

Census and Duties of Levite Clans (c. 2 Iyyar [April/May] 1445 BC)

Numbers 3–4

Introduction—The Aaronic Priesthood

- 3:1 These *are* the genealogies of Aaron and Moses at the time when Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.
 2 These *are* the names of the descendants of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.
 3 These *are* the names of the descendants of Aaron, the priests, the anointed ones whom he consecrated as priests.
 4 Nadab and Abihu died before Yahweh when they presented a strange fire before Yahweh in the desert of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar served as priest during the presence of Aaron their father.

The Levites are Given in Service to the Priesthood

- 5 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,
 6 “Bring near the tribe of Levi, and set the tribe before Aaron the priest, and they will minister to him.
 7 They shall observe his duties and the duties of the entire community before the tent of assembly, to do the work of the tabernacle.
 8 And they will keep all the vessels of the tent of assembly and the responsibilities of the Israelites, to do the work of the tabernacle.
 9 You will give the Levites to Aaron and to his descendants; they *are* surely assigned to him from among the Israelites.
 10 But you will count Aaron and his descendants; they will keep their priesthood, and the stranger who approaches will be put to death.”

The Purpose Behind the Levitical Census

- 11 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying,
 12 “I *myself* receive the Levites from the midst of the Israelites in the place of all *the* firstborn of *the* offspring of the womb from the Israelites. The Levites will be mine
 13 because all *the* firstborn *are* mine; on the day of my killing all *the* firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for myself all *the* firstborn in Israel, both humankind and animal; they will be mine. I am Yahweh.”

Levitical Census for Firstborn Redemption

- 14 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai, saying,
 15 “Muster the descendants of Levi according to their families, according to their clans. You will count every male from one month and above.”
 16 So Moses mustered them according to the command of Yahweh, just as he commanded.
 17 These were the sons of Levi according to their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
 18 And these *are* the names of the sons of Gershon according to their clans: Libni and Shimei.
 19 And the sons of Kohath according to their clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.
 20 The sons of Merari according to their tribes: Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the clans of the Levites according to their families.

Clan of Gershon

- 21 To Gershon belonged the clan of the Libnites and the clan of the Shimeites; these *are* the clans of the Gershonites.
 22 The ones counted according to the number of every male from one month and above *were* seven thousand five hundred.
 23 The clans of the Gershonites will camp behind the tabernacle to the west,
 24 and the leader of the family of the Gershonites is Eliasaph son of Lael.
 25 And the responsibility of the descendants of Gershon in the tent of assembly *is* the tabernacle, and the tent covering it and the curtain of the doorway of the tent of the assembly,
 26 and the hangings of the courtyard and the curtain of the doorway of the courtyard that *is* around the tabernacle and the altar, and its ten cords, all of its use.

Clan of Kohath

- 27 To Kohath belonged the clan of Amramites, the clan of the Izharites, the clan of the Hebronites, and the clan *of* the Uzzielites; these *were* the clans of the Kohathites.
 28 According to *the* number of every male from one month and above *there were* eight thousand six hundred keeping the responsibility of the sanctuary.
 29 The clan of the descendants of Kohath will encamp on the side of the tabernacle to the south.
 30 The leader of his family according to the clans of the Kohathites *is* Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.
 31 Their responsibility *was* the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altar, and the vessels of the sanctuary, with which they ministered, and the curtain, and all of its use.
 32 The chief of the leaders of the Levites was Eleazar son of Aaron the priest *who had* oversight of those keeping the responsibility of the sanctuary.

Clan of Merari

33 To Merari belonged the clan of Mahlites and the clan of the Mushites: these *are* the clans of Merari.

34 The ones counted according to the number of every male from one month and above *were* six thousand two hundred.

35 *The* leader of the family according to the clans of Merari *is* Zurriel son of Abihail; they will encamp of the side of the tabernacle to the north.

36 The responsibility of the sons of Merari *was* the supervision of the frames of the tabernacle, its bars, pillars, bases, and all its vessels and all its service,

37 and the pillars around the courtyard, and their bases, pegs, and cords.

38 Those encamped before the tabernacle to the east—before the tent of assembly to the east—*were* Moses and Aaron and his sons; they will keep the responsibility of the sanctuary for the Israelites; and the stranger who approaches will be put to death.

Census Total

39 All those counted from the Levites whom Moses and Aaron mustered according to the word of Yahweh, according to their clans, every male from one month and above *were* twenty-two thousand.

Firstborn Israelites Redeemed With Levites

40 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Muster every firstborn male from the Israelites from one month and above and count their names.

41 And you will receive the Levites for me—I *am* Yahweh—in the place of all *the* firstborn among the Israelites, and the animals of the Levites in the place of all *the* firstborn among the animals among the Israelites.”

42 So Moses mustered all the firstborn among the Israelites just as Yahweh commanded him.

43 And all *the* firstborn males among the number of names from one month and above, the ones counted, *were* twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

44 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,

45 “Receive the Levites in the place of all *the* firstborn among the Israelites, and the animals of the Levites in the place of their animals; the Levites will be mine. I *am* Yahweh.

Excess Israelites Redeemed With Money

46 And the ransom of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the Israelites who are excessive over the Levites,

47 you will receive five shekels a person, in the sanctuary shekel; you will collect twenty *gerahs per* shekel.

48 You will give the money to Aaron, and to his sons the ransom of the ones who are excessive among them.”

49 And Moses received the money of the redemption from the ones who were excessive from those redeemed of the Levites.

50 From the firstborn of the Israelites he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, in the sanctuary shekel.

51 And Moses gave the money of the ransom to Aaron and to his sons according to the word of Yahweh just as Yahweh commanded Moses.

Census and Duties of Kohath Clan

4:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

2 “Take a census of the descendants of Kohath from the midst of the descendants of Levi, according to their clans and their families,

3 from thirty years old and above, up to fifty years old, everyone who comes to the service to do the work in the tent of assembly.

4 This *is* the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of assembly, concerning the holiness of the sanctuary:

5 When setting out the camp, Aaron and his sons will go and lower the curtain of the covering and cover with it the ark of the testimony.

6 They will put on it a covering of fine leather, and they will spread a cloth of perfect blue over it, and they will place its poles.

7 And over the table of the presence they will spread *out* a blue cloth and put on it the plates, dishes, and libation bowls, and the pitchers of the libation; and the bread of continuity will be on it.

8 They will spread over it a scarlet cloth, and they will cover it with a covering of fine leather, and they will place its poles.

9 They will take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for the light source, its lamps, a pair of its tongs, its small pans, and all the vessels of its oil with which they attend to it.

10 They will put it and all its vessels inside a covering of fine leather and put it on the carrying frame.

11 Over the altar of gold they will spread a blue cloth, and they will cover it with a covering of fine leather and place its poles.

12 They will take all the vessels of the cultic service with which they serve in the sanctuary and put *them* on a blue cloth, and they will cover them with a covering of fine leather; and they will put *them* on the carrying frame.

13 They will remove the fat-soaked ashes from the altar and spread a purple cloth over it;

14 they will put on it all the vessels with which they serve, the fire pans, forks, shovels, and bowls—all the vessels of the altar. They will spread on it a covering of fine leather; and they will place its poles.

15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the vessels of the sanctuary when the camp sets out, the descendants of Kohath will come after to carry *these*, but they must not touch the sanctuary, or they will die. These *are* the load

of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of assembly.

16 “Eleazar son of Aaron the priest is to supervise the oil of the light source, the incense, the regular grain offering, the oil of anointment, the supervision of all the tabernacle and all that *is* in it, in the sanctuary and in its vessels.”

17 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

18 “You must not cut off the tribe of the clan of the Kohathites from the midst of the Levites.

19 Do this to them and they will live and not die when they come near the most holy things. Aaron and his sons will go and appoint them, each one to his task and burden.

20 But they must not go and look for a moment at the holy objects.”

Census and Duties of Gershon Clan

21 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

22 “Take a census of the descendants of Gershon also, according to their families and clans,

23 from those twenty years old and above until fifty years old; you will muster them, all who come to help to do the work of the tent of assembly.

24 This *is* the work of the clans of the Gershonites: to serve and to carry.

25 They will carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tent of assembly *and* its covering and the covering of fine leather, which is on top of it, and the curtain of the doorway of the tent of assembly,

26 and the curtains of the courtyard, and the covering for the doorway of the gate of the courtyard, which *is* all around on the tabernacle and altar, and their cords and all the vessels of their work; and all that is done to them they will do.

27 And all the work of the descendants of the Gershonites will be at the command of Aaron and his sons, for all they *are to* carry and for all their work, and you will appoint to them responsibility for all they *are to* carry.

28 This *is* the work of the clan of the descendants of the Gershonites in the tent of assembly, and their responsibility *lies* under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

Census and Duties of Merari Clan

29 “For the descendants of Merari according to their clans, according to their families, you will muster them;

30 from those thirty years old and above until fifty years old; you will muster them, all who come to do the work of the tent of assembly.

31 And this *is* the responsibility of those who are to carry, all their work in the tent of assembly: the frames of the tabernacle and its bars, pillars, and bases,

32 and the pillars of the courtyard all around, and their bases, pegs, and cords, with all their vessels and for all their work. You will appoint by name the vessels that they *are* responsible to carry.

33 This *is* the work of the clan of the descendants of Merari, for all their work in the tent of assembly under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

Census Totals—Kohathites

34 And Moses and Aaron mustered the leaders of the community according to the house of their families,

35 from those thirty years old and above until fifty years old; everyone who comes to the service to work in the tent of assembly, 36 the ones counted were two thousand seven hundred and fifty.

37 These *were* those counted of the clans of the Kohathites, everyone who served in the tent of assembly whom Moses and Aaron mustered according to the command of Yahweh by the hand of Moses.

Census Totals—Gershonites

38 And the descendants of Gershon counted according to their clans and according to their families,

39 from those thirty years old and above until fifty years old, everyone who comes to the service to work in the tent of assembly; 40 the ones counted, according to their clans, according to their families, were two thousand six hundred and thirty.

41 These *were* those counted of the clans of the descendants of Gershon, everyone who serves in the tent of assembly whom Moses and Aaron mustered according to the command of Yahweh.

Census Totals—Merarites

42 Those counted of the clans of the descendants of Merari according to their clans, according to their families,

43 from those thirty years old and above until fifty years old, everyone who comes to the service to work in the tent of assembly, 44 the ones counted, according to their clans, were three thousand two hundred.

45 These *were* those counted of the clans of the descendants of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron mustered according to the command of Yahweh by the hand of Moses.

Summary

46 All those counted of the Levites whom Moses and Aaron and all the leaders of Israel mustered according to their clans, according

to their families,

47 from those thirty years old and above until fifty years old, everyone who comes to the service to do *the* work of the service carrying in the tent of assembly,

48 the ones counted were eighty thousand five hundred and eighty.

49 According to the command of Yahweh by the hand of Moses they were mustered, each man according to his service and according to their service and according to their burden; and so they were counted by him just as Yahweh commanded Moses.

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