

1 Chronicles Chapter 27

Verses 1-34: (1 Chronicles chapters 23-26), discusses spiritual leadership, while here the chronicler focuses on the civil aspects of David's kingdom.

In (verses 1-15), this section enumerates the standing army of Israel (288,000 men), which had responsibility to guard the nation and temple. They were divided into 12 divisions, each of which served for one month during the year. When full war occurred, a larger force could be called into action (chapter 21).

1 Chronicles 27:1 "Now the children of Israel after their number, [to wit], the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course [were] twenty and four thousand."

This listing of the "captains of thousands" comes from the list of the mighty men of David, the Thirty (found in 11:11-47; 2 Sam. 23:8-39). These men had served David faithfully when Saul pursued him.

A military force of 24,000 men served on active duty one "month" at a time; hence, David's standing army consisted of 288,000 men. The names of the commanders of these men follow closely those found in the roster of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23:8-39; 1 Chron. 11:26-47).

This has to do with the standing army of Israel. There were 24,000 on duty each month. It appears, there were twelve groups. Each group contained 24,000. Each group served a month, and then were off eleven months, unless there was an uprising.

Verses 2-15: Each "division" functioned rather like the National Guard instead of a standing army, serving for one "month" in a 12 month rotation. Again, the emphasis is on the Israel's unity under David.

1 Chronicles 27:2 "Over the first course for the first month [was] Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

The month Nisan, sometimes called Abib, which was March: was Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel; the first and chief of David's worthies (1 Chron. 11:11). and in his course were twenty and four; and so in all the following ones.

1 Chronicles 27:3 "Of the children of Perez [was] the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month."

This man was of the posterity of Perez, or Pharez, a son of Judah, and so had the preference and command of all the captains of the army for that month.

Jashobeam is mentioned (in chapter 12:11), as one of the three mighties of David. His was the first group on duty in the service of the king. (Verse 3 above), says that he was of Perez, or Pharez who is of Judah.

1 Chronicles 27:4 "And over the course of the second month [was] Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course [was] Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise [were] twenty and four thousand."

Dodai an Ahohite; the same with Dodo (1 Chron. 11:12), was over the course of the second month, and his lieutenant or successor was Mikloth.

Dodai is the same as Dodo. He was father of Eleazar, one of David's three mighty men. He was of the tribe of Benjamin.

1 Chronicles 27:5 "The third captain of the host for the third month [was] Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest. Or rather a prince, a principal officer, was general of the army for the third month, Sivan, or May. The same was mighty among the thirty, and even above them, for he was among the three mighty (1 Chron. 11:22), and Ammizabad his son succeeded him, or was his deputy, when other ways employed.

1 Chronicles 27:6 "This [is that] Benaiah, [who was] mighty [among] the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course [was] Ammizabad his son."

Though led by our version here, and following the Jewish writers, I have called Benaiah a priest; (see 1 Kings 2:31), yet I am now rather of opinion that he was not one. For though priests might bear arms on some occasions, yet it is not likely that one should be in a constant military office, and especially general of an army. Besides, this man was of Kabzeel, a city in the tribe of Judah, which is not mentioned among the Levitical cities (see 2 Sam. 23:20).

Benaiah was of the Levitical tribe. He was a descendent of Aaron. Jehoiada, his father, was chief priest. He was one of the three mighty men of David. We must continue to notice that each family leader is over his own 24,000 men. Ammizabad will later become David's captain of host commanding the third month.

1 Chronicles 27:7 "The fourth [captain] for the fourth month [was] Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

Asahel the brother of Joab was over the course for the fourth month, Tammuz, or June, and who being slain by Abner, his son Zebadiah succeeded him.

Zebadiah was of Judah. Asahel was killed by Abner, before this office was given. Zebadiah was in place of his father. The father is mentioned probably, because the honor was his. What is probably, meant by Asahel is the family of Asahel.

1 Chronicles 27:8 "The fifth captain for the fifth month [was] Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

Shamhuth, the same with Shammah (2 Sam. 23:11 and Shammoth (1 Chron. 11:27), was captain for the fifth month, Ab, or July.

Shamhuth is the same as Shammoth the Harorite. This was also a tribe of Judah.

1 Chronicles 27:9 "The sixth [captain] for the sixth month [was] Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

“Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite”: Was over the course of the sixth month, Elul, or August (see 1 Chron. 11:28).

Ira was one of the 30 chosen warriors of David. All of these appointments are happening about 1,000 B.C.

1 Chronicles 27:10 "The seventh [captain] for the seventh month [was] Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

“Helez the Pelonite”: Was captain for the seventh month, Tisri, or September (see 1 Chron. 11:27).

There is nothing more known of him. I might bring to your attention again, he is of the tribe of Ephraim.

1 Chronicles 27:11 "The eighth [captain] for the eighth month [was] Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

The captain for the eighth month, Marchesvan, sometimes called Bul, or October, was “Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites”: Of the posterity of Zerach, a son of Judah in the line of Hushah (1 Chron. 4:4).

Sibbecai was of Judah. He is called Mebunnai in another Scripture. He was from the prominent family, the Zarhites. He fought with the Philistine giant Saph, or Sippai, and won.

1 Chronicles 27:12 "The ninth [captain] for the ninth month [was] Abi-ezer the Anetothite, of the Benjamites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

The captain of the course for the ninth month, Chisleu, or November was Abi-ezer, of Anathoth, in the tribe of Benjamin (see 1 Chron. 11:28).

Abi-ezer was a Benjamite. Anetothites were one family of the Benjamites. It is very interesting to me that many of these leaders come from Judah and Benjamin, which will later break off from the twelve. It would be speculation to say that David already knew this break would eventually come, and was preparing early. This had to be providence of God.

1 Chronicles 27:13 "The tenth [captain] for the tenth month [was] Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

Maharai, of Netophah, in the tribe of Judah and of the posterity of Zerah, was over the course for the tenth month, Tebet, or December (see 1 Chron. 11:30).

Maharai was one of David's mighty men. Netophah was a town very near Bethlehem. In fact, the two towns connected. The Zarhites, whom he was one of, were well thought of.

1 Chronicles 27:14 "The eleventh [captain] for the eleventh month [was] Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

And the captain for the eleventh month, Sheber, or January, was Benaiah. Of Pirathon, in the tribe of Ephraim (see 1 Chron. 11:31).

Benaiah was one of David's thirty mighty men. He was of the tribe of Ephraim.

1 Chronicles 27:15 "The twelfth [captain] for the twelfth month [was] Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course [were] twenty and four thousand."

And over the course for the twelfth month, Adar, or February, was "Heldai the Netophathite": The same with Heled (1 Chron. 11:30), and who was of the posterity of Othniel, the first judge in Israel (Judges 1:13).

Heldai was of Judah. Heldai is sometimes spelled Heled. Othniel was the son in law of Caleb. Othniel was the first judge of Israel after Joshua. The majority of the captains (seven), came from Judah. There were two from Benjamin, two from Ephraim and one from Levi. Each one of them was over twenty-four thousand men.

Verses 16-22: while 12 officers are named, the tribes of Asher and Gad are not mentioned for unknown reasons.

These are names of the tribal leaders.

1 Chronicles 27:16"Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites [was] Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maachah:"

These were the following rulers or princes. The captains over the militia before named were of David's appointment; but these ruled over their respective tribes in their own right, or by the choice of their tribes. The ruler of the tribe of Reuben was Eliezer, the son of Zichri: of the tribe of Simeon. Shephatiah the son of Maachah; whether this was his father's or mother's name is not certain, it being the name both of a man or a woman.

1 Chronicles 27:17 "Of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok:"

Of the tribe of Levi, "Hashabiah the son of Kemuel": Of the Aaronites, who were of the same tribe, but, being priests, are thus distinguished from the Levites. "Zadok", who was made High Priest in the times of Solomon.

1 Chronicles 27:18 "Of Judah, Elihu, [one] of the brethren of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael:"

Of the tribe of Judah, Elihu, a brother of David's, the same with Eliab (1 Sam. 16:6). Of the tribe "of Issachar", "Omri the son of Michael".

1 Chronicles 27:19 "Of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel:"

Of the tribe of Zebulun, "Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah". Of the tribe of Naphtali, "Jerimoth the son of Azriel".

1 Chronicles 27:20 "Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah:"

Of the tribe of Ephraim, "Hoshea the son of Azaziah": Of the half tribe of Manasseh, on this side Jordan westward "Joel the son of Pedaiah".

1 Chronicles 27:21 "Of the half [tribe] of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner:"

"Of the half tribe of Manasseh, in Gilead": On the other side Jordan eastward. "Iddo the son of Zechariah": Of the tribe of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner, the famous general on the side of Ish-bosheth.

1 Chronicles 27:22 "Of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These [were] the princes of the tribes of Israel."

Of all excepting Gad and Asher, who are omitted. Perhaps he that was prince of the tribe of Reuben, or else of the half tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan, was ruler of Gad and Asher. These lying between Zebulun and Naphtali, might be under the prince of one of them.

We have already gone into detail about each of the people mentioned in the verses above. The thrust here, is the fact that they were leaders in their respective tribes. Gad and Asher were the only two tribes who were not mentioned in the list above. It appears that David is putting everything in perfect order for it to run smoothly, even after his death, when his son, Solomon, would reign. Each tribe had their own leader. We might take note that the Levites were mentioned first. Zadok was a prominent priest.

Verses 23-24: No census figure for the whole nation could be given, due to David's pre-exclusion of those under 20 years old and to the divine wrath that fell upon the nation in the form of a plague (21:6-14).

Verses 23-24: This census is mentioned (in 23:3, 24). The promise of Yahweh to "increase Israel like the stars of the heavens" refers to God's covenant with David's ancestor Abraham (Gen. 15:5; 22:17). Perhaps this is what caused Joab to question the census.

Here is further comment on the sinful census detailed (in 1 Chron. 21:1-30). David didn't try to number all Israelites because they were too many (Gen 28:14). Nor did he finish the census, being interrupted by guilt and judgment.

1 Chronicles 27:23 "But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens."

Only those that were twenty years and upwards; but, according to Cornelius Bertram, he numbered them that were under twenty, though but sixteen, through nineteen years of age, provided they were of robust bodies, and of a tall stature, and able to bear arms. Which he takes to be the sin of David, in numbering the people, being contrary to the law of God. Yet though he had ordered them to be numbered, and they were, yet he would not take them and put them into the account of his chronicles, as in the next verse, that his sin might not be known (see 2 Sam. 24:9).

"Because the Lord had said, he would increase Israel like to the stars in the heavens": Which are not to be numbered, and therefore David sinned in attempting to number the people.

This is interesting why David did not count the men under twenty years old. In most places, it speaks of numbering the men who were of the age to go to war. This tells us that David's census was not for the purpose of war. David believed God would keep the promise to make the Israelites beyond numbering.

1 Chronicles 27:24 "Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David."

This abbreviated reference to the wrongly motivated "census" is not meant to blame "Joab" instead of David; it likely assumes that the audience already knew the story (verse 23). Apparently, David kept an official record of events, "the account of the chronicles of king David." This practice was common for ancient kings.

“The chronicles of king David”: Daily records were kept of the king’s reign. None was kept of this calamity because the record was too painful.

Joab did not want to number the people. He actually quit before the counting was over. God was very angry about this numbering. David would not have these numbers recorded, because it was displeasing to God.

Verses 25-31: David had a vast, well organized system of “storehouses” throughout the nation. Israel presumably had abundant crops as well as vineyards and olive groves. The people also had numerous “camels, asses,” and herds of sheep and goats.

A summary of officials who looked over David’s various agricultural assets. These officials administered the royal property.

1 Chronicles 27:25 "And over the king's treasures [was] Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, [was] Jehonathan the son of Uzziah:"

“And over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel”: The historian here proceeds to relate who were employed in the economical and civil affairs of David. And the first mentioned is the lord of his treasury, who had the care of his gold and silver brought into his treasury, either by a levy on his own people, or by the tribute of others. Jehonathan the son of Uzziah had the care of the storehouses. In which were laid up what the fields, cities, villages, and castles that belonged to the king produced, whether by fruits gathered in, or by rents collected.

Azmaveth was over the treasuries of Jerusalem. This consisted of silver and gold, but it also, spoke of their wealth in grain. Jonathan was helper to Azmaveth.

1 Chronicles 27:26 "And over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground [was] Ezri the son of Chelub:"

“Ezri the son of Chelub”: Looked after his workmen in the fields, employed in the tillage of the ground.

Ezri was the supervisor of the work in the field.

1 Chronicles 27:27 "And over the vineyards [was] Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine cellars [was] Zabdi the Shiphmite:"

Shimei the Ramathite”: In the tribe of Benjamin, had the care of the vineyards, to see that they were dressed and pruned, and kept in good order. “Zabdi the Shiphmite (Num. 34:10), had the charge of the wine squeezed out of the grapes, both in the presses and in the cellars.

The vineyards were a great source of wealth in their land. This is speaking of the officer in charge of the vineyards and the wine cellars.

1 Chronicles 27:28 "And over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that [were] in the low plains [was] Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil [was] Joash:"

Baal-hanan of Gedor, in the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:36), was over the olive and sycamore trees, to see that they were well taken care of. And Joash was entrusted with the cellars where the oil was deposited.

Olive trees live for thousands of years, and were a great source of revenue for the Israelites. You can easily see the importance of the olive trees and sycamore trees, when we see that Joash (someone David put great confidence in), was in charge.

1 Chronicles 27:29 "And over the herds that fed in Sharon [was] Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds [that were] in the valleys [was] Shaphat the son of Adlai:"

“Shitrai the Sharonite”: Had the herds of cattle, “fed in Sharon” committed to his trust. Whether in Sharon beyond Jordan, or that about Lydda and Joppa, near the Mediterranean Sea, both affording fruitful pastures for herds. And this man, being of Sharon, was a fit man to be employed in such service. And “Shaphat the son of Adlai”: Was over those herds that were in the valleys, where were good pastures for them. Such officers Pharaoh king of Egypt had (Gen. 47:6).

We can easily see the importance that David placed on each service. He was making sure that everything in his kingdom of importance, had someone to be over it that he could trust. The valleys, spoken of here, were west of the Jordan. They had tremendous herds of sheep.

1 Chronicles 27:30 "Over the camels also [was] Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses [was] Jehdeiah the Meronothite:"

“Obil the Ishmaelite”: An Arab, as the Targum, had the care of the camels. And a very proper person he was, who must know the nature of them, and how to manage them. Arabia, or the land of the Ishmaelites, abounding with them. This man was so called, either because he was an Ishmaelite by birth or was proselyted to the Jewish religion. Or else he was an Israelite that had dwelt sometime in the land of Ishmael, and therefore so called. Bochart thinks he had his name of Obil from his office, the word in the Arabic language signifying a keeper of camels. “Jehdeiah the Meronothite”: Was over the asses, which were employed in ploughing and carrying burdens.

Obil was a descendent of Ishmael. The word "Obil" means tender of camels. The king and his sons rode on asses.

1 Chronicles 27:31 "And over the flocks [was] Jaziz the Hagerite. All these [were] the rulers of the substance which [was] king David's."

And “Jaziz the Hagerite”: Was over the flocks of sheep, the chief shepherd, who had the command of all the under shepherds. And a very proper person, being a Hagerite, or Arab; for such dwelt in tents for the sake of pasturage for their flocks, as Jarchi notes. These were the principal men that had the care of David's personal substance. So, in later times, the Roman Caesars had such sort of servants to take care of their farms, fields, fruit, cattle, etc. The rest that follow were David's courtiers.

The Hagarites were descended from Hagar, the mother of Ishmael. The substance, spoken of here, had to do with the things that made David great. God blessed Israel greatly at that time. There were no shortages of substance.

Verses 32-34: These important officials served as royal confidants and counselors.

A summary of those whose duties kept them in close contact with the king (compare 18:14-17), perhaps like a cabinet. When David's son, Absalom, rebelled against him, Ahithophel betrayed David and joined the revolution. Hushai pretended loyalty to Absalom, and his advice caused Absalom's death (2 Sam. 15:31 - 17:23).

1 Chronicles 27:32 "Also Jonathan David's uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni [was] with the king's sons:"

“Jonathan”: Or to whom David was uncle, the son of Shimea, his brother being a wise and learned man, was his counsellor (see 2 Sam. 21:21). And Jehiel the Hachmonite was preceptor, or tutor to the king's sons. That brought them up, and took care of their education.

Jonathan was held in high esteem by David. He was David's personal counsellor. He worked in the presence of David. He was a scribe, as well as counsellor. He attended all the special events with David. This Jehiel was tutor to David's sons. One of them would be king someday. It was his job to see that they were trained and ready.

1 Chronicles 27:33 "And Ahithophel [was] the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite [was] the king's companion:"

Ahithophel was his counsellor until the conspiracy and rebellion of Absalom. And “Hushai the Archite”: was his companion, friend, and favorite, with whom he conversed at leisure hours.

Mentioned here as the “king's counsellor”, Ahithophel later betrayed David and joined Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. chapters 15-17).

A wise king would have more than one counsellor. David was no exception to this. Ahithophel was a counsellor along with Jonathan, David's relative. Hushai was friend and confidant of David. Even though he was good friend to David, he helped Absalom try to overthrow David.

1 Chronicles 27:34 "And after Ahithophel [was] Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar: and the general of the king's army [was] Joab."

After the death of Ahithophel, Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar, were his counsellors. And Joab the general of his army.

This just shows the succession from Ahithophel. Jehoiada took the place of Ahithophel. Abiathar is speaking of the high priest, most probably. Joab was David's commander in chief. (Verses 32, 33, and 34), contain the names of the men in closest contact with David. They were his key people in his cabinet.

1 Chronicles Chapter 27 Questions

1. What group is verse 1 speaking of?
2. How long did each group serve at one time?
3. Jashobeam is one of David's _____.
4. Perez is the same as _____.
5. Dodai is the same as _____.
6. He was the father of _____.
7. Benaiah was of the _____ tribe.
8. He was a descendent of _____.
9. His father, _____, was chief priest.
10. Asahel was killed by _____.
11. Ira was one of _____ chosen warriors of David.
12. Helez was from what tribe?
13. Sibbecai was of the tribe of _____.
14. What was he remembered for?
15. What does the author find to be interesting about where these leaders came from?
16. How many men did each of these leaders have?
17. Othniel was the son-in-law of whom?

18. Othniel was the first _____ of Israel after Joshua?
19. How many of the leaders of the troops are from Judah?
20. Why had David not numbered those under 20?
21. Who led the numbering for David?
22. Why did he not finish numbering?
23. What was Azmaveth over?
24. Why were the vineyards important to watch over?
25. How long do olive trees live?
26. What does "Obil" mean?
27. Who were the Hagarites descended from?
28. Who was David's counsellor?
29. Who was tutor to David's sons?
30. Who was another of David's counsellors?
31. Abiathar is speaking of the _____ .