



First Chronicles - Chapter Twenty Six

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

II.e 1 Chronicles 21:1-29:30 - David's Census and Preparation for the Temple (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Six

The primary duty of the Levitical gatekeepers was to safeguard the sanctuary from trespass by unauthorised persons and from defilement by idolatrous practices. They were also responsible for the temple treasuries and the maintenance of the building and its equipment. The gatekeepers played a vital role in aiding the high priest Jehoiada in opposing Queen Athaliah in 2 Chronicles 23:4-19, and in the reforms by Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 31:14) and Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:9).

II.e.x 1 Chronicles 26:1-19 - The Gatekeepers

The next Levitical service defined by the Chronicler is that of gatekeeper. As with the previous services, the gatekeepers are organised by divisions according to their ancestral heritage and are once again in three groups. However, only two represent lineages known from previous Levitical lists: Korahites (vv.1-3), descended from Kohath (1 Chronicles 6:22), and Merarites (vv.10-11). The third group comprise the sons of Obed-edom (vv.4-8), who appear to have no overt connection to the Levitical genealogy and may even be an intrusion into the list that originally included only the two houses mentioned in v.19.

¹ As for the divisions of the gatekeepers: of the Korahites, Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. ² Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, ³ Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh.

⁴ Obed-edom had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sachar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, ⁵ Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the eighth; for God blessed him.

1 Chronicles 26:1-5

The divisions of the gatekeepers. These had the responsibility for security, both in a practical and spiritual sense. They made sure that only those who were ready to serve and worship God could come into the temple and its associated building. Their work had to be organised and arranged just as much as the work of the priests who officiated at the sacrifices.

Essentially their duty was to make ordinary people aware of the practical limits of holiness, for anyone entering the sanctuary unlawfully did so on penalty of death. Although some might see their work as humble, it was actually of great privilege. Remember the envy of the Psalmist: <<*For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness*>> (Psalm 84:10).

Of the Korahites. The role of gatekeeper would not be unexpected for any Korahite because, unlike the Gershonites and the Merarites, who were allowed to transport the items under their care on carts, the Kohathites had to carry their items, the holy things of the tabernacle, on their shoulders. They had the arduous burden of transporting these items from place to place as the camp moved, but they were not allowed to actually touch the items or they would die. They would be used to the physical demands that would be placed on a role like this.

Of the sons of Asaph. This is not Asaph the well known worship leader by is a shortened form of Ebiasaph; refer to 1 Chronicles 9:19.

Obed-edom had sons. Obed-edom was the father of a large family and is the one who was blessed by God as the keeper of the ark in 1 Chronicles 13:14.

Because he is elsewhere referred to as a Gittite, a title that suggests he originated from the Philistine city of Gath, has led many commentators to conclude that he was not a Levite and may even not been an Israelite. Although there are many who maintain that he and his descendants would not have been allowed to serve functionaries in the temple, there are those who believe he could have. If so, this means his inclusion within this company as one who was not an Israelite by birth suggests a certain fluidity in the early monarchy over who might count as a Levite. The postexilic period took a much stricter line over Levitical genealogy; refer to Ezra 2:61-63.

⁶ Also to his son Shemaiah sons were born who exercised authority in their ancestral houses, for they were men of great ability. ⁷ The sons

of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers were able men, Elihu and Semachiah. ⁸ All these, sons of Obed-edom with their sons and brothers, were able men qualified for the service; sixty-two of Obed-edom.

1 Chronicles 26:6-8

Who exercised authority in their ancestral houses, for they were men of great ability. Shemaiah was of the family of gatekeepers, yet his sons rose to positions of high responsibility because they were men of great ability. They are also described as able men with strength for the work.

⁹ Meshelemiah had sons and brothers, able men, eighteen. ¹⁰ Hosah, of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief (for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him chief), ¹¹ Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brothers of Hosah totalled thirteen.

1 Chronicles 26:9-11

Meshelemiah had sons and brothers, able men, eighteen. Meshelemiah means whom Jehovah repays. He is the Shelemiah of v.14, the Shallum of 1 Chronicles 9:17-31, and the Meshullam of Nehemiah 12:25.

¹² These divisions of the gatekeepers, corresponding to their leaders, had duties, just as their kindred did, ministering in the house of the Lord; ¹³ and they cast lots by ancestral houses, small and great alike, for their gates. ¹⁴ The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a prudent counsellor, and his lot came out for the north. ¹⁵ Obed-edom's came out for the south, and to his sons was allotted the storehouse. ¹⁶ For Shuppim and Hosah it came out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth on the ascending road. Guard corresponded to guard. ¹⁷ On the east there were six Levites each day, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, as well as two and two at the storehouse; ¹⁸ and for the colonnade on the west there were four at the road and two at the colonnade. ¹⁹ These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the sons of Merari.

1 Chronicles 26:12-19

These divisions of the gatekeepers, corresponding to their leaders, had duties, just as their kindred did, ministering in the house of the Lord. Some would make a distinction between the spiritual and the practical work of the temple and regard the spiritual work as more important. The Chronicler is careful to remind his readers and others that the work of these gatekeepers, whose service was more practical in nature, was esteemed by God as just as valuable and necessary.

A very important point is made by the inclusion of these groups, even though they might seem to represent a diversion from the Chronicler's main theme. As God's people pay proper attention to their status as a worshipping community, the distinction between the sacred and the secular disappears. All tasks, whether mundane or specialised, ministry or support, have value in the eyes of the Lord.

They cast lots by ancestral houses, small and great alike, for their gates. They determined the order and arrangement of the service for the gatekeepers the same way that they had determined the order and arrangement for the priests in their service. Small and great alike means that David let the Lord decide when it came to organising and ordering these offices, and he did not let prestige, reputation or position determine their appointments.

The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. The east gate was the position of greatest responsibility, requiring six gatekeepers, because it would lead directly to the temple entrance. It was known as 'the king's gate' in postexilic times: <<*The gatekeepers were: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman; and their kinsman Shallum was the chief, stationed previously in the king's gate on the east side*>> (1 Chronicles 9:17-18a).

II.e.xi 1 Chronicles 26:20-32 - The Treasurers, Officers, and Judges

Certain Kohathite families, the Ladanites and Amramites, had duties as treasurers. The two treasuries were located near the gates: one for the house of God, presumably to store the regular tithes and offerings; and another for the dedicated gifts, i.e. the spoils of war and other special gifts.

Two other groups of Levites, the Izharites and the Hebronites, were assigned to serve outside Jerusalem as officers and judges among the Israelite tribes both west and east of the River Jordan.

²⁰ And of the Levites, Ahijah had charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts. ²¹ The sons of Ladan, the sons of the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, the heads of families belonging to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli.

1 Chronicles 26:20-21

And of the Levites, Ahijah had charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts. David set in order the financial organisation necessary for the administration of the building of the temple, including oversight of the all the treasures brought in by David's conquest of neighbouring peoples.

²² The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the Lord. ²³ Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: ²⁴ Shebuel son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries. ²⁵ His brothers: from Eliezer were his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiiah, his son Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth.

1 Chronicles 26:22-25

Shebuel son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries. Although Moses had served as one of the greatest leaders and prophets in Israel, his descendants played no special role unlike the descendants of his brother Aaron, who were the priests. However, this particular descendant was given a position of great trust and responsibility that was, no doubt, passed on to his descendants in turn.

²⁶ This Shelomoth and his brothers were in charge of all the treasuries of the dedicated gifts that King David, and the heads of families, and the officers of the thousands and the hundreds, and the commanders of the army, had dedicated. ²⁷ From booty won in battles they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of the house of the Lord. ²⁸ Also all that Samuel the seer, and Saul son of Kish, and Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedicated – all dedicated gifts were in the care of Shelomoth and his brothers.

1 Chronicles 26:26-28

From booty won in battles they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of the house of the Lord. It was normal for the victors in battle to take the spoils from their enemies especially from any cities that were captured as a result of battle. Normally this would have been shared out amongst the victors but a significant portion had been taken by David and other leaders, including Samuel the seer, and Saul son of Kish, and Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah specifically to dedicate to the Lord and now it would be used in the building of this magnificent temple.

²⁹ Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were appointed to outside duties for Israel, as officers and judges. ³⁰ Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brothers, one thousand seven hundred men of ability, had the oversight of Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the Lord and for the service of the king. ³¹ Of the Hebronites, Jerijah was chief of the Hebronites. (In the fortieth year of David's reign search was made, of whatever genealogy or family, and men of great ability among them were found at Jazer in Gilead.) ³² King David appointed him and his brothers, two thousand seven hundred men of ability, heads of families, to have the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites for everything pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.

1 Chronicles 26:29-32

Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were appointed to outside duties for Israel, as officers and judges. According to RaDak this relates to appropriate work that needed to be done outside of the Temple precincts.

The Hebronites were appointed for all the work of the Lord and for the service of the king. Most likely this signifies responsibilities for religious and civil taxation, administration and delivering justice. These arrangements were made in the last year of David's rule, circa 970 BC.

To have the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites for everything pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king. Two thousand seven hundred men were picked to serve the tribes east of the Jordan, showing the importance placed on that region and ensuring that they too followed the statutes of the Lord and remained loyal to their king even though they were separated from the Promised Land by the River Jordan.