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Gershom

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(Lord, this is down! This is not hair! [...] What do I know? I just know: Where once there was much hair, now there is none. This, Lord, is to be accused.)

Again, although bitterly ironic, this poem also sticks to Gernhardt's abovementioned concept. Instead of accusing God for the disease (to which Gernhardt would succumb in 2006), or of asking for the rationale behind it, it is only his bald head he is complaining about, which reminds him of the days of his childhood, when he, coming from the hairdresser, was mocked as "Glatzenkönig" (king of the dome) (*ibid.*; cf. Langenhorst: 193).

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Sebastian Fuhrmann

Gershom

The etymological meaning of the name is uncertain. In the HB Gershom (MT: *Gēršôm*) appears as the name of three different individuals, but it may simply be a variant of "Gershon," which is well attested as the name of the first son of Levi or a Levitic clan. The Bible uses the name in different contexts as wordplay. Its original etymology remains unclear. It may be related to the idea of exile or expulsion (for different explanations see Propp: 174).

1. Son of Moses

In the HB, Moses' sons do not play a significant role. They are only mentioned before the arrival at Sinai and disappear thereafter. Exodus 2:15–22, which may be part of the oldest written Moses story from the 7th century BCE, relates Moses' flight to Midian where he marries the daughter of a local priest. The name of his first son Gershom is explained in Exod 2:22 (as well as in Exod 18:3) with a wordplay on *gēr* ("sojourner") and *šām* ("there"), as shown by the Greek vocalization *Gersam*. There may also exist an allusion to the root *g-r-š* (to expel), which fits with Moses' fugitive status (Propp: 174). Gershom appears again together with a sec-

ond son Eliezer in Exod 18. The author of this story supposes that Moses' wife and his children stayed in Midian and did not follow him to Egypt (contrary to Exod 4:20). The biblical exodus narrative does not tell anything more about Moses' offspring. This is a clear indication that Moses is not an ancestor, since his descendance is not important. He is a mediator whose successor does not belong to his family. Judges 18:30 negatively mentions a son of Gershom as a priest of the tribe of Dan. Moses' grandson is here depicted as the founder of an illicit idolatrous cult. Different attempts have been made in the versions and early commentaries to correct this statement (see Groß: 754, 793). A slightly different genealogy from Judges 18:30 appears in the Levitical genealogies 1 Chr 23:14–16 and 26:24.

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2. Son of Levi

In 1 Chronicles 6:1–2 (ET 6:16–17) Gershom appears as the first son of Levi, and the father of Libni and Shimei. This Gershom is identical with Gershon, who appears in 1 Chr 5:27 (ET 6:1); Gen 46:11; Exod 6:16–17; Num 3:18, 21 in the same genealogical context and must therefore be the same person. It is possible that these variants reflect an attempt to distinguish Moses' son from the son of Levi. In 1 Chr 6:5 (ET: 6:20) the sons of Gershom differ from those mentioned in 6:2. This list may reflect a different tradition.

3. Descendant of Phinehas

In Ezra 8:2 Gershom is the son or descendant of Phinehas, who accompanied Ezra from Babylonia to Jerusalem. Phinehas is the grandson of Aaron, and the name of his son Gershom may have been chosen based on its appearance in the Levitical lists in Chronicles.

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Thomas Römer

Gershom ben Judah

Gershom ben Judah (ca. 950–ca. 1028), known by the moniker *me'or ha-golah* (Light of the Exile) and famed student of Judah b. Meir "Sir Leontin," was active in Mainz at the turn of the 11th century. Probably born in Metz and a scion of the branch of the Tuscan Kalonymos clan that founded the Rhenish Jewish community, Gershom maintained a lifelong intellectual link with Italian and Palestinian traditions. His outstanding achievements include: