

Numbers Chapter 4 Continued

Verses 21-33: The “sons of Gershon” were responsible to carry the tabernacle’s “curtains”, coverings, and screens. The “sons of Merari” (3:33-37), carried the frame of the tabernacle “the boards ... and the pillars” (and their related attachments).

Verses 21-28: “Gershon”: See (note on 3:21-26).

Numbers 4:21 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Though Aaron is not mentioned here, he was concerned in taking the sum of the Gershonites, as well as of the Kohathites, as appears from (Num. 4:41).

In the last lesson and in this lesson, the message is for the Levitical tribe. We see again, the chain of Command of these messages from God. They go first to Moses.

Numbers 4:22 "Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families;"

As well as of the sons of Kohath. For though Gershon was Levi's eldest son, yet his posterity was not excused from the service of the tabernacle, and bearing things of it in journeying.

"Throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families": All in their several houses, and in the several families in those houses, that were of the age next mentioned, were to be numbered.

Gershon is a descendent of Levi. This is not speaking to the Kohathites now. God commanded Moses to count the tribe of Gershon.

Numbers 4:23 "From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation."

Take an account how many there are of that age, which were received into the company of those who ministered in the tabernacle of the congregation. And so fit for service (see notes on Num. 4:3).

"To do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation": As the rest of the Levites.

These again, are for service in the ministry, and their best years are from the time they are thirty to the age of fifty. A man's physical stamina is the greatest during these years.

Numbers 4:24 "This [is] the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens:"

The former of these phrases Aben Ezra interprets of setting up the tabernacle, making the bread (the showbread), and slaying (the sacrifices). And keeping, that is watching and guarding the tabernacle. And the latter of what they did when journeying, bearing and carrying the things assigned to them, afterwards mentioned.

It appears they are to work as burden-bearers of the things of the sanctuary. The ministry consists of more than just the high priest. It takes a number of people working together, in the job God has called them to, to make the tabernacle or the church to work. Each call is different, and each call is important. Each person must seek to find God's will for his own life. Do not look at someone else's call, and wish it were yours. God knows what you can do the best. He has called you to service in a place where you can excel.

Numbers 4:25 "And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that [is] above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,"

The ten curtains of fine linen (Exodus 26:1).

"And the tabernacle of the congregation": The curtains of goats' hair made for a tent over it, as Jarchi (see Exodus 26:7).

"His covering": The covering of rams skins dyed red (Exodus 26:14).

"And the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it": Over all the rest.

"And the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": The eastern veil, as Jarchi calls it. Which was for the door of the tent that led into the tabernacle, the Holy Place (Exodus 26:36).

This tribe does not carry the boards. They carry the curtains and various coverings. They are responsible to carry them, and even to hang them, when the tabernacle stops.

Numbers 4:26 "And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which [is] by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve."

Which made the great court that surrounded the tabernacle (Exodus 27:9).

"And the hanging for the door of the gate of the court": The eastern gate that led into the court, a hanging of twenty cubits (Exodus 27:16).

"Which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about": That is, which hangings that formed the court, and were round about the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering (see notes on Exodus 26:36).

"And their cords": Which fastened the hangings to pins or stakes fixed in the ground to keep them tight, that they might not be moved to and fro with the wind.

"And all the instruments of their service": In the court, as the tables on which the sacrifices were laid. And the hooks, and cords, and pins, on which they were hung and fastened, as Aben Ezra (see Ezekiel 40:39).

"And all that is made for them": For the vessels of service, or for the tabernacle, or the altar, as the same writer intimates.

"So shall they serve": By bearing them and carrying them.

Again, we see things that are used with the curtains and the badger's skins. They keep all of this together, so it will be less difficult to set it up when the tabernacle stops.

Numbers 4:27 "At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens."

As they shall order and direct.

"Shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites": Every one of them was to take their share, as Aaron and his sons should appoint them.

"In all their burdens, and in all their service": What each of them should carry, and in what they should perform duty.

"And ye shall appoint to them in charge all their burdens": Charge them carefully to keep all that were committed to them to bear, that none be lost, not a pin nor a cord.

Aaron and his sons will appoint a job for each of them to do in service for the Lord.

Numbers 4:28 "This [is] the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge [shall be] under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

Which they should execute when the camp and tabernacle were in motion.

"In the tabernacle of the congregation": "In the court", where they should take up their burdens, or which lie in things respecting the tabernacle. This was the part they were to be employed in, namely, in taking care of the hangings of the tabernacle, etc.

"And their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest": The things committed to their care were delivered by him to them, and they were under his inspection and direction.

Ithamar, the son of Aaron, was in charge of this particular group and the particular jobs they were to care for. Ithamar was a priest. Ithamar had been involved in the construction of the tabernacle.

Exodus 38:21 "This is the sum of the tabernacle, [even] of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, [for] the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest."

Verses 29-33: "Merari": See note on 3:33-37.

Numbers 4:29 "As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers;"

The third and youngest son of Levi.

"Thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers": Which is the form of expression used of them all (see notes on Num. 4:2).

Merari was the third of the Levitical tribes. They were chosen to serve the Lord, the same as the others. We have mentioned before, that God has a specific job for each of us to do.

I Corinthians 12:4 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

Just because we have a different job than someone else, does not mean we are not called of God.

1 Corinthians 12:5 "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."

Numbers 4:30 "From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation."

The Septuagint version here, and in (Num. 4:3), renders it, from twenty-five years old and upward. Agreeable to (Num. 8:24). At the which age the Levites went into the tabernacle, to wait and to learn their business, but they did not enter upon it till thirty.

"Even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them": At which age they were discharged from business.

"Everyone that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation" (see notes on Num. 4:3).

The age is the same as for those who were priests and high priest. The caring for the church is just as sober a call, as being a minister.

Numbers 4:31 "And this [is] the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof,"

What should be committed to their care and charge, and they should bear and carry.

"According to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation": Which was assigned to them as their part. And which was very heavy and cumbersome, and therefore they had wagons allowed them (Num. 7:8).

"The boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof": All these belonged to the Holy and to the most Holy Place (see Exodus 26:15).

Numbers 4:32 "And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden."

These belonged to the court of the tabernacle. The pillars were what the hangings were hung upon, and the sockets, into which the pillars were set. And the cords, with which the hangings were fastened (see Exodus 27:9).

"With all their instruments, and with all their service": Whatever else were used in, and served for the support of this part of the tabernacle.

"And by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden": Everything, even the least that were committed to their charge. And they were to bear and carry, either they themselves, or in wagons, were to be mentioned by name. And not only every board, pillar, and socket, were to be told out to them, and particularly named. How many they were, to what they belonged, from whence they were taken, and where to be replaced. But every pin, and cord, and the use of them. That so when they came to set up the tabernacle again, there might be nothing wanting in its place to secure it. And make it as firm as at first. Such particular notice and care does God take of all his people, and Christ of all committed to him. And so should ministers of the word of all that are their charge, who must one day give an account to God (Heb. 13:17).

This is stating again; the items they were responsible for. The boards were heavier, than the curtains the tribe of Gershon was responsible for. Everyone had to do their particular job, for the tabernacle to be set up, and function properly.

Numbers 4:33 "This [is] the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

The Mahlites and Mushites, namely, the service before observed, the particulars of which are given.

"According to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation": Agreeably to what was allotted to them in that part of the tabernacle they were concerned in.

"Under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest": Who had the oversight of these as well as of the Gershonites, as Eleazar had of the Kohathites. Though as Eleazar was the chief of the tribe of Levi, it is thought that Ithamar acted under him (Num. 3:32).

Each of the items had a specific place in the tabernacle, so they had different people to care for the same thing each time, so as to not get them mixed up.

Verses 34-49: "Numbered": The Kohathites totaled 2,750 (4:36), the Gershonites 2,630 (4:40), the Merarites 3,200 (4:44). All the Levites from 30-50 years old in service added up to 8,580 (4:48).

Numbers 4:34 "And Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites after their families, and after the house of their fathers,"

Perhaps these chiefs were the same with those who were concerned with Moses and Aaron in numbering all the tribes whose names were given (Num. 1:5). The Kohathites are begun with, according to the divine direction, and then the Gershonites and Merarites in their order. And in (Num. 4:34), is only an account of the numbering of each of them, as ordered by the Lord. And this account is expressed in the same terms in them all. There remains nothing to be observed but the particular sums of each of them.

"After their families, and after the house of their fathers" (see notes on Num. 4:2).

We see this numbering was done by Moses and Aaron, because of its importance in the tabernacle.

Numbers 4:35 "From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation:"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Again, they re-emphasize they must not be extremely young, or extremely old. They needed them to be old enough to be responsible, and young enough to be physically able to keep up the work.

Numbers 4:36 "And those that were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty."

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:37 "These [were] they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

God appointing Moses to be the minister and executor of it. See notes on (Num. 4:34).

The tribe of Kohath numbered 2,750. We remember these were like Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons, and those in training to minister in the tabernacle. They handled the holy things.

Numbers 4:38 "And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers,"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:39 "From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation,"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:40 "Even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred and thirty."

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

The tribe of Gershon numbered 2,630. They handled the curtains, and the ties, and the veil.

Numbers 4:41 "These [are] they that were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD."

Which were of eligible age to serve in it, that is between 30 and 50. See notes on (Num. 4:34).

We must also notice; that God chose them to do the work they were doing. He sent His wishes through Moses to their leaders. They did just as they knew was the will of God.

Numbers 4:42 "And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers,"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:43 "From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation,"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:44 "Even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred."

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

We see that the tribe of Merari numbered 3,200. This tribe was in charge of the boards and the heavy framing for the tabernacle.

Numbers 4:45 "These [be] those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Even though the message came from God to each of these tribes, the message came through Moses and Aaron. The tribe accepted their call, as did the tribe of Gershon.

Numbers 4:46 "All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers,"

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:47 "From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation,"

Whoever of the Levites that had any charge in the tabernacle. See notes on (Num. 4:34).

Numbers 4:48 "Even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore."

See notes on (Num. 4:34).

These are the same statements that have been made of these tribes individually. The difference, here, is they are spoken of as a unit. The total number of young men that were the age to serve was 8,580.

Numbers 4:49 "According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses."

Aaron and the chief of the congregation of Israel assisting it.

"Everyone according to his service": Called in (Num. 4:47), "the service of the ministry", or "service of service". Which Jarchi interprets of that part of the service of the Levites, which lay in singing the song with cymbals and harps. Which, he says, was a service to another service.

Though it seems to be better explained, by Chaskuni, of their taking down and setting up of the tabernacle, which was a service incumbent on all the Levites.

"And according to his burden": Called "the service of the burden" (Num. 4:47). Which the last mentioned writer restrains to the ark, table, candlestick, and altars, which the Kohathites carried on their shoulders. But may be extended to what each of them bore and carried when journeying.

"Thus were they numbered of him, as the Lord commanded Moses": From thirty years old to fifty, as Jarchi observes. For that was the order given to Moses by the Lord, which he punctually attended to. As a faithful servant in the house of God. So that Moses neither added, nor diminished from that which the Lord commanded him.

This again, explains that the numbering was by command of God. The message came through Moses. One of the reasons this is stressed over and over, is the fact that God gets angry when the numbering of the people without His permission. David found this out, when he numbered the people, and God greatly punished him for it.

2 Samuel 24:10 "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

1 Chronicles 21:10-12 "Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three [things]: choose thee one of them, that I may do [it] unto thee." "So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee" "Either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh [thee]; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me."

1 Chronicles 21:14 "So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men."

Numbers Chapter 4 Continued Questions

1. This lesson is to the _____ tribe.
2. What age males were to be counted of the Gershon's?
3. The tribe of Gershon are to work as _____.
4. Who really makes a church, or a tabernacle, work?
5. Each person must seek to find _____ for his life.
6. What is the tribe of Gershon to do?

7. Who tells them what their specific job is?
8. What specific person is their overseer?
9. There are diversities of _____, but the same Spirit.
10. What was the tribe of Merari responsible for?
11. Who numbered them?
12. How many were numbered of the tribe of Kohath?
13. How many were numbered of the tribe of Gershon?
14. How many were numbered of the tribe of Merari?
15. The numbering was by command of _____.
16. What had David done, that was so bad in God's sight?
17. What three choices of punishment did he have?
18. What punishment came?
19. How many were killed during the punishment?
20. Do you think we should number our people without God's permission?