites replaced the first-born sons of Israel as men whose lives are wholly dedicated to God’s service.
2. In place of the first-born sons of Israel, the Levites are given to Aaron and his sons (the chief priests) as lesser ministers and as representatives of Israel.
3. The Levites are responsible for guarding and protecting the Sanctuary, for dismantling the Sanctuary when Israel was ready to begin the march, for carrying the Sanctuary and its sacred items, and for reassembling the Sanctuary when the Israelites set up camp.
4. The chief priests, the descendants of Aaron and Levites of the clan of Kohath, have guard duty over their own unique priestly responsibilities.