

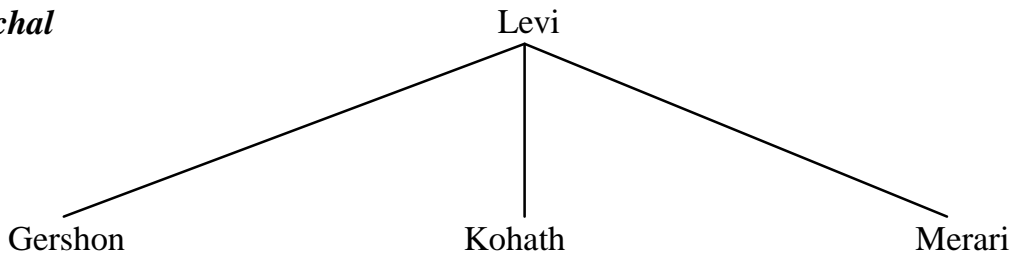
Introduction to Chronicles

by Richard Pratt

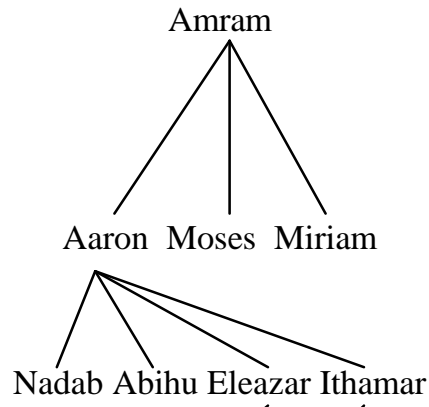
APPENDIX A - THE FAMILIES OF LEVI

The genealogies and lists covering the tribe of Levi answered specific questions that had been raised in the Chronicler's day. The duties among the various families of Levi had shifted throughout the history of Israel, leaving much confusion in the minds of post-exilic Israelites. A brief sketch of these developments will make the Chronicler's purpose more evident. The following discussion is not comprehensive, but it points to the major contours of the tribe's history in six periods: Patriarchal, Mosaic, Davidic, Solomonic, Exilic, and Post-Exilic (see figure 3).

Patriarchal



Mosaic



Davidic

Zadok Abiathar

Solomonic

Zadok

Exilic

Post-Exilic

Joshua

Families of Levi (figure3)

Patriarchal Period

Levi was one of the twelve patriarchs and had three sons: Gershon, Kohath and Merari (1 Chr 6:1; see Gen 46:11). The Chronicler's genealogies deal with the Gershonites (6:17,20,62,71), Kohathites (1 Chr 6:2,22,60-61,66), and Merarites (1 Chr 6:19,29,63,77).

Mosaic Period

Kohath and his son Amram stood at the head of Levi's most prominent descendants. Moses, Aaron and Miriam descended from Amram (1 Chr 6:3) and Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests in distinction from all other Levites (see Exod 28,29). The sons of Aaron had a variety of special duties in worship not shared by other Levites.

Not all the descendants of Aaron held this honored priestly role throughout history. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (6:3; see Exod 6:23; Num 3:2). The first two sons died without offspring in the wilderness because of sacrilege (see 24:2; Lev 10:1-2). The sons of Eleazar and Ithamar alone continued the priestly line. All the descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar were to serve as priests, but Phinehas, a son of Eleazar, and his descendants were chosen as high priests because of Phinehas' zeal for God's honor (see Num 25:10-13).

Davidic Period

David established two high priests to represent these two priestly families of Eleazar and Ithamar in his new capital of Jerusalem: Abiathar, a descendant of Ithamar (15:11; 24:6), and Zadok, a descendant of Eleazar (6:4,12). These priests shared the high priestly office in David's day (18:16; see 2 Sam 20:25).

Solomonic Period

During the struggle for the throne after David's death, Abiathar sided with Adonijah against Solomon (see 1 Kgs 1:7). Therefore Solomon removed him from the priesthood, fulfilling the prophecy spoken by the Lord at Shiloh concerning the house of Eli (see 1 Sam 2:27-36; 1 Kgs 2:26-27,35). By contrast, Zadok supported Solomon and his descendants and held exclusive right to the high priestly service until the exile (29:22; see 1 Kgs 2:35; 4:1-4).

Exilic Period

At the time of Judah's exile, many Zadokite priestly leaders were taken away to Babylon. As a result, other descendants of Levi who remained in the land served in their place among the ruins of the temple. The Zadokite priest Ezekiel prophesied that when the exiles returned, the Zadokite family would be restored to its previous status of leadership in the new temple. Other families of Levi were to hold subordinate positions, even as they had before the exile (see Ezek 40:46; 43:19; 44:10-15).

Post-exilic Period

Naturally, Ezekiel's position caused trouble after the exile. Joshua (spelled "Jeshua" in 1 Chr 24:11; 2 Chr 31:15), the Zadokite high priest, returned with David's descendant Zerubbabel to take charge of worship in Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah supported Zadokite leadership. In his view, Joshua was Zerubbabel's indisputable partner (see Zech 3-4). From the amount of attention given to these matters by Ezekiel and Zechariah it appears that not all the descendants of Levi were happy that the Zadokites were returning to their previous roles.

This background explains why the Chronicler took so much care to outline the duties given to each family of Levi. His genealogies and lists reach back to the Mosaic and Davidic periods to provide clear directions in the confusion of the post-exilic period. What families were supposed to be priests? What were the other Levitical families to do? The Chronicler addressed these kinds of issues in no uncertain terms. He supported the prominence of the Zadokite line, but also established duties of honor for the other families of Levi.

APPENDIX B - THE STRUCTURES, FURNISHINGS AND DECORATIONS OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The complexities of the Chronicler's records of Solomon's temple make it helpful to provide a brief overview of the matter.

Structures

First, of all the structures comprising the Temple complex, the Chronicler's primary concern was with the **temple of the Lord** (see 2 Chr 3:1,3; 4:11,16,19; 5:1), the main building which was about 90 feet (27 meters) long and 30 feet (9 meters) wide. This central structure was divided into three parts. 1) The stairs leading to the front of the building rose to a large **portico** (see 2 Chr 3:4,15-17; 8:12; 1 Kgs 6:3; 7:6), a covered area (about 30 feet [9 meters] wide and high) adorned with two large pillars on either side. 2) Through the doors at the rear of the portico was the **main hall** (see 2 Chr 3:5-7; 4:7-8,22; 1 Kgs 6:5,17) which was about 60 feet [18 meters] long and 30 feet [9 meters] wide (see 1 Kgs 6:17). This room corresponds to "the Holy Place" of Moses' tabernacle (see Exod 26:31-37). 3) Beyond the doors and curtain at the rear of the main hall was **the Most Holy Place** (see 2 Chr 3:8,10-12; 4:22; 1 Kgs 6:16,23-28,30-32), the innermost room which housed the ark of the covenant. This cubical room (about 30 feet [9 meters] in all dimensions) corresponds to the inner room by the same name in Moses' tabernacle (see Exod 26:31-35).

Beyond these structures, the Chronicler also briefly mentioned **the courtyard of the priests** and **the large court** (2 Chr 4:9). These areas were walled in courts surrounding the temple which were for priests and lay people respectively.

Furnishings

Second, in addition to the structures themselves, the Chronicler also remarked on many furnishings. A number of items in the courtyard of the priests appear. 1) The **bronze altar** (see 1 Kgs 8:22,31,54,64; 9:25; 2 Kgs 11:11; 12:9; 16:14-15; 23:9; 2 Chr 4:1; 5:12; 6:12; 6:22; 7:7,9; 8:12; 15:8; 23:10; 29:18-27; 33:16; 35:16) stood directly in front of the stairs leading to the portico. It was used for burnt offerings and meal offerings (see Ex 40:29). 2) The **Sea of cast metal** was an enormous basin placed just to the left of the stairs of the portico (2 Chr 4:2). Its primary function was for priestly washings before ceremonies (2 Chr 4:6b). 3) **Ten basins** (2 Chr 4:6,14) flanked the temple, five on the southern side and five more on northern side. They were used for washing the instruments **used for burnt offerings** (2 Chr 4:6). 4) The Chronicler briefly mentioned **pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls** (2 Chr 4:11) which were presumably used by the priests in their courtyard.

Three furnishings were located in the main hall. 1) **Ten gold lampstands** (2 Chr 4:20) stood alongside 2) **ten tables** (2 Chr 4:8,19) placed on the northern and southern sides of the main hall. Only one lamp and table stood in Moses' tabernacle

(see Exod 25:23,31). 3) Along with these furnishings were **100 gold sprinkling bowls** (4:8) which were used for a variety of functions in the main hall.

Decorations

Third, the Chronicler recorded a number of decorations in the temple. To mention a few, the portico was **overlaid ... with pure gold** (2 Chr 3:4b). The pillars on either side of the portico were elaborately decorated with **pomegranates attached to chains ... on top of the pillars** (2 Chr 3:16; see also 4:12-13). The main hall was **paneled ... with pine and covered with fine gold** (2 Chr 3:5). Various artistic designs are also mentioned (2 Chr 3:5), along with **precious stones** (2 Chr 3:6). The Most Holy Place contained **gold nails** (or "hooks"), each of which was **overlaid in its upward parts with gold** (2 Chr 3:9). Two enormous golden **sculptured cherubim** stood behind the ark of the covenant **facing the main hall** (2 Chr 3:10-13). The curtain separating the main hall and the Most Holy place was **blue, purple, and crimson** with **cherubim** embroidered within it (2 Chr 3:14). In the courtyard of the priests, the Sea stood on **twelve bulls** (2 Chr 4:15) cast in bronze and facing in all directions; its rim was shaped **like a lily blossom** (2 Chr 4:4-5).