

1 Chronicles Chapter 15

(In verses 1-29), the chronicler picks up the narrative concerning the Ark where it left off at (1 Chron. 13:14), as David brings the Ark from Obed-edom.

Verses 1-2: David's preparations for the "Ark" included the selection of a "place" for it to be housed and the assigning of the proper Levitical assistants.

1 Chronicles 15:1 "And [David] made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent."

"David made him houses": He was able by the alliance and help of Hiram (18:1), to build a palace for himself and separate houses for his wives and their children. While the Ark remained near Jerusalem at the home of Obed-edom for 3 months (13:13-14), David constructed a new tabernacle in Jerusalem to fulfill God's Word (in Deut. 12:5-7), of a permanent residency.

The three months that the Ark remained in the house of Obed-edom gave David ample time to prepare the tent for the Ark to be placed in. This is not the tabernacle they brought across the desert. This is a new tent. It had been hundreds of years since the tabernacle had been built. It would have decayed greatly in those years. This new tent will be a temporary place for the Ark. Solomon will build the temple to house it.

1 Chronicles 15:2 "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever."

"Carry the Ark": After a lapse of 3 months (13:14), David constructed a new tabernacle in Jerusalem to fulfill God's Word (in Deut. 12:5-7), of a permanent residency.

God commanded that only the "Levites" could carry the holy things of God, including "the Ark" (Deut. 10:8). David did not do this the first time he tried to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem (chapter 13). He had obviously learned from his mistake.

We see that David's eyes had been opened about the moving of the Ark. He had, most probably, checked with the high priest in the law to see how the Ark should be handled, to avoid another death. The sons of Kohath will come to carry the Ark. The Ark was not to be touched even by them. They were to run poles through the rings on the side of the Ark, and carry the poles on their shoulders.

1 Chronicles 15:3 "And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it."

The chief and heads of the people.

To bring up the Ark of the Lord": From the house of Obed-edom, where it had been three months, and for the sake of which his house was blessed, and which David heard of; and this encouraged him to take this step to fetch it from thence.

“Unto his place, which he had prepared for it (1 Chron. 15:1).

This time there would be much more care taken in the moving of the Ark. The "all Israel" is speaking of the elders and the captains of thousands. The Ark would be moved with great rejoicing and celebration, but would also be handled reverently.

Verses 4-7: “Kohath ... Merari ... Gershom”: David conducted the Ark’s relocation with the same families as had Moses (Num. chapter 4). In the restoration from Babylon, these identical 3 divisions of Levi participated (1 Chron. 6:1-48).

1 Chronicles 15:4 "And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:"

Whose business it was to bear the Ark when there was any occasion for it. And from hence to the end of (1 Chron. 15:10), an account is given of the Levites, and their number employed in this affair.

The children of Aaron were the priestly family. The other Levites were also in the service of the LORD, but were not priests.

1 Chronicles 15:5 "Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren a hundred and twenty:"

“Of the sons of Kohath”: A son of Levi, that is, of his posterity; for his immediate sons, and so those of the rest after mentioned, had been dead ages ago. The principal of those, at this present time, was Uriel, and his kindred, or those of the same family with him, were one hundred and twenty:

Kohath was the first specifically mentioned, because this was the family of the priests out of the Levitical tribe. Aaron was descended from Kohath through Amram. Uriel was the head of this priestly family at this time, and the 120 others are under him. Each house of the Levites had specific things to do. The house of Kohath served as priests.

1 Chronicles 15:6 "Of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty:"

Of those of Merari, another son of Levi, the chief was Asaiah, with two hundred and twenty of his relations.

Merari was also of the Levitical family and was in the service of the LORD, but not as priests. He was head of the third division of the Levites. At the time of David, his family had Asaiah for their chief. There were 220 of his brethren with him.

1 Chronicles 15:7 "Of the sons of Gershon; Joel the chief, and his brethren a hundred and thirty:"

Of those of Gershon, another son of Levi, was Joel, and his brethren were one hundred and thirty.

Gershon was also of the Levitical tribe. His family was in the service of the LORD, but not as priests. Joel was their chief, and brought 130 with him.

1 Chronicles 15:8 "Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred:"

Of the posterity of Elizaphan, a grandson of Kohath (Exodus 5:18), the most noted was Shemaiah, who had two hundred of his family with him.

Elizaphan was the grandson of Kohath, Shemaiah was the chief of the family descended from him. He came with 200 of his men.

1 Chronicles 15:9 "Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore:"

And of those of Hebron, the son of Kohath (Exodus 6:18), Eliel was the most famous, and he had eighty of his kindred with him.

Hebron was the son of Kohath. His descendants had led to Eliel the chief, at the time of David. He brought 80 men with him.

1 Chronicles 15:10 "Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren a hundred and twelve."

And of those of Uzziel, another son of Kohath in a different line from Elizaphan, who also was a son of Uzziel, was Amminadab the chief, who had one hundred and twelve of his kindred with him. The number of Levites, in all, gathered together, were eight hundred and sixty two, besides their chiefs.

Uzziel was the son of Kohath, and at the time of David, Amminadab was the chief of their family. He came with 112 of his men to witness the moving of the Ark.

Verses 11-13 (see the note on 16:37-42).

1 Chronicles 15:11 "And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab,"

“Zadok ... Abiathar”: These two High-Priests, heads of the two priestly houses of Eleazar and Ithamar, were colleagues in the high-priesthood (2 Sam. 20:25). They served the Lord simultaneously in David’s reign. Zadok attended the tabernacle in Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39), while Abiathar served the temporary place of the Ark in Jerusalem. Ultimately, Zadok prevailed (1 Kings 2:26-27).

Zadok and Abiathar were acting high priests at the time of David. Zadok was of the house of Eleazar. He was faithful to David. Abiathar was the fourth in descent from Eli. He alone was saved alive, when Saul killed many of the priests. Abiathar was High Priest, along with Zadok, at the time of David. David and Abiathar were lifelong friends. The others, mentioned in the verse above, were captains of their families at the time of David. They were all Levites.

Verses 12-13: The words “did not consult Him” could just as easily be ascribed to Saul as to David. Yet David make a decided effort to ask God for guidance and then follow it, something many in Israel apparently did not remember to do. They certainly did not learn it from Saul.

1 Chronicles 15:12 "And said unto them, Ye [are] the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, [both] ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto [the place that] I have prepared for it."

“Sanctify yourselves”: This was a special sanctification required on all special occasions, demanding complete cleanliness.

The actual moving of the Ark would be left up to these men. They had to sanctify themselves for the work to be done here. This consisted of removing themselves from anything pertaining to the world for at least three days prior to the move. It included washings of the natural body and clothing to be worn, as well as ceremonial washing. They must wear white linen garments as well. Whatever was necessary to set them aside for God's work here, was what they had to do. Not only were the chiefs to do this, but all the Levitical tribe that would be with them for this moving of the Ark.

1 Chronicles 15:13 "For because ye [did it] not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

“A breach”: God’s anger broke out when the Ark had been improperly handled and transported by Uzza (Sam. 6:6-8; 1 Chron. 13:9-12).

Now, David realized that they had not observed the law the first time they tried to move the Ark to Jerusalem. The lack of keeping God's law got some killed. They had searched the law now, and know how they are to go about moving the Ark.

1 Chronicles 15:14 "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the Ark of the LORD God of Israel."

As they were ordered, and in the manner they should.

To bring up the Ark of the Lord God of Israel": For though it was chiefly the work of the Levites, yet the priests might do it, and sometimes did (see Joshua 3:13).

All of the law was being observed. They had learned as we Christians should learn, that God is holy. They have prepared themselves first by reading the law, so they would know what the proper way was, and now were doing just that. We cannot know what the will of God is, until we study His Word. Then we can do His will, because we know what His will is for our lives.

1 Chronicles 15:15 "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD."

Not only bare it on their shoulders, but with the staves in it, which rested on their shoulders (see Num. 7:9). The reason of this command, that the Ark should be carried on men's shoulders, and not in any carriage. According to Maimonides, was both for the honor of it, and lest its form and structure should be any ways damaged.

We have mentioned several times in these lessons that even the Levites were not to touch the Ark. They were to run the staves through the rings on the side of the Ark and place the staves on their shoulders to carry it.

Verses 16-24: Eminent Levites were instructed to train the musicians and singers for the solemn procession.

1 Chronicles 15:16 "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren [to be] the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy."

The six before mentioned (1 Chron. 15:11).

"To appoint their brethren to be the singers": Before the Ark, as they brought it up: With instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals; which were used in those times (see 2 Sam. 6:5).

"Sounding by lifting up the voice with joy": The instrumental music was to be attended with vocal music, and that very sonorous and loud, and performed with all tokens of inward joy and gladness, as the occasion required.

1 Chronicles 15:17 "So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah;"

For "Herman, Asaph," and "Ethan" (see the note on 6:31-48).

Heman was a Kohathite, Asaph was of Gershon, and Ethan was of Merari. All three of the Levitical families were represented here. Notice, the musicians and singers were in the service of the LORD.

1 Chronicles 15:18 "And with them their brethren of the second [degree], Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters."

Who were next unto them, both in office and skill in singing.

"The fourteen following, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters": Who, when they were not employed in singing, were doorkeepers of the sanctuary. Either they had been porters at the tabernacle in Gibeon, or were so after the Ark was placed in the tabernacle David prepared for it.

Those listed (in verse 17), were the leaders. Those listed (in verse 18 here), were their immediate subordinates. We see a familiar name here. Obed-edom had been keeping the Ark at his home before this move. We also know that he was listed as a porter. They were keepers of the door.

1 Chronicles 15:19 "So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, [were appointed] to sound with cymbals of brass;"

The three principals of them. These were appointed:

"To sound with cymbals of brass": For as there were three sorts of musical instruments (1 Chron. 15:16). These three chief singers had one of those instruments appropriated to them, one of which were the cymbals of brass, to which the apostle alludes (1 Cor. 13:1).

Notice, there is even order in the part each was to play with the instruments and the singing. These cymbals of brass were probably the signal to begin.

1 Chronicles 15:20 "And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth;"

Who were eight of the second degree. Aziel is the same with Jaaziel (1 Chron. 15:18), and Ben is left out, in whose room Azaziah, in the next verse, seems to be put. Ben is thought to be sick or dead before they came to execute their office, and whom the father of Kimchi takes to be the same with him who is expressed (in the title of Psalm 9:1), which title is, "on Muthlabben", or the death of Ben. These were appointed to sound:

"With psalteries on Alamoth": Psalteries were another kind of instruments of music; and Alamoth was either the beginning of a song, to the tune of which those instruments played, or the tune itself, and the note of it. Either the treble or counter tenor, a shrill sound, like that of organs, which this word sometimes signifies (see Psalm 46:1).

The psalteries were musical instruments. Alamoth is a musical term, as well.

1 Chronicles 15:21 "And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel."

These six were appointed to sound.

"With harps on the Sheminith to excel": Which Sheminith some take to be a harp with eight strings, or the beginning of a song, or a musical tone (see the title of Psalm 6:1).

These used a totally different type of musical instrument. Harps were stringed instruments.

1 Chronicles 15:22 "And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, [was] for song: he instructed about the song, because he [was] skillful."

But the chief for the song were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan; rather for the burden. As the Targum, for the lifting up and bearing the Ark.

"He instructed about the song": Or about the taking up and bearing the burden, the Ark. Directing when to take it up, and how far to go with it, and then rest.

"Because he was skillful": A wise and prudent man in all things, and so proper to direct in this business.

This is just saying, that he was the director of song. He was the leader and the director. Notice, why he was the leader, he was skilled.

1 Chronicles 15:23 "And Berechiah and Elkanah [were] doorkeepers for the ark."

Either while it was at Kirjath-jearim, and at Obed-edom's house; or rather after it was put in the tabernacle David had prepared for it. Though it may be best of all to understand it, that those, as it was carrying, went before it, to keep the people from pressing to it, and gazing on it.

Perhaps, they would be doorkeepers, when it was safe in the tent that David had prepared for it.

1 Chronicles 15:24 "And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the Ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah [were] doorkeepers for the ark."

(See Numbers 10:1-10), for more detail about the "trumpets".

Obed-edom had been a doorkeeper, when it was in his house. Perhaps the four doorkeepers walked with the Ark to assure that no one would open it. The seven priests that blew the trumpets, probably walked between the two sets of doorkeepers.

Num. 10:2 "Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps."

The trumpets here, should have been formed of a piece of silver with no seams. These would not be the rams' horns.

Verses 15:25 – 16:3 (see notes on 2 Sam. 6:12-19).

Verses 25-29: David wore a "robe of fine linen" and an "ephod" (vest). This priestly clothing signified that David was both king and priest for his people, an amazing foreshadowing of Jesus. Ideally, every believer's worship is full of such "joy", forgiveness and restoration as was celebrated here.

1 Chronicles 15:25 "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom with joy."

He and the principal men of the nation, and the officers of the army or militia.

"Went to bring up the Ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy": With all demonstrations of it; for which purpose such a band of music was prepared, as before described.

This was no small procession. This was a festive time, but also a time of humbleness before the LORD. This time the law will be observed in the moving of the Ark.

1 Chronicles 15:26 "And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams."

Not merely granted them bodily strength to carry it, which did not require a great deal. But helped them to carry it with cheerfulness, and without fear, and so as to commit no error. Or in any respect provoke his displeasure, as when it was brought before from Kirjath-jearim.

"That they offered seven bullocks and seven rams": By way of thanksgiving, besides what David offered. And this was done by the way (see 2 Sam. 6:13).

"Seven" means spiritually complete. The sacrificing was done to cover any and all sins that might keep this journey from being pleasing unto the LORD. Sins of omission and commission were thought of in this. This is mentioned (in the 6th chapter of 2 Samuel).

1 Chronicles 15:27 "And David [was] clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also [had] upon him an ephod of linen."

For though a king, he being among the singers, was clothed as they; for so it follows:

"And all the Levites that bare the Ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song": Or of those that bore the burden, the Ark, as the Targum:

"And the singers": All were clothed in robes of fine linen.

"David also had upon him an ephod of linen": Which he had besides his linen robe, and was over it. And being a shorter and tighter garment, it bound the other closer to him. Though some think this is explanative of the former, and designs the same, and is what others, besides priests, were on occasion allowed to wear.

For "Ephod" (see the note on 1 Sam. 2:18).

The "linen" symbolized being clothed in righteousness. They had examined themselves, and put on the righteousness of God for this trip. They all wore the linen, because they were all in the service of God. The ephod was worn by David on this trip, because he was the official in charge of the journey. He was representing all of Israel to the LORD.

1 Chronicles 15:28 "Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps."

And all Israel were bringing. Samuel has "and David and all the house of Israel," and "Ark of the Lord."

"Cornet": Rather, trumpet. The rest of this verse is wanting in Samuel, but all the additional instruments have already been mentioned (1 Chron. 15:16-21).

"Trumpets": Clarions, or straight trumpets. The last clause should be rendered, "and with clanging cymbals, with harps and lutes." (compare Psalm 150:3-4).

This was not a quiet procession. The music was played loudly, and so were the trumpets blown by the priests. The singing was loud as well. The shouting that accompanied showed that with great joy in their hearts as they brought the Ark to Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 15:29 "And it came to pass, [as] the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart."

Of the palace, to see the procession (see 2 Sam. 6:16). Where not only this circumstance is related, and the inward contempt she had for David, because of his behavior, but also what she said, and what David returned in answer to it.

David was dancing in the spirit before the Ark of God. Michal was the wife of David, but was, also the daughter of Saul. In the 6th chapter of 2 Samuel, it speaks of David leaping and dancing. We do not know why she really despised David in her heart. It could have been jealousy that Saul did not get this honor. It also could be that she was not as close to God as David was. We do know that she was never to have children, because of this incident.

1 Chronicles Chapter 15 Questions

1. In verse 1, David prepared a place for the Ark and pitched for it a _____.
2. How long did the Ark remain at Obed-edom?
3. Why does the author believe this is a new tent?
4. None ought to carry the Ark, but the _____.
5. What had David done to avoid another death while moving the Ark?
6. How was the Ark to be carried?
7. Who are meant by "all Israel"?
8. In verse 4, who does David assemble to move the Ark?
9. The children of Aaron were the _____ family.
10. Why is Kohath mentioned first?
11. Aaron was descended from Kohath through _____.
12. How many of the sons of Merari came with Asaiah?
13. Who was the chief of the sons of Gershon at the time of David?
14. Elizaphan was the grandson of _____.
15. Who was Hebron's father?
16. Who were the two acting high priests at the time of David?
17. Which one of them was descended from Eleazar?
18. Abiathar was the fourth from _____.

19. What did David tell the Levites to do, before they came?
20. What did they do to sanctify themselves?
21. What had David realized, since he had first tried to move the Ark?
22. How had the Levites prepared themselves for this, to make sure they do not sin?
23. How did they carry the Ark?
24. In verse 16, we read that there would be _____ and _____ that would accompany the moving of the Ark.
25. Who were to sound with cymbals of brass?
26. What were psalteries?
27. Why was Chenaniah the leader of the singing?
28. Who were the doorkeepers?
29. What does the number "seven" mean spiritually?
30. How many rams and bullocks were sacrificed?
31. What does "linen" symbolize?
32. What did David do before the Ark to show his joy?
33. Who complained about what he did?
34. How was she punished?