

Numbers 3:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward.

Analysis

The Gershonites' assigned camp position 'behind the tabernacle westward' demonstrates that even camp arrangement served theological purposes. The four sides of the tabernacle housed different Levitical clans, creating a living barrier between God's holy presence and the people's camp. This spatial arrangement taught Israel that approaching God requires mediation, a principle fulfilled in Christ who stands between God's holiness and human sin, providing the only safe access to the Father.

Historical Context

The western position placed the Gershonites opposite Judah's camp (east side), creating a pattern where Levitical clans surrounded the tabernacle on all four sides. This arrangement both protected the tabernacle and prevented unauthorized approach by common Israelites.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the Levites' protective positioning around the tabernacle illustrate that approaching God requires proper mediation?
2. What does this spatial arrangement teach us about respecting God's holiness and approaching Him only through the means He has appointed?

Interlinear Text

מִשְׁפְּחֵי ת	הַגֵּרָשֹׁנִי י	אַחֲרֵי י	הַמִּשְׁכָּן	יָחֹנּוּ ו	יָמָה:
The families	of the Gershonites	behind	the tabernacle	shall pitch	westward
H4940	H1649	H310	H4908	H2583	H3220

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:53 (Temple): But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.