

**THE MOST  
OBSCURE VERSE  
IN SCRIPTURE**

1 Chronicles 26:18



**“AT PARBAR WESTWARD,  
FOUR AT THE CAUSEWAY  
AND TWO AT PARBAR”**

Parbar פִּרְבָּר

“At Parbar westward, four at the  
causeway and two at Parbar”

Parbar פַּרְבָּר

The meaning is uncertain. The word is found in only one other place in the Bible (2 Kings 23:11), where it is translated “courts.” Some have speculated that it means a colonnade, an open courtyard, either covered or uncovered.



Fortunately, no great doctrine is at stake, because we know from the context that it is speaking of the gatekeepers, temple watchmen, guards, perhaps even a paramilitary force.

1Chronicles 26:17-19

<sup>17</sup> On the east *were* six Levites, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, and for the storehouse two by two.

<sup>18</sup> As for the Parbar on the west, *there were* four on the highway *and* two at the Parbar.

<sup>19</sup> These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the sons of Korah and among the sons of Merari.

While the precise meaning of the term "Parbar," is obscure, the texts emphasize the faithfulness and dedication required for doorkeeper service. This is seen in the Psalms where every assigned role, no matter how small, contributes to the glory of God.

**Psalm 84:10** For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good *thing* will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!

In order to grasp the full significance of this passages we need to have some background about the Levites. Their responsibilities in the history of Israel are tremendous, and yet their functions are not will understood in our day, even though there is an abundance of information about them in the Old Testament.

# The Architecture of Holiness

The Logistics, Lineage, and Legacy of the Tribe of Levi.

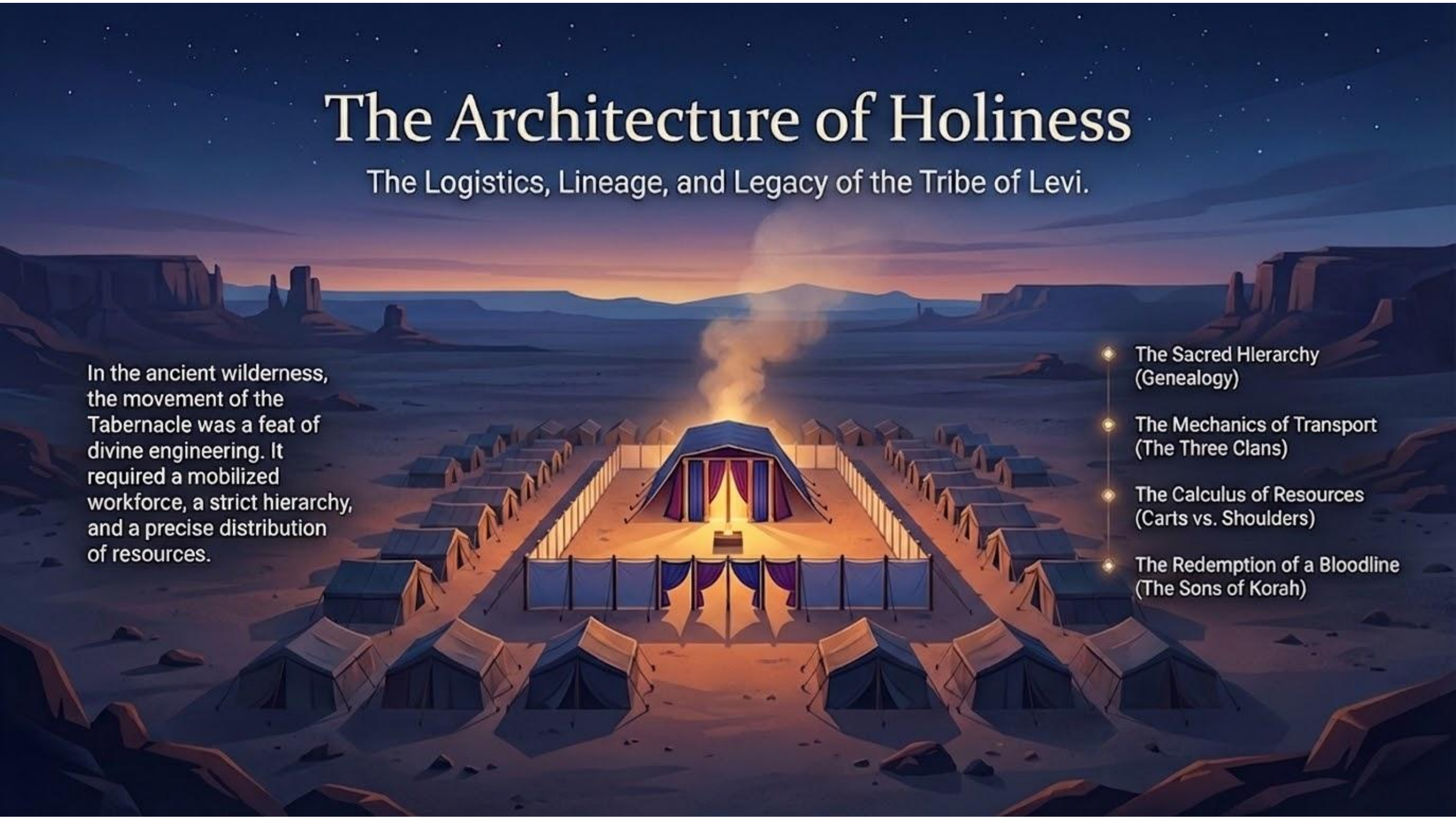
In the ancient wilderness, the movement of the Tabernacle was a feat of divine engineering. It required a mobilized workforce, a strict hierarchy, and a precise distribution of resources.

The Sacred Hierarchy  
(Genealogy)

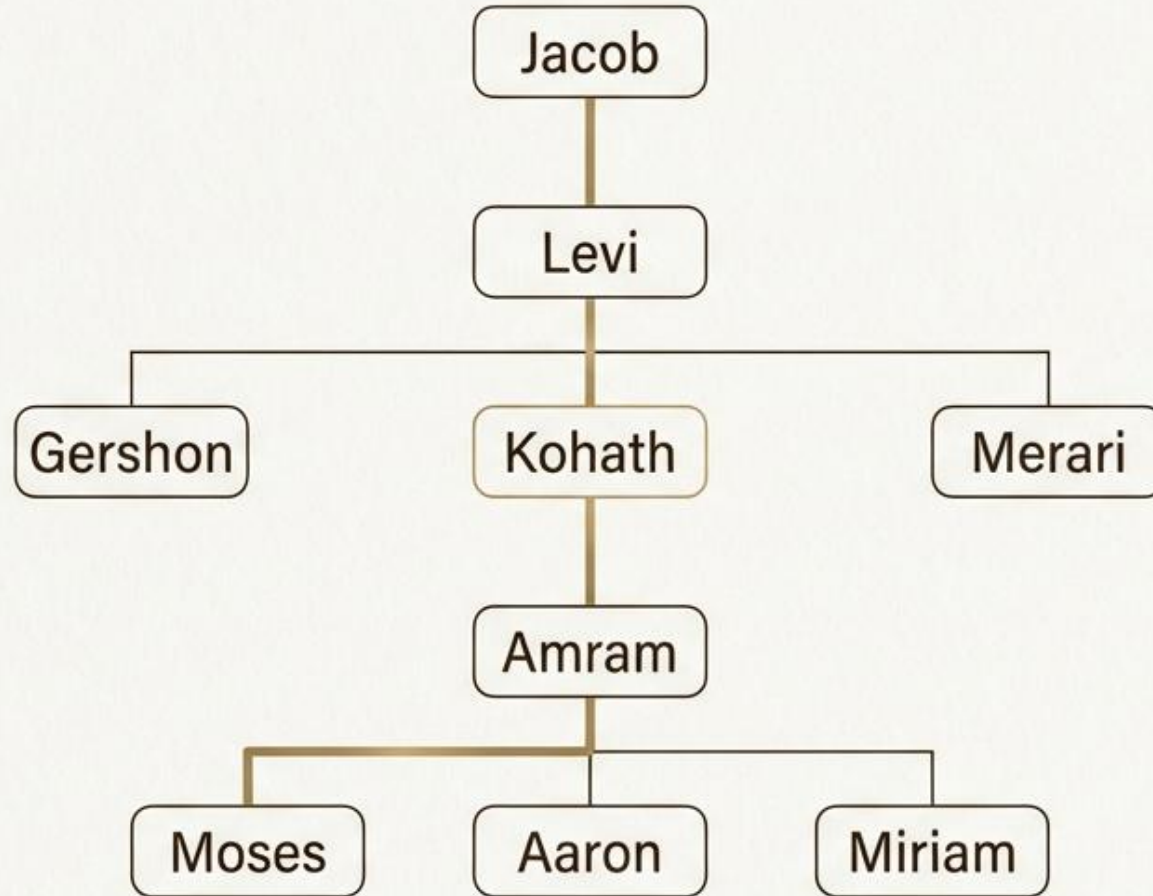
The Mechanics of Transport  
(The Three Clans)

The Calculus of Resources  
(Carts vs. Shoulders)

The Redemption of a Bloodline  
(The Sons of Korah)



# The Levitical Lineage



Jacob had 12 sons; Levi was the progenitor of the priestly tribe. While the tribe is a single entity, it is functionally divided into three distinct clans: the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites (Numbers 26:57).

# The Distinct Priesthood



**“Although all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests.”**

Only the descendants of Aaron (from the Kohathite line) were authorized to serve as priests and perform sacrifices (Exodus 28:1–3). The remaining Levites supported the priests, serving as the infrastructure that allowed the priesthood to operate.

# Three Clans, One Sanctuary



## **Kohath**

The Holy  
Furnishings



## **Gershon**

The Textiles  
& Curtains

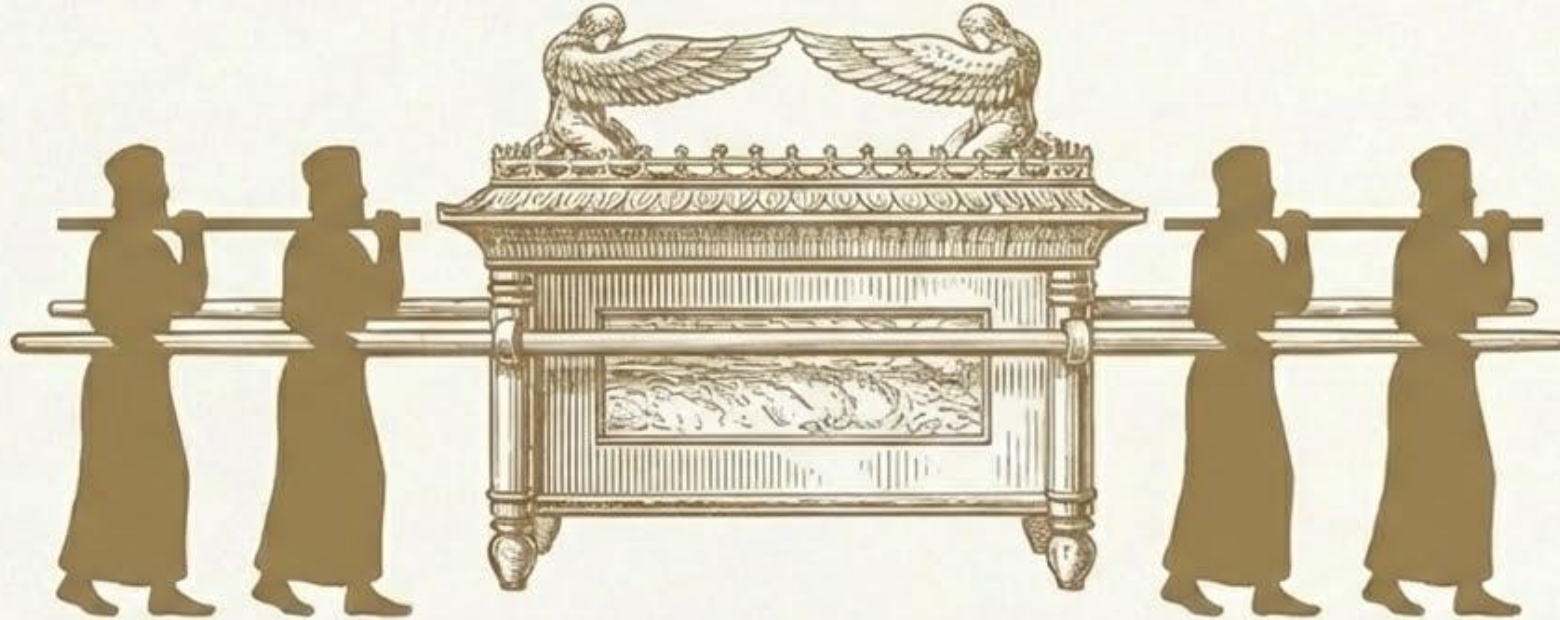


## **Merari**

The Framework  
& Structure

Each family group held distinct duties to ensure the 'Tent of Meeting' could be transported.  
Each clan was a specialized organ in the body of the Tabernacle.

# The Kohathites: Bearers of the Holy



## Responsibility:

The most holy objects associated with the sanctuary (Numbers 4:4–14).

## Inventory List:

- The Ark of the Covenant
- The Table of Showbread
- The Altars
- The Lampstand

## \*\*Method: Shoulders Only\*\*

Because these items were holy, they were not carried on carts. The Kohathites bore them on their shoulders using staves placed through rings. Sanctity required personal contact, not mechanical assistance.

# The Gershonites: Stewards of the Textile



## **Responsibility:**

Management of the decorations and fabric components (Numbers 4:24–26).

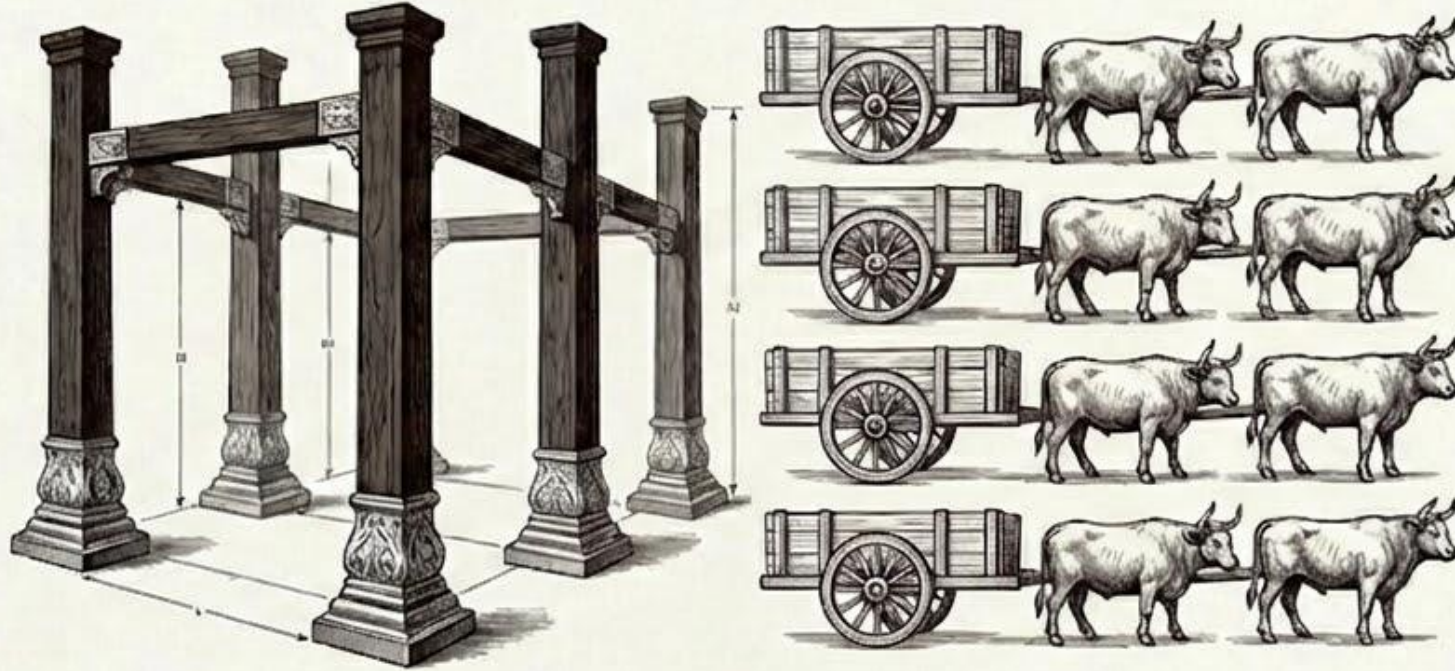
## **Inventory List:**

- Tent coverings
- Curtains and hangings
- Ropes

## **\*\*Method: 2 Carts + 4 Oxen\*\***

Because their tasks involved heavy, pliable materials, God provided mechanical resources (Numbers 7:6–7). The allotment of two carts allowed for the efficient transport of the large cloth sections.

# The Merarites: Masters of the Frame



## Responsibility:

The structural integrity of the tent.

## Inventory List:

- Pillars and bases
- Frames and posts
- Pegs and cords  
(Numbers 4:31–32).

## \*\*Method: 4 Carts + 8 Oxen\*\*

This assignment required significant strength. Consequently, they received the largest allotment among the Levites (Numbers 7:8). The distribution of resources was directly proportional to the physical weight of the burden.

# Oxen of Burden vs. Shoulders of Honor

Function



Reverence



The sanctuary objects that the Kohathites transported were to be carried on their shoulders... The **Gershonites** and **Merarites**, however, were given ox carts.  
(Numbers 7:9 vs 7:6-8).

In the economy of the Tribe of Levi, the **highest honor was not the lightest load, but the most direct contact with the holy.**

# The Service Lifecycle



- **Active Duty:** Ages 25 to 50 (Numbers 8:24–26).
- **Post-Service:** After 50, released from regular duties but could assist voluntarily in lighter tasks.
- **Exemption:** Levites were exempt from military duty (1 Chronicles 9:33), allowing total focus on spiritual responsibilities.

# The Rebellion of Korah



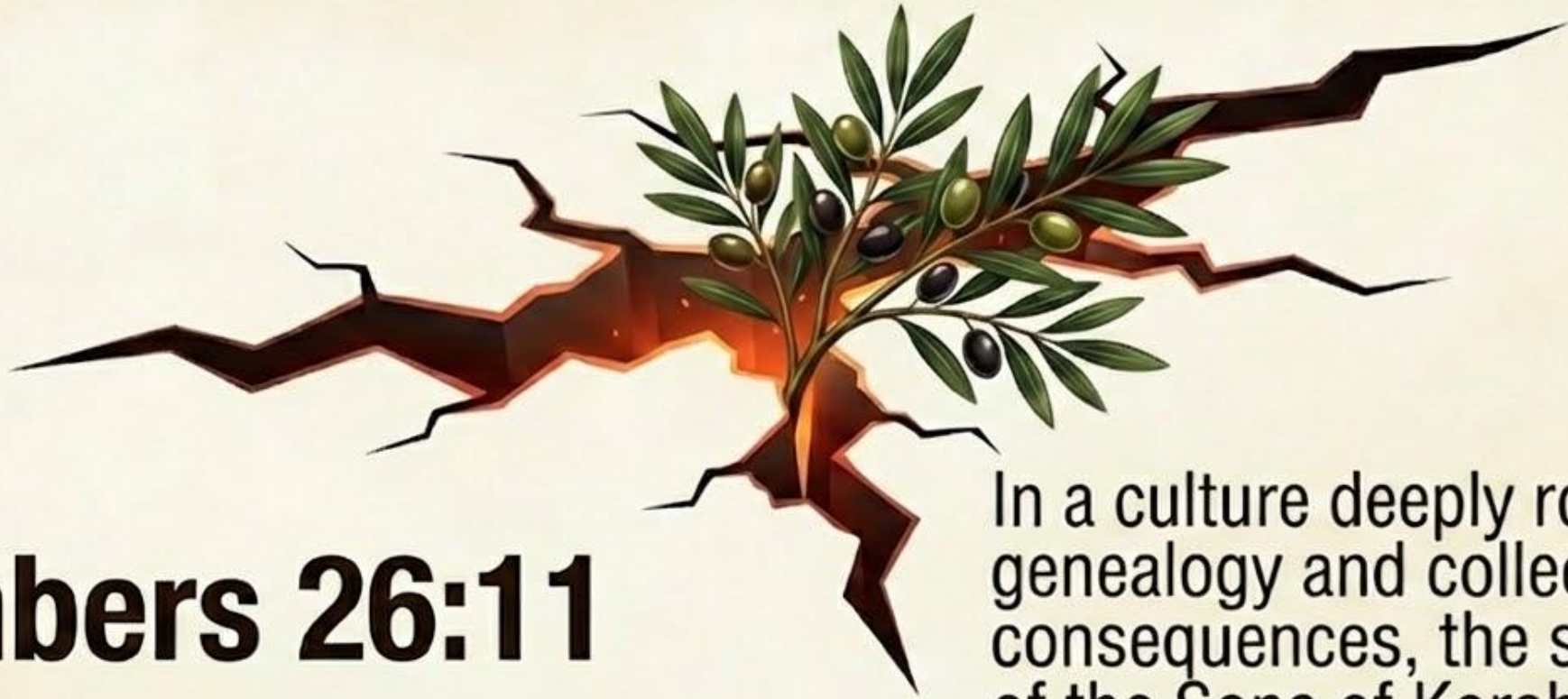
Within the Kohathite clan—the bearers of the holy—arose a crisis.

Korah, a Levite leader, challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron. He questioned why specific leaders held power if “all Israelites were holy” (Numbers 16).

The rebellion was met with catastrophe. The earth opened to swallow Korah and his followers.

By all ancient customs, the lineage of Korah should have been extinguished or permanently disgraced.

# The Children of Korah Died Not



## Numbers 26:11

Despite the destruction of their father, the line did not end. The sons of Korah were spared.

In a culture deeply rooted in genealogy and collective consequences, the survival of the Sons of Korah stands as a testament to individual choice and divine mercy. They were not condemned by their father's sin.

# From Rebels to Gatekeepers

## Role Evolution

The Sons of Korah embraced their place within the Kohathite division.

**Duties:** They served as gatekeepers, guarding the entrance to the very presence of God their ancestor had tried to usurp.

**Worship:** They became central figures in the liturgy of Israel, leading the community in song.



“The legacy of the Sons of Korah is one of redemption... they chose to follow a path different from their ancestor.”

# Lyre The Songs of the Redeemed Lyre

## The Psalms of the Sons of Korah

Psalms  
42,  
44-49,  
84,  
85,  
87,  
and 88



*“My soul thirsts  
for God, for the  
living God.”  
(Psalm 42)*

The descendants of the man who tried to seize power became the men who wrote the soundtrack of humility and longing.

# Structure and Spirit



**Order:** Holiness requires preparation, hierarchy, and the right tools for the burden (carts for the heavy, shoulders for the holy).

**Grace:** Lineage does not dictate destiny. The Sons of Korah prove that one can emerge from a history of rebellion to leave a legacy of praise.

## **The gatekeepers were Levites stationed at the gates the temple.**

- It was their task to open the temple gates in the morning and to close them again at night.
- They received the tithes and gifts that the Israelites brought.
- They stood watch over the storerooms and treasuries to make sure that nothing was stolen.
- They stood on guard to make sure that no unclean person unclean thing would enter God's house.
- They stood guard day and night.

Not a glamorous job, but as the poet John Milton reminds us, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

## **Sons of Korah**

There was especially one family that David appointed to become gatekeepers as well as musicians, namely the sons of Korah.

The title of Psalm 84. tells us that it was a “Psalm of the sons of Korah.” It was they who sang, “I’d rather be a **doorkeeper** in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness .”

The Hebrew there does not have a noun, “doorkeeper,” but a verb. It says, “I’d rather **stand guard** at the threshold in the house of my God than dwell in in the tents of wickedness.”

Psalm 84 is sung by sons of Korah stationed at the doors of the temple, and there’s no place they’d rather be.

Here is the irony: Korah wanted to open up the tabernacle service so that anyone could enter and offer incense, but God appoints Korah's sons to be gatekeepers, to guard the entrance to make sure that not just anyone could enter.

They have to make it their life's work to prevent the sin of their father from happening again. Korah says, anyone can enter, but the sons of Korah learn to sing, "I'd rather be a doorkeeper than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

When David was planning to build the temple, the Levites had become a large tribe. Being a great administrator, David divided the priesthood into 24 divisions, each serving two weeks per year, and all of them serving during the great feast weeks.

He and Samuel together also divided the gatekeepers into divisions. There were twenty-four gatekeepers on duty at any one time (1Chron 26:17-18): six at the east, four at the north, four at the south, two at the storehouse, four at the west, two at the gate above the ascent, and two at the parbar. They would report for duty from their various villages and serve a seven-day rotation.

## 1 Chronicles 9:22-25

<sup>22</sup> All those chosen as gatekeepers *were* two hundred and twelve. They were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed them to their trusted office.

<sup>23</sup> So they and their children *were* in charge of the gates of the house of the LORD, the house of the tabernacle, by assignment.

<sup>24</sup> The gatekeepers were assigned to the four directions: the east, west, north, and south.

<sup>25</sup> And their brethren in their villages *had* to come with them from time to time for seven days.

<sup>26</sup> For in this trusted office *were* four chief gatekeepers; they were Levites. And they had charge over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God.

<sup>27</sup> And they lodged *all* around the house of God because they *had* the responsibility, and they *were* in charge of opening *it* every morning.

<sup>28</sup> ¶ Now *some* of them were in charge of the serving vessels, for they brought them in and took them out by count.

<sup>29</sup> *Some* of them *were* appointed over the furnishings and over all the implements of the sanctuary, and over the fine flour and the wine and the oil and the incense and the spices.

<sup>30</sup> And *some* of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices.

<sup>31</sup> Mattithiah of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the trusted office over the things that were baked in the pans.

<sup>32</sup> And some of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites *were* in charge of preparing the showbread for every Sabbath.

<sup>33</sup> ¶ These are the singers, heads of the fathers' *houses* of the Levites, *who lodged* in the chambers, *and were free from other duties*; for they were employed in *that* work day and night.

1Chron 26:26 This Shelomoth and his relatives had charge of all the treasures of the dedicated gifts, which King David and the heads of the fathers' households, the commanders of thousands and hundreds, and commanders of the army, had dedicated. 27 They dedicated part of the spoil won in battles to repair the house of the LORD

When Solomon finished building the temple, he assigned the gatekeepers to their posts (2 Chron 8:14). <sup>14</sup> And, according to the order of David his father, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, the Levites for their duties (to praise and serve before the priests) as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers by their divisions at each gate; for so David the man of God had commanded.

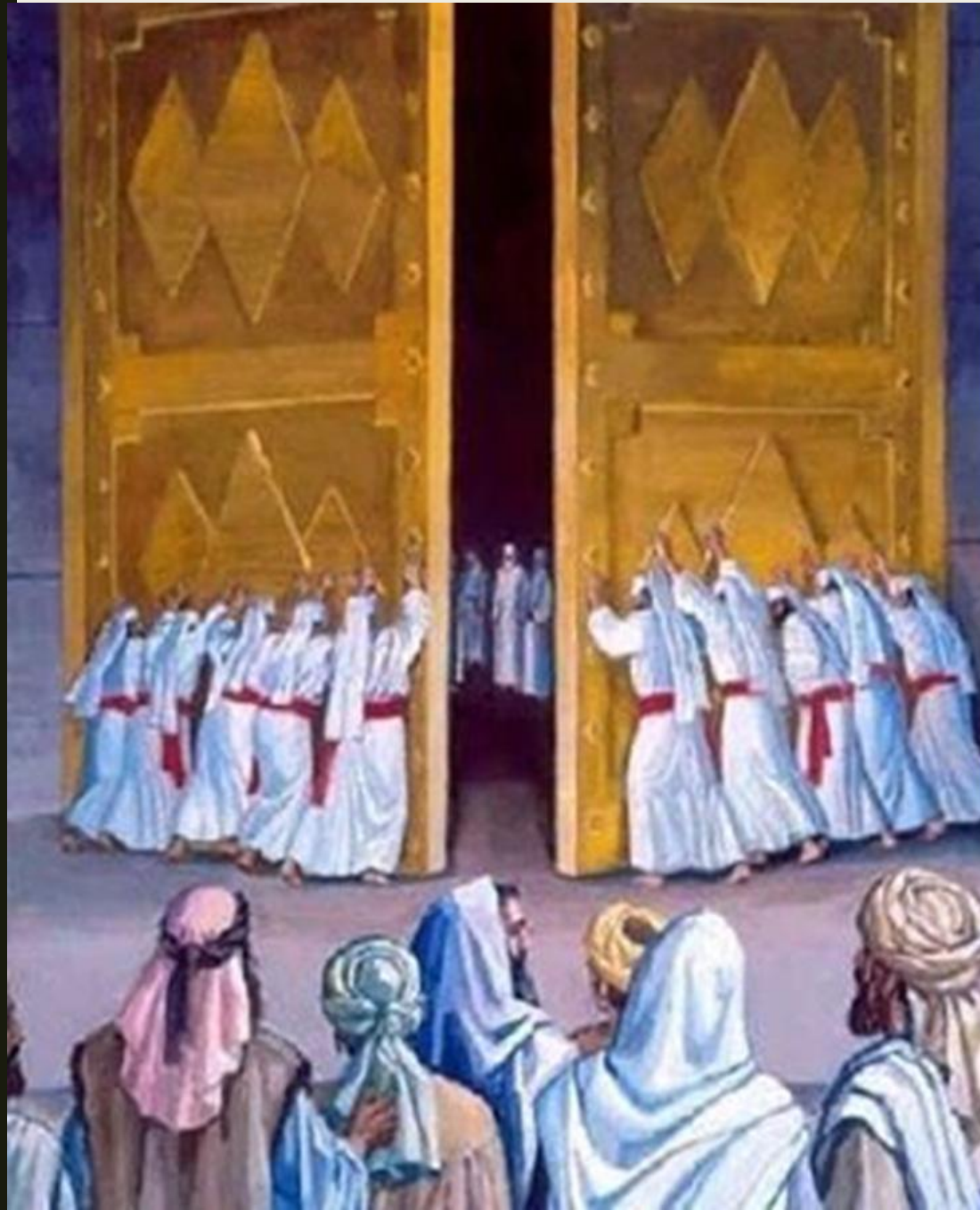
They were stationed on all four sides, east, west, north, and south. Lots were cast to decide who went where, so this too was the Lord's decision (1 Chron 26:13; Prov 16:33).



**Psalm 84:10** For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good *thing* will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!



The gatekeepers occupied an office of great trust. They were given the key to the entrance to the holy areas of the temple. They proved to be reliable in opening the gates each day. - 1 Chronicles 9:26,27.

It doesn't matter who your parents were, whether they were good or bad.

What matters is your relationship with the Lord and your attitude toward Him.

Will you be faithful?

Are you willing to do whatever your assigned task is?

Do you desire to be pleasing to Him?

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# 1 CHRONICLES 26

NKJ 1Ch 26:1 ¶ Concerning the divisions of the gatekeepers:  
of the Korahites, Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of  
Asaph.

2 And the sons of Meshelemiah were Zechariah the firstborn,  
Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,

3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh.

4 Moreover the sons of Obed-Edom were Shemaiah the  
firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sacar the  
fourth, Nethanel the fifth,

5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth;  
for God blessed him.

Also to Shemaiah his son were sons born who governed their fathers' houses, because they were men of great ability.

7 The sons of Shemaiah were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers Elihu and Semachiah were able men.

8 All these were of the sons of Obed-Edom, they and their sons and their brethren, able men with strength for the work: sixty-two of Obed-Edom.

9 And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, eighteen able men.

10 Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons: Shimri the first (for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him the first),

11 Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth; all the sons and brethren of Hosah were thirteen.

12 ¶ Among these were the divisions of the gatekeepers, among the chief men, having duties just like their brethren, to serve in the house of the LORD. 13 And they cast lots for each gate, the small as well as the great, according to their father's house.

14 The lot for the East Gate fell to Shelemiah. Then they cast lots for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and his lot came out for the North Gate;

15 to Obed-Edom the South Gate, and to his sons the storehouse.

16 To Shuppim and Hosah the lot came out for the West Gate, with the Shallecheth Gate on the ascending highway-- watchman opposite watchman.

17 On the east were six Levites, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, and for the storehouse two by two.

18 As for the Parbar on the west, there were four on the highway and two at the Parbar.

19 These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the sons of Korah and among the sons of Merari.

20 ¶ Of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasuries of the house of God and over the treasuries of the dedicated things.

21 The sons of Laadan, the descendants of the Gershonites of Laadan, heads of their fathers' houses, of Laadan the Gershonite: Jehieli.

22 ¶ The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and Joel his brother, were over the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

23 Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites:

24 Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was overseer of the treasuries.

25 And his brethren by Eliezer were Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son.

26 This Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasuries of the dedicated things which King David and the heads of fathers' houses, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the army, had dedicated.

27 Some of the spoils won in battles they dedicated to maintain the house of the LORD.

28 And all that Samuel the seer, Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruah had dedicated, every dedicated thing, was under the hand of Shelomith and his brethren.

29 ¶ Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons performed duties as officials and judges over Israel outside Jerusalem.

30 Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, one thousand seven hundred able men, had the oversight of Israel on the west side of the Jordan for all the business of the LORD, and in the service of the king.

31 Among the Hebronites, Jerijah was head of the Hebronites according to his genealogy of the fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David, they were sought, and there were found among them capable men at Jazer of Gilead.

32 And his brethren were two thousand seven hundred able men, heads of fathers' houses, whom King David made officials over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God and the affairs of the king.

"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

Ezekiel 18:20

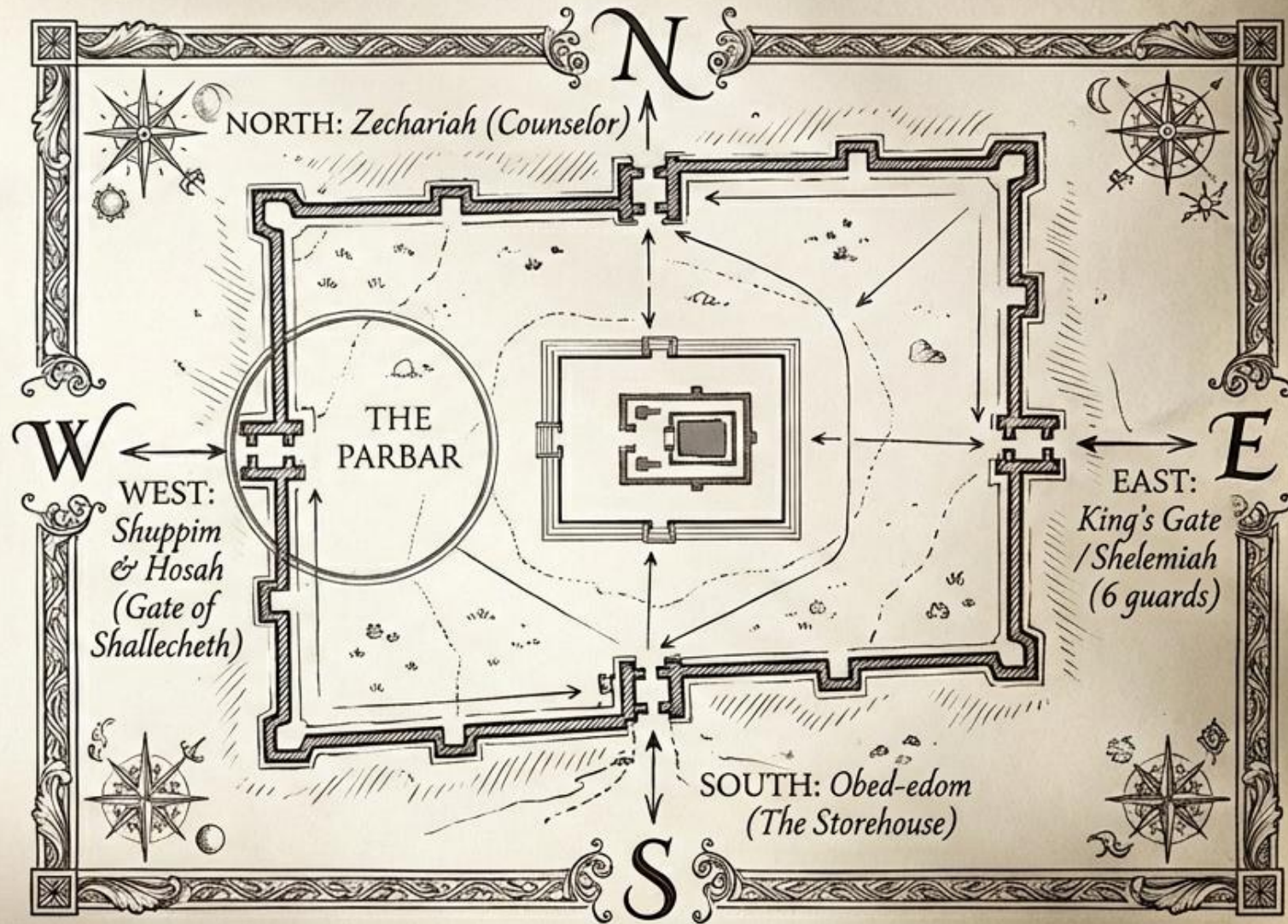
Exo 20:4 ¶ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,**  
<sup>6</sup> but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

# GUARDIANS OF THE CARDINAL GATES

**Source:** 1 Chronicles 26

**The Guard:** 4,000 Levites designated as *Gibbor Chayil* (“Mighty men of valor”).

**The Mandate:** To secure the perimeter before the stone was laid, ensuring the sanctity of the House of God.



The *Parbar* (1 Chronicles 26:18) refers to a western colonnade or court—a structural detail later visionaries struggled to reconstruct.