

Numbers 2-3

Bible Study

Review—Chapter 1

A census was taken of the tribes of Israel to organize the march to the land of Canaan...the name of the book comes from this census: Numbers

The total of all of the tribes, men over 20 who could go to war—603,550

- The Levites were not numbered in the census

Israel would be leaving Sinai in less than three weeks...so the camp is being organized to make the march to Canaan

The leader of each tribe is named and would be responsible for numbering his tribe

These leaders names will be repeated in chapter 2, showing how they were to camp around the tabernacle



Numbers 2

This chapter describes how the tribes are to camp around the tabernacle in a square formation...and in this order they are to march

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

²“Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father’s house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.

The tribes were responsible to camp by their own standard (flag) which marked off the tribes, **and** also by the emblem of the father’s house—a type of insignia

v. 2 “standard” (Heb. *Degel*)= flag, banner
(Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Com.) “something that is seen [a banner or flag], which served as an identity feature for the given tribal unit”

➤ There will be **four** units or groups, with three tribes in each unit
(Expositors) “tradition (Jewish) holds that the standard of the triad led by Judah had the figure of a lion, that of Reuben of a man, that of Ephraim...an ox, that of Dan...an eagle”

“**emblems** of the father’s house” (OKJ) ‘ensign’ (Heb. *Owth*)= sign, banner—a type of insignia of a father’s house
(Expositors) “Jewish tradition suggests that tribal banners corresponded in color to the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest”

²“Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father’s house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.

v.2 (last part) “they shall camp some distance”

(Tyndale) “There was a space between the tribal encampments and the tent of meeting....

Joshua 3:4 stipulates that a distance of 2,000 cubits (1,000 yards) should separate the ark from the secular tribes. This might be intended here as well.”

- Four camps [of 3] around the tabernacle, led by one tribe with their standard (flag)
 - The tribal leaders from chapter 1:5-15 are repeated with their census totals



1st Camp—east side [Judah's flag]

³On **the east side**, toward the rising of the sun, those of the **standard** of the forces **with Judah** shall camp according to their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab *shall be* the leader of the children of Judah.”

⁴And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred.

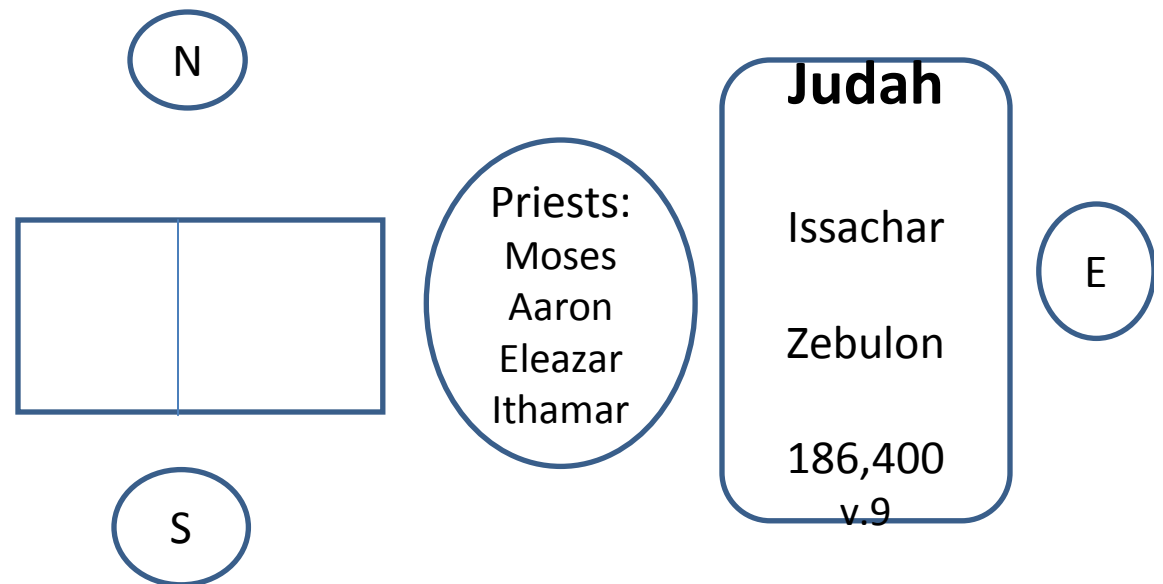
⁵“Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of **Issachar**, and Nethanel the son of Zuar *shall be* the leader of the children of Issachar.”

⁶And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred.

⁷“Then *comes* the tribe of **Zebulun**, and Eliab the son of Helon *shall be* the leader of the children of Zebulun.”

⁸And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

⁹“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred—these **shall break camp first**.”



2nd camp—south side [Reuben's flag]

¹⁰“On the **south side** *shall be* the **standard** of the forces with **Reuben** according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Reuben *shall be* Elizur the son of Shedeur.”

¹¹And his army was numbered at forty-six thousand five hundred.

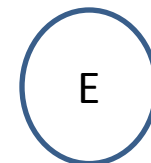
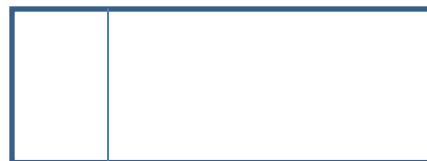
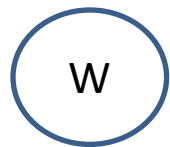
¹²“Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of **Simeon**, and the leader of the children of Simeon *shall be* Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.”

¹³And his army was numbered at fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

¹⁴“Then *comes* the tribe of **Gad**, and the leader of the children of Gad *shall be* Eliasaph the son of [£]Reuel.”

¹⁵And his army was numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.

¹⁶“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Reuben, one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty—they shall be the second to break camp.



Levites

Reuben

Simeon

Gad

151,450 v.16

¹⁷“And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

The placement of v. 17 in the middle of the chapter reminds readers that the tabernacle is the place of the divine presence...and is the center of the ordering of the people

- also reiterates the significance of the Levities

“so shall they move out”

The camp is to journey in the order and configuration of the list

3rd camp—west side [Ephraim's flag]

¹⁸“On the **west side** *shall be* the **standard** of the forces with **Ephraim** according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Ephraim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud.”

¹⁹And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred.

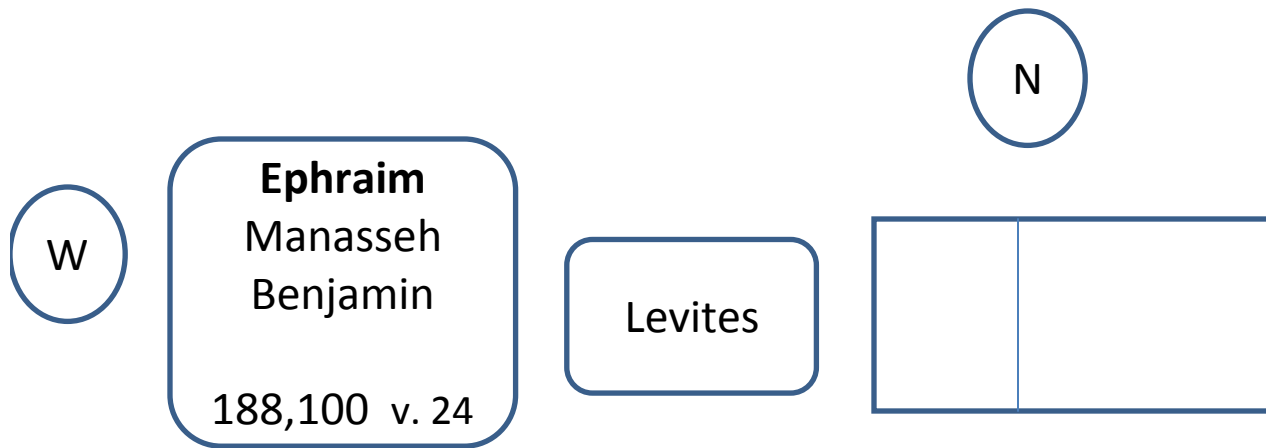
²⁰“Next to him *comes* the tribe of **Manasseh**, and the leader of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.”

²¹And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred.

²²“Then *comes* the tribe of **Benjamin**, and the leader of the children of Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideoni.”

²³And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred.

²⁴“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred—they shall be the third to break camp.



4th camp—north side [Dan's flag]

²⁵“The **standard** of the forces with **Dan** *shall be* on the **north side** according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.”

²⁶And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

²⁷“Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of **Asher** *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran.”

²⁸And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred.

²⁹“Then *comes* the tribe of **Naphtali**, and the leader of the children of Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan.”

³⁰And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred.

³¹“All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred—they shall break camp last, with their standards.”

N

Dan

Asher

Naphtali

157,600 v. 31

Levites



³²These *are* the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces *were* **six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.**

³³But the **Levites were not numbered** among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

³⁴Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

v. 32-33

Total repeated 603, 550...but the Levites are not numbered

Verse 34

Emphasizes the people's obedience to God's instructions given through Moses

Camp of the tribes and how they move out

N

Dan
Asher
Naphtali

Levites-Merari

W

Ephraim
Manasseh
Benjamin

Levites-
Gershon

Tabernacle

Aaron
Moses
Aaron's
sons

Judah
Issachar
Zebulon

E

Levites-
Kohath

Reuben
Gad
Simeon

S

Numbers 3

Order and duties of the Levites

¹Now these *are* the records of Aaron and Moses when the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

²And these *are* the names of the **sons of Aaron**: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³These *are* the names of the **sons of Aaron, the anointed priests**, whom he consecrated to minister as priests.

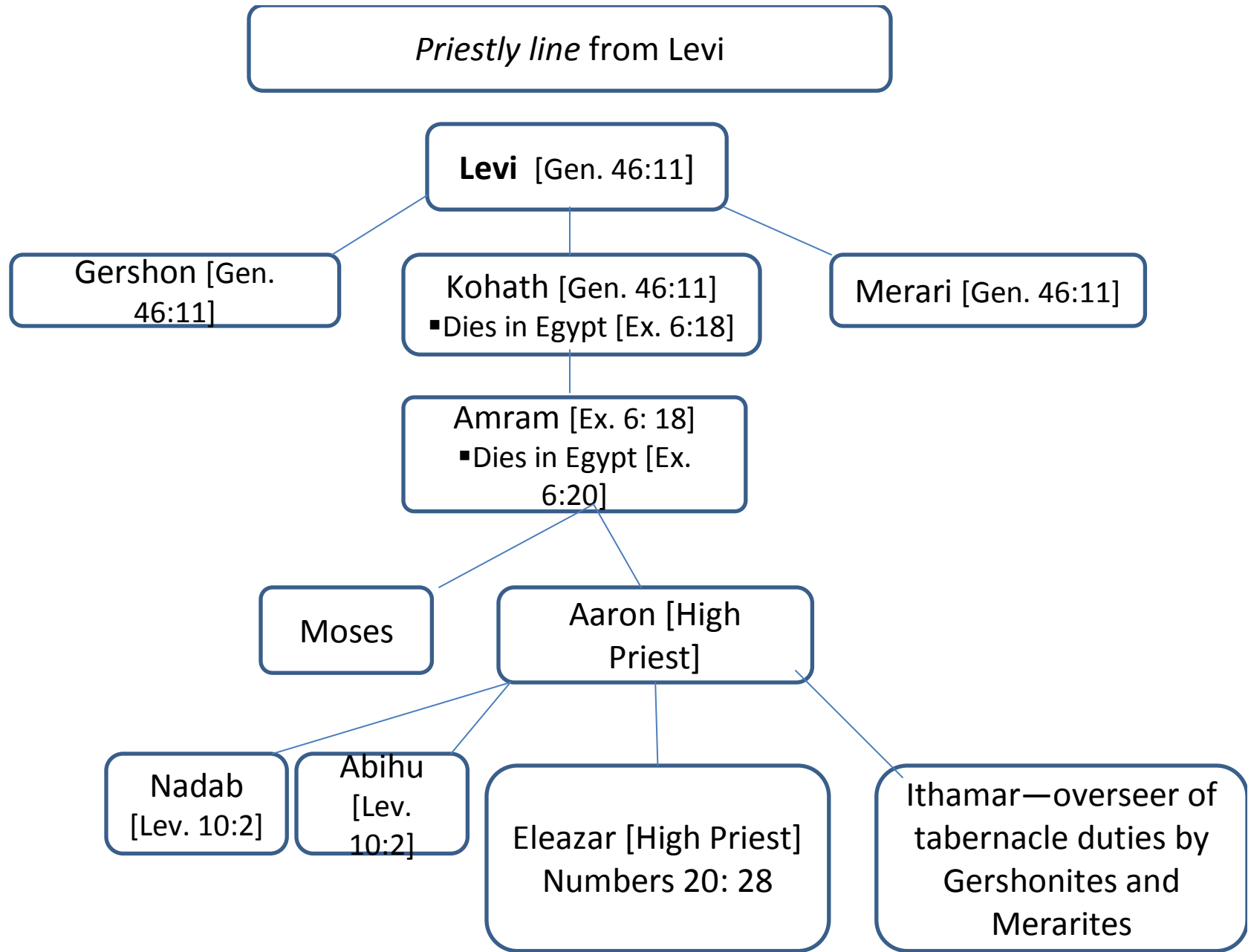
v. 1 'records' [OKJ]= 'generations' "12th occurrence, eleven in Genesis, one here, one in Ruth, one in Mat. 1:1" (Companion)

(Holman) "God chose Aaron and his descendents to serve as priests, with the other Levitical tribes assisting them.

Determining just who qualified to serve as priest required scrupulous record-keeping on the part of the tribe."

v. 3 "the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests"

(Tyndale) "They alone had the right to handle the sacrificial blood to touch the altar, and to enter the tent of meeting"



Levi—Tabernacle duties of the Levites

Gershon

Libni

[Ex. 6:17]

Shimiel

[Ex. 6:17]

Lael

[Num. 3:35]

Eliasaph—leader

Num. 3: 24

- Tent w/covering
- Screen door of tabernacle
- Screen door of court
- Hangings of court

Kohath

Amram

[Ex. 6:18]

- priests

Izeher

[Ex. 6:18]

Hebron

[Ex. 6:18]

Uzziel

[Ex. 6:18]

Elizaphan—leader

Num. 3: 30

- Ark of covenant
- Table of showbread
 - Lampstand
 - Altars
 - Veil

Merari

Mahli

[Ex. 6: 19]

Mushi

[Ex. 6:19]

Abihail

[Num. 3:35]

Zuriel—leader

Num. 3: 35

- Boards/Pillars/sockets
 - Pillars of court/sockets
- Bars/Pegs/Cords

⁴Nadab and Abihu had died before the Lord when they offered profane fire before the Lord in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

Leviticus 10:1-2

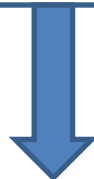
¹Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.

²So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

Aaron had four sons who would assist him and serve as priests, but Nadab and Abihu died **“and had no children”** which left Eleazar and Ithamar to serve with their father

(BKC) “Since only Aaron and his direct descendents could serve as priest [Ex. 28:1], it was impossible for them to attend to all Israel’s religious needs by themselves.

So the entire tribe of Levi was selected to undertake religious responsibilities short of actual priestly ministry. Since Aaron was a Levite this meant that all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests”



⁵And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

⁶“Bring the **tribe of Levi** near, and present them **before Aaron** the priest, that they may **serve him**.

⁷And they shall **attend to his needs** and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle.

v. 6

“**serve him**” (Heb. Seret)– a general word for all the work that the Levites were to do

v. 7 “attend to his needs’ [OKJ] ‘keep his charge’

(New Int. Com. OT) “the idiom here is *samar mismeret* which Milgrom has shown to mean ‘guard duty’.

Verse seven tells of the duties of the Levites when the tribes **are in camp**, since this is the only time when one can keep watch in front of or *before* the tent of meeting....

One of the ways in which the Levites serve is by standing guard for him before [i.e. in front of] the tent of meeting.”

⁸**Also** they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle.

⁹And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they *are* given entirely to [£]him from among the children of Israel.

¹⁰So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”

(Holman) “The Lord delineated the specific duties of each tribe division, beginning with the priests. They were responsible for all the tabernacle duties, including the materials and transport. [v.7-8]

The Lord gave them the remaining tribal members to assist them [v.9], and from these members he created three separate divisions according to family origin to preside over different duties.

But these other Levites who were not priests could not perform priestly functions as could Aaron’s immediate descendents. Any Levite who did so was to be put to death.[v.10]

¹¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

¹²“Now **behold**, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,

¹³because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord.”

v. 11 “I Myself have taken the Levites....instead of every firstborn...”

The Levites are substituted for the firstborn—God had claimed the firstborn for service to him for sparing Israel’s firstborn [Ex. 13:2]

v. 13 “sanctified” [OKJ] ‘hallowed’= separated

The Levites are set apart for service to God

¹⁴Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying:

¹⁵“Number the children of Levi by their fathers’ houses, by their families; you shall number every male from a month old and above.”

¹⁶So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded

v. 15 “you shall number”—the first census of Levites [2nd in chapter 4]

- Numbering all male Levites from one month old and above
- Provides camp arrangement completing work began in chapter 2

The three Levite families: Gershon, Kohath, Merari

¹⁷These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁸And these *are* the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei.

¹⁹And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

²⁰And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of the Levites by their fathers' houses.

v. 16-20 Begin with "And" in [OKJ]

Gershon [v.18] and Merari [v.20] has two descendents each....Kohath [v.19] had four descendents

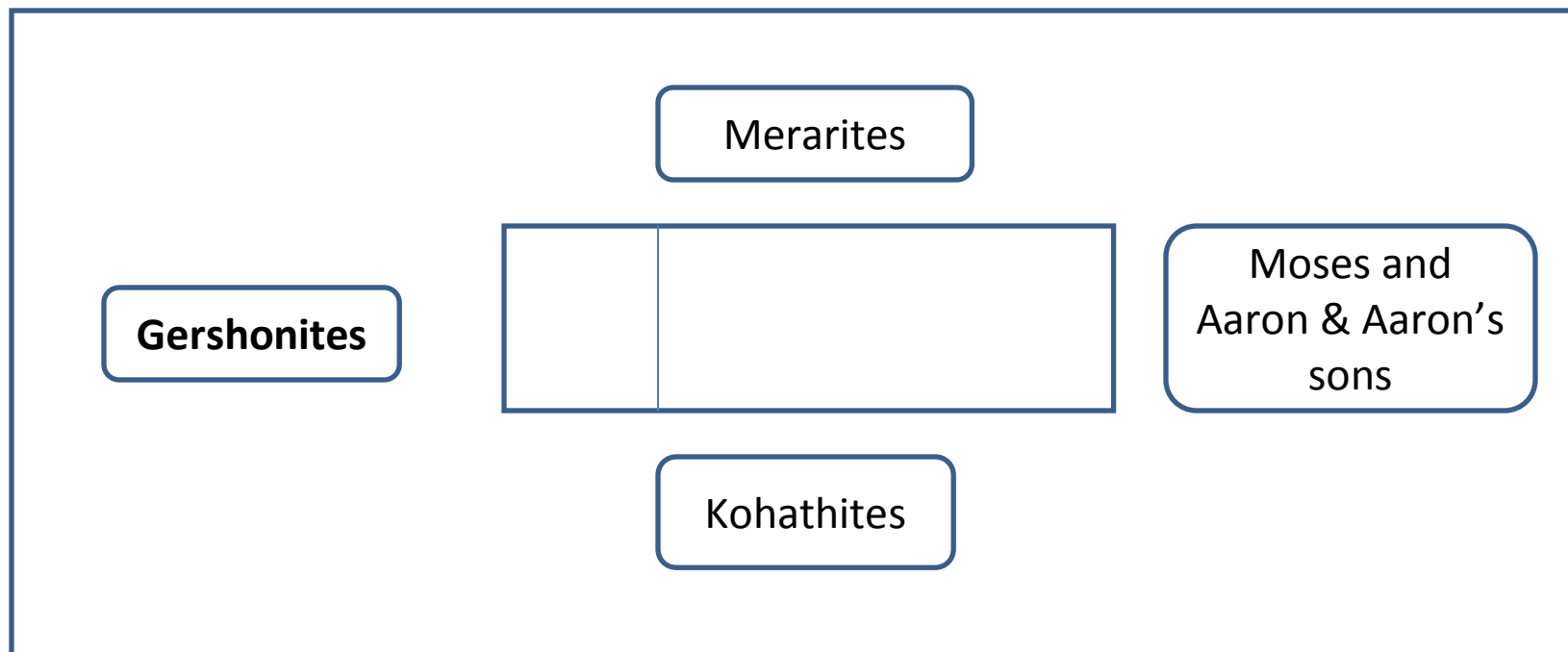
²¹From **Gershon** came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites; these were the families of the Gershonites.

²²Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above—of those who were numbered *there were* seven thousand five hundred.

²³The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle **westward**.

²⁴And the leader of the father's house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael.

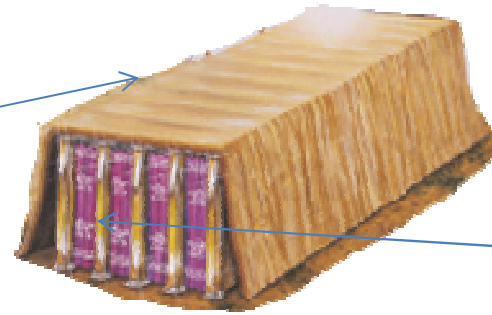
The Gershonites camped to the west side of the tabernacle...their total number was 7,500



Duties of the family of Gershon

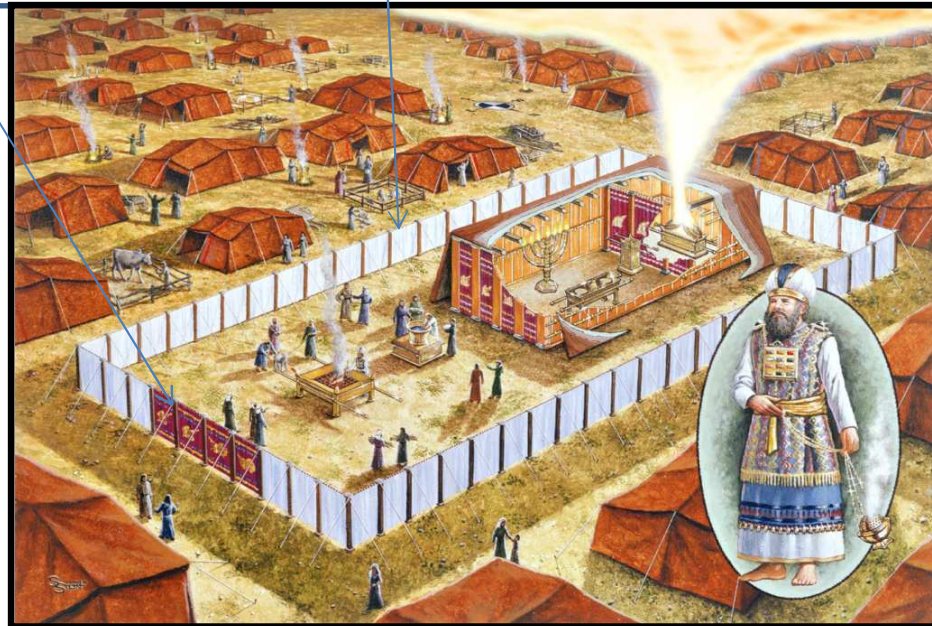
²⁵The duties of the children of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting *included* the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting,

The tent with its covering



Screen for the door

²⁶the screen for the door of the court, the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them.



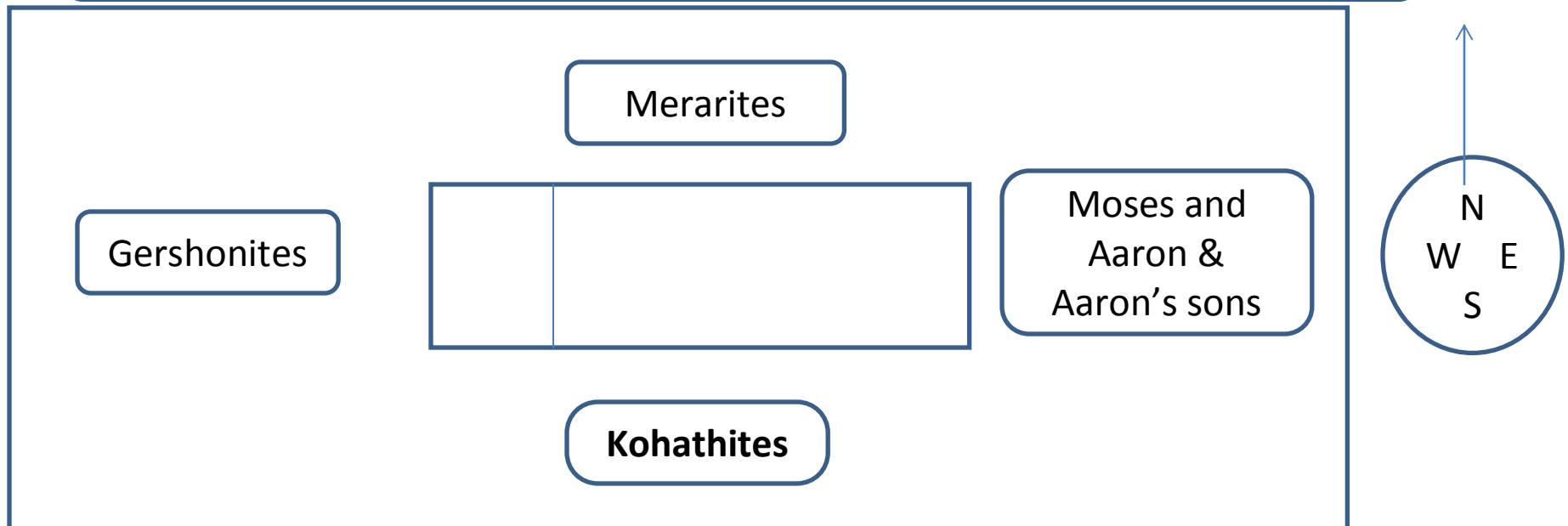
²⁷From **Kohath** came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites.

²⁸According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary.

²⁹The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the **south side** of the tabernacle.

³⁰And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.

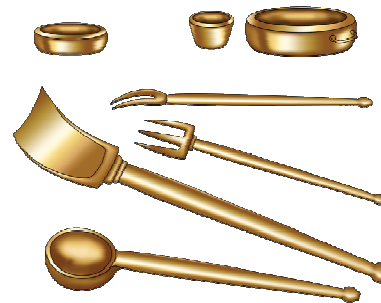
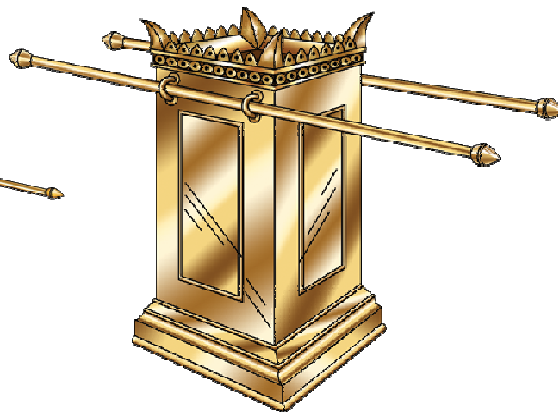
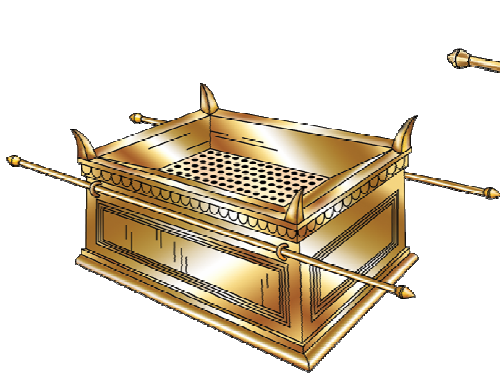
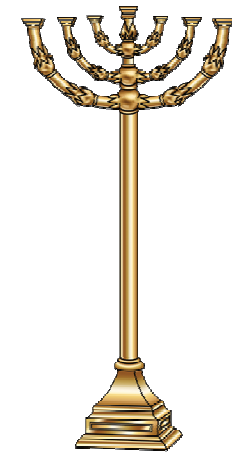
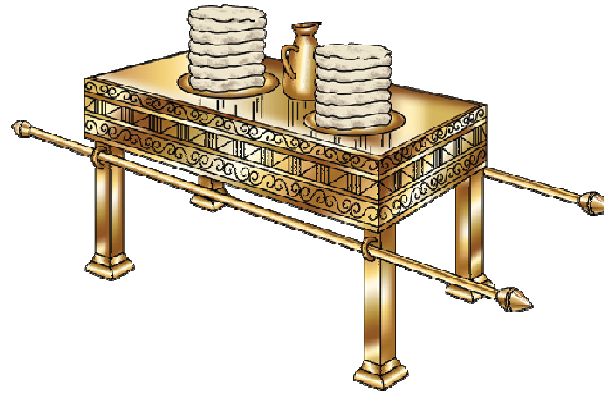
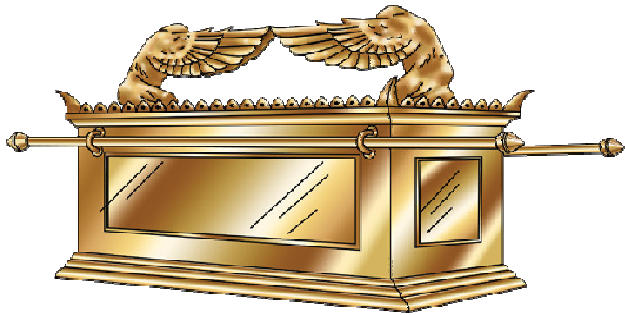
The family of Kohath camped to the south side of the tabernacle... their total number was 8,600



Duties of the family of Kohath

³¹Their duty *included* the ark, the table, the lamp stand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.

“the screen” [OKJ] ‘the hanging’= the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place



³²And **Eleazar** the son of Aaron the priest *was to be* chief over the leaders of the Levites, *with* oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.

“chief over the leaders” [Heb.] = chief of the chief—a figure of speech (repetition)

(Understanding the Bible Com.)

“Verse 32 highlights the fact that the Levites are under supervision of the priests. Eleazar, Aaron’s older surviving son, supervises the leaders of the Levites.

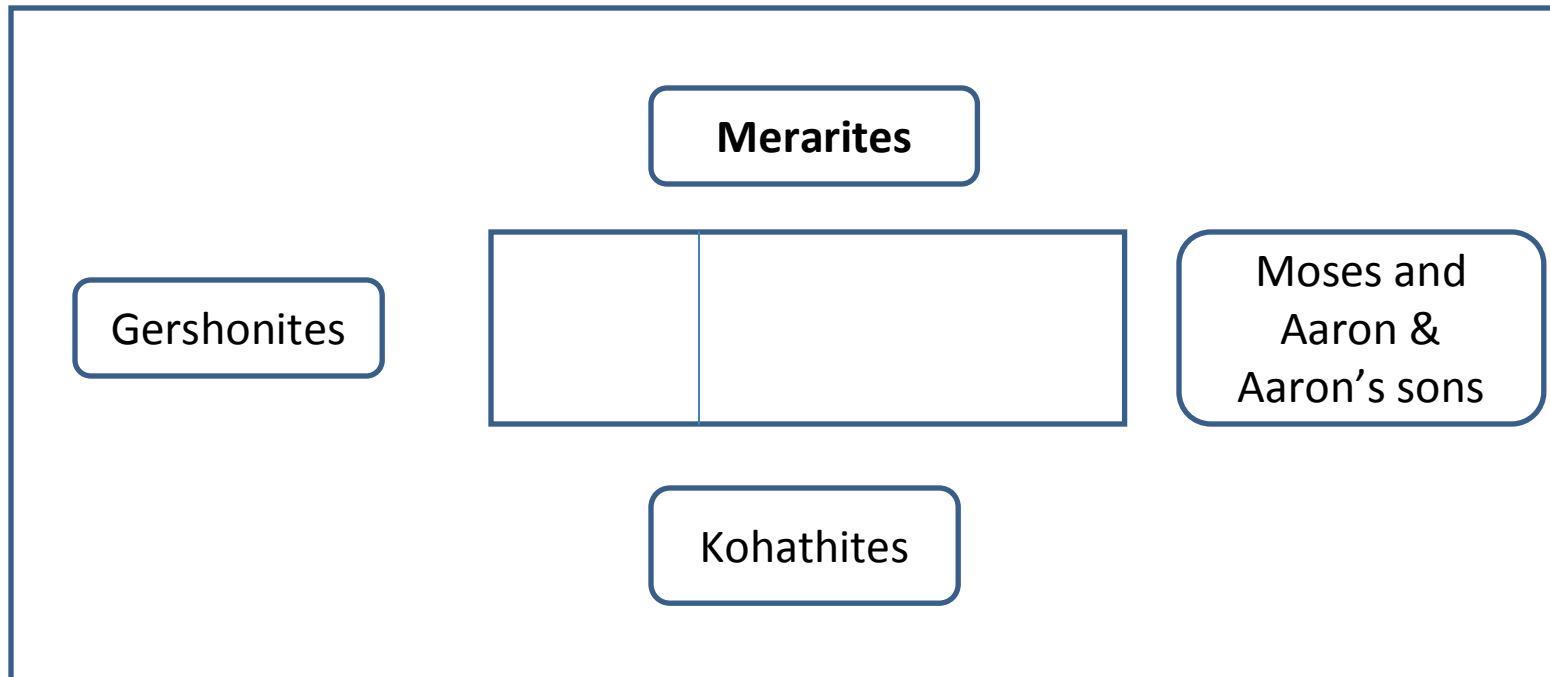
The notice comes here because of Eleazar’s Kohathite descent and to emphasize the seriousness of the task”

³³From **Merari** came the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these *were* the families of Merari.

³⁴And those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above, *were* six thousand two hundred.

³⁵The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari *was* Zuriel the son of Abihail. These *were* to camp on the **north side** of the tabernacle.

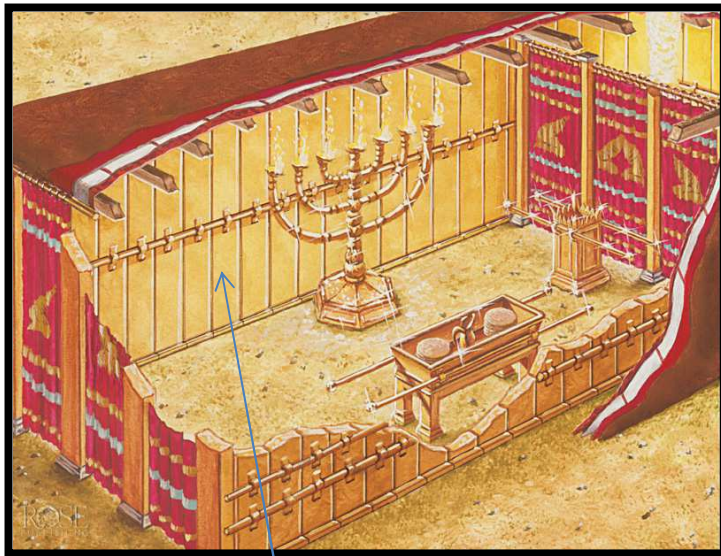
The family of the Merarites camped to the north of the tabernacle...their total number was 6,200



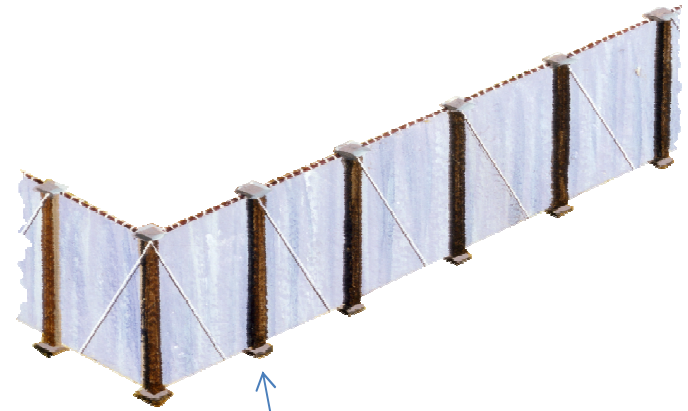
Duties of the children of Merari--Wood framing and parts

³⁶And the appointed duty of the children of Merari *included* the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, its utensils, all the work relating to them,

³⁷and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords.



Boards of the tabernacle, bars, pillars



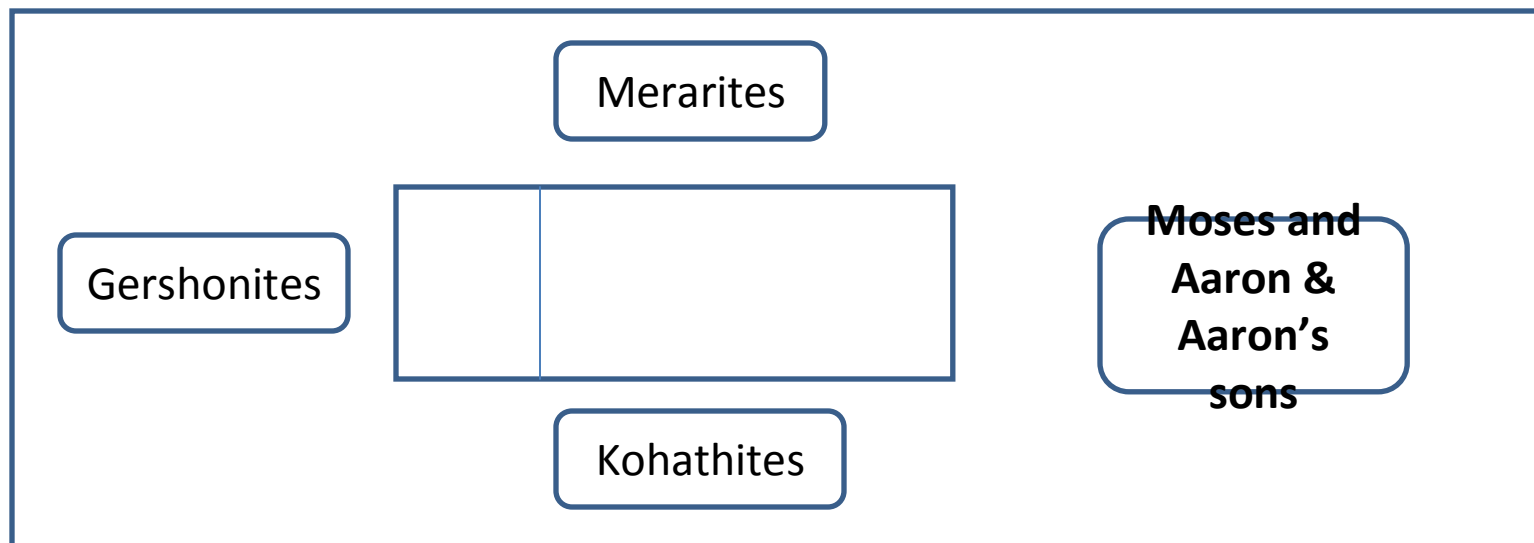
Pillars of the court

³⁸Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the **east**, before the tabernacle of meeting, **were Moses, Aaron**, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death.

³⁹All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, **were** twenty-two thousand.

v. 38 Moses and Aaron were designated to camp on the **east side** of the tabernacle in front of the tent of meeting

v. 39 The total number of all the Levites came to 22,000 as numbered by Moses and Aaron



⁴⁰Then the Lord said to Moses: “Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above, and take the number of their names.

⁴¹And you shall take the Levites for Me—I *am* the Lord—instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel.”

A census was to be taken of **all the firstborn males of Israel** from a month old and above

v. 41 (BKC) “In compensation for His having spared the firstborn, males of Israel at the time of the Exodus, the Lord declared that all the firstborn of men and animals belonged to him. [For service]”

Now the tribe of Levi was to be given to God as a substitution for all the firstborn of the other tribes

⁴²So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the Lord commanded him.

⁴³And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

v. 43 The total of all firstborn males in Israel was— 22,273

The total of Levites was 22,000 [v.39]—there was not enough Levites, they were short 273 to match the number of total firstborn in Israel

The 273 firstborn Israelites without Levitic redemption had to be redeemed in another way—pay in shekels (redemption money)

(BKC) “The solution was to exact five shekels for each of the 273 [v.47], a total of 1,375 silver two ounce shekels [v.50]”

Paid to Aaron and his sons [v.48, 51]

⁴⁴Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

⁴⁵“Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord.

⁴⁶And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites,

⁴⁷you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take *them* in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs.

⁴⁸And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons.”

⁴⁹So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites.

⁵⁰From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five *shekels*, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

⁵¹And Moses gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Lessons

God's presence was in the middle of Israel's camp, as He is in the Church...and will be in the future New Jerusalem

Psalms 46:4-5

⁴ *There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.

⁵ God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

Aaron and his sons were the only ones who could approach God's presence in the tabernacle

With Christ as our High Priest—his true followers are called priests (I Pet. 2:5,9) and we can come into God's presence and build a relationship with God...because of what Christ has done for us