

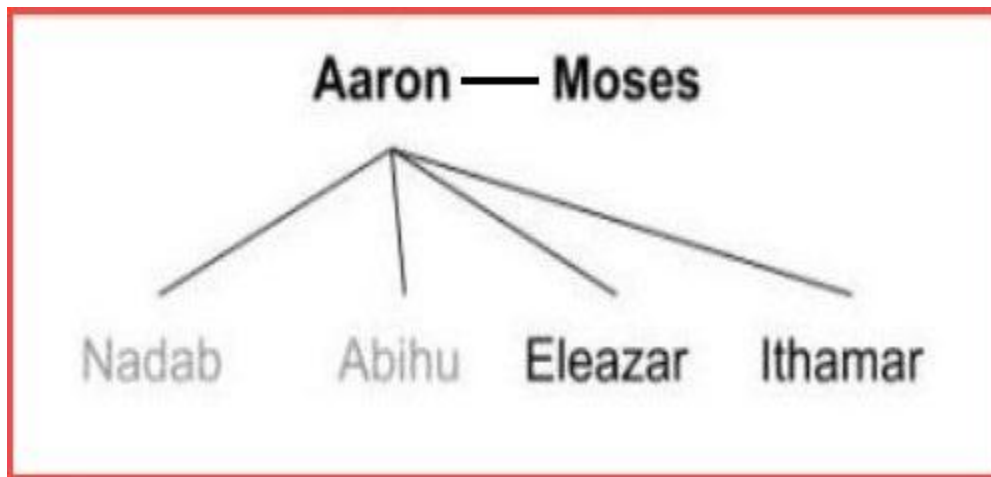
Numbers 3

Verses 1 - 4

Now these are *the records of* the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. ² These then are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priests. ⁴ But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priests.

See chart 305 Sons of Aaron



⁴ But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

The 4 sons of Aaron were ordained during a 7 day ceremony and their ministry began on day 8. However, Nadab and Abihu died by fire from the Lord on that day so they only served as priests for 1 day.

See Leviticus 10:1- 2

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on the fire and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.

Verses 5 – 10

⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶ “Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. ⁷ They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. ⁸ They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. ⁹ You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel. ¹⁰ So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death.”

⁶ “Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. ⁷ They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. ⁸ They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

1. The Levites set up, dismantled and transported the tabernacle and were responsible for the various furnishings of the tabernacle.

See Numbers 1:50 - 53

⁵⁰ And you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings and over everything that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it; they shall also camp around the tabernacle. ⁵¹ So when the tabernacle is to move on, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman who comes near *it* shall be put to death. ⁵² So the sons of Israel shall camp, each man by his own camp, and each man by his own flag, according to their armies. ⁵³ But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there will be no *divine* wrath against the congregation of the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be responsible for service to the tabernacle of the testimony.”

¹⁰ So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death.”

Normally the word layman means any non-Levite but here it includes any Levites who were not priests. The Levites were there to serve Aaron and his two sons but there was a clear distinction between the priesthood and those who served them.

Verses 11 – 13

¹¹ Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be mine. ¹³ For all the firstborn are mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be mine; I am the Lord.”

¹² “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be mine.

God had killed all the firstborn of Egypt during the last plague. For this reason all of the firstborn of Israel had to be redeemed (be bought back) from God because they were considered His.

See Exodus 13:15

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the firstborn of every womb among the sons of Israel, among people and animals *alike*; it belongs to Me.”

This event took place at the time of the Exodus (1-15-1446) but about 5 months later God decided to take the Levites in place of the first-born of Israel because the Levites stood up and fought for Him when the people of Israel worshipped the golden calf.

See Exodus 32:26,29

²⁶ Moses then stood at the gate of the camp, and said, “Whoever is for the Lord, *come to me!*” And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him..... ²⁹ Then Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves today to the Lord—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

Two important things happened at that event.

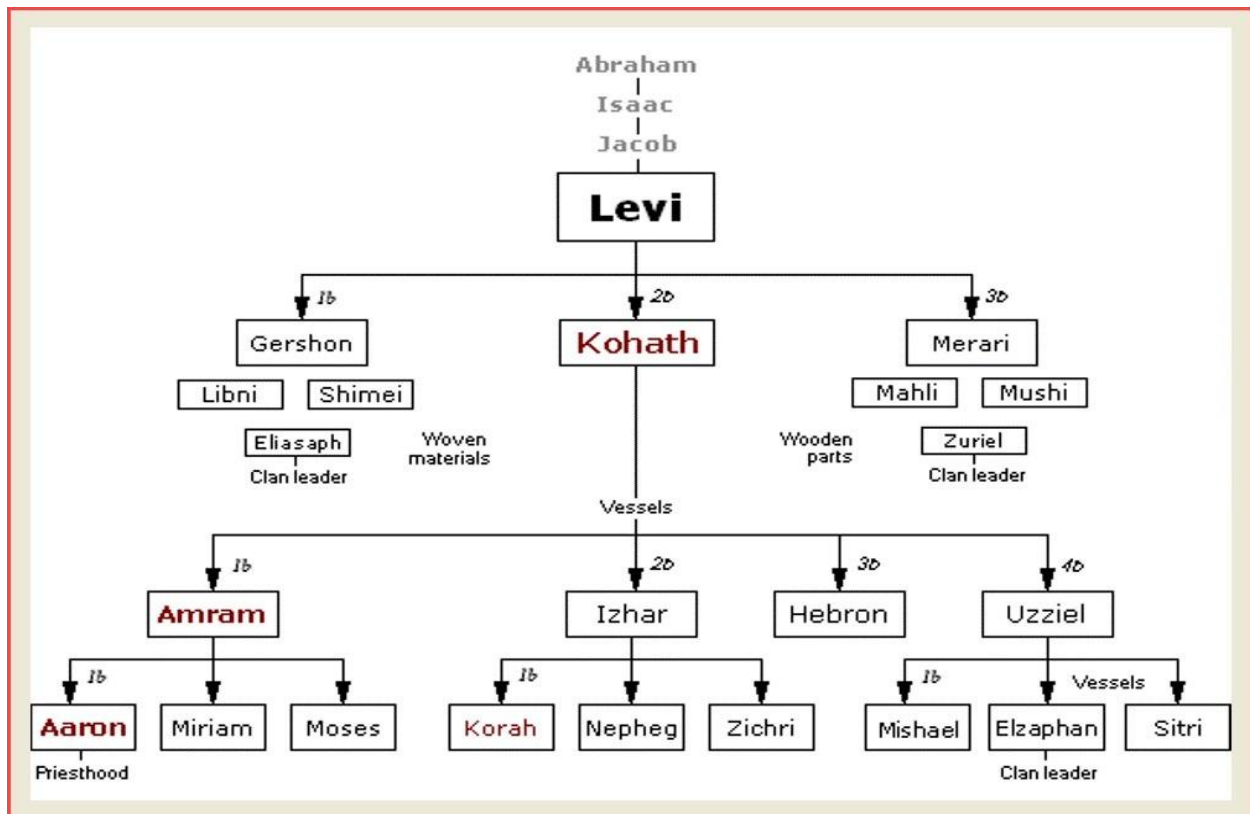
1. Moses said, whoever is for the Lord, *come to me!*" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him

2. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

Verses 14 - 20

¹⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, ¹⁵ "Number the sons of Levi by their fathers' households, by their families; every male from a month old and upward you shall number." ¹⁶ So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, just as he had been commanded. ¹⁷ These then are the sons of Levi by their names: **Gershon and Kohath and Merari**. ¹⁸ These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: **Libni and Shimei**; ¹⁹ and the sons of Kohath by their families: **Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel**; ²⁰ and the sons of Merari by their families: **Mahli and Mushi**. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' households.

See chart 310 Levi's sons & grandsons

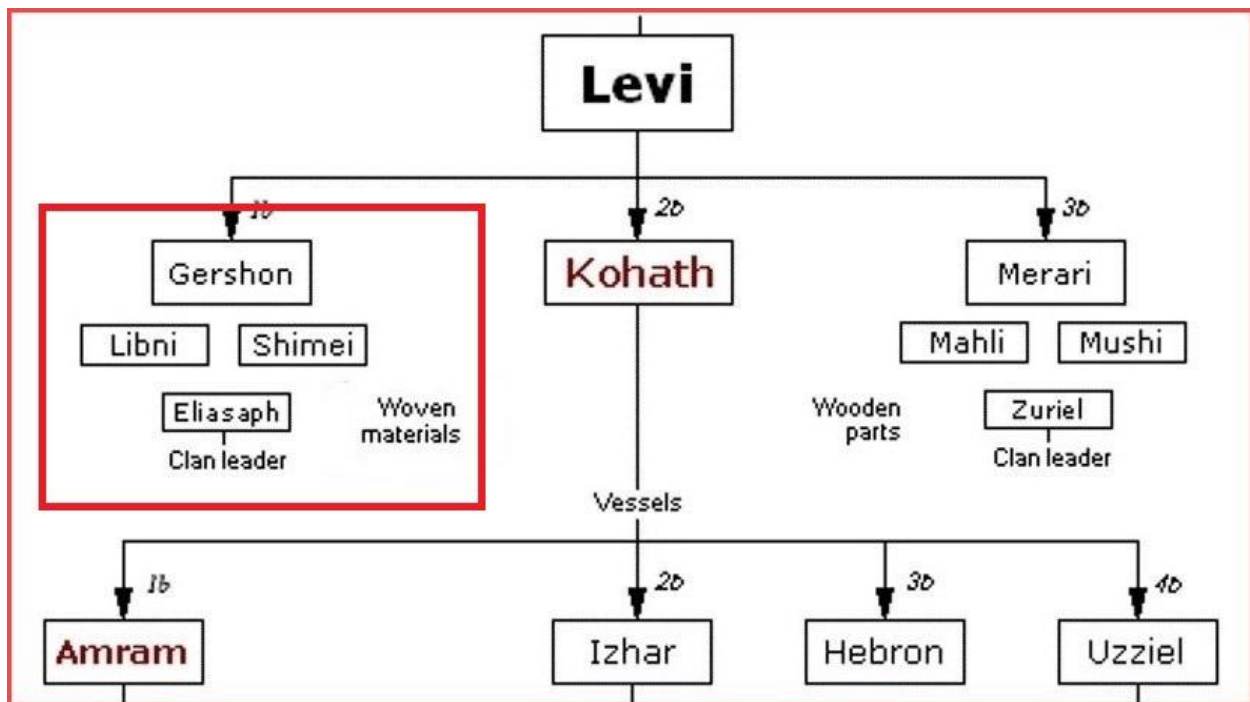


Verses 21 – 26

²¹ Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimeites; these were the families of the Gershonites. ²² Their numbered men, in the numbering of every male from a month old and upward, even their numbered men were 7,500. ²³ The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward, ²⁴ and the leader of the fathers' households of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael. ²⁵ Now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting involved the tabernacle and the tent, its covering, and the screen for the doorway of the tent of meeting, ²⁶ and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the doorway of the court which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords, according to all the service concerning them.

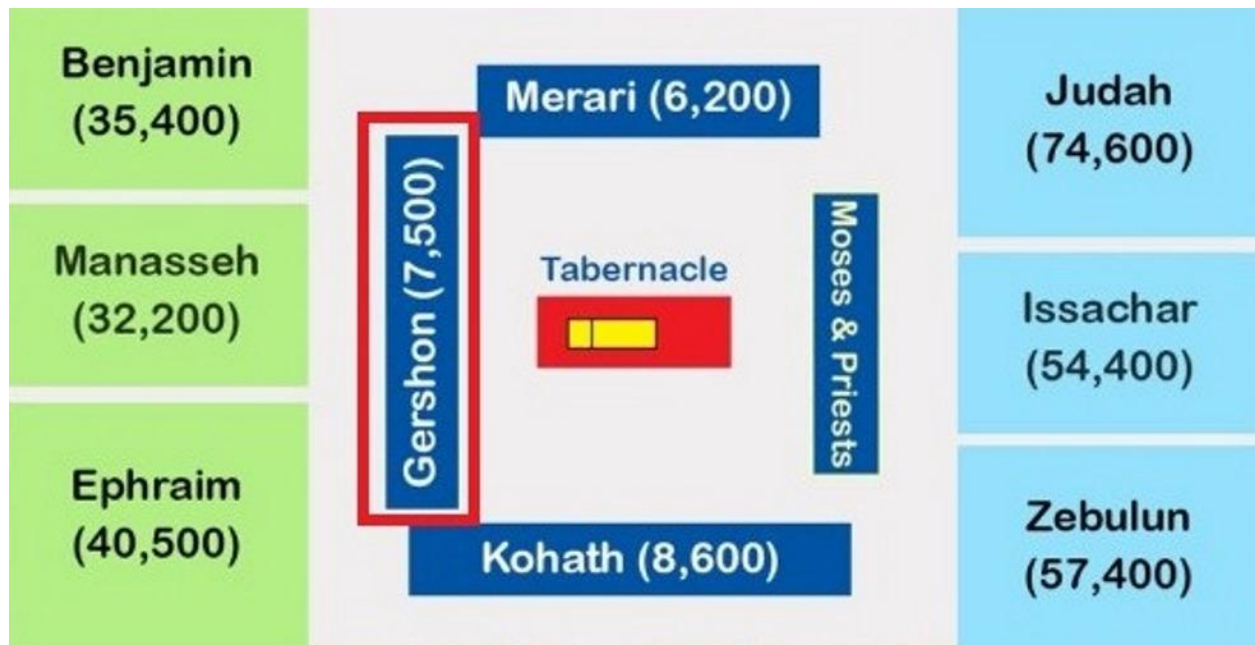
²¹ Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimeites; these were the families of the Gershonites.

See Pic 312 Gershon



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

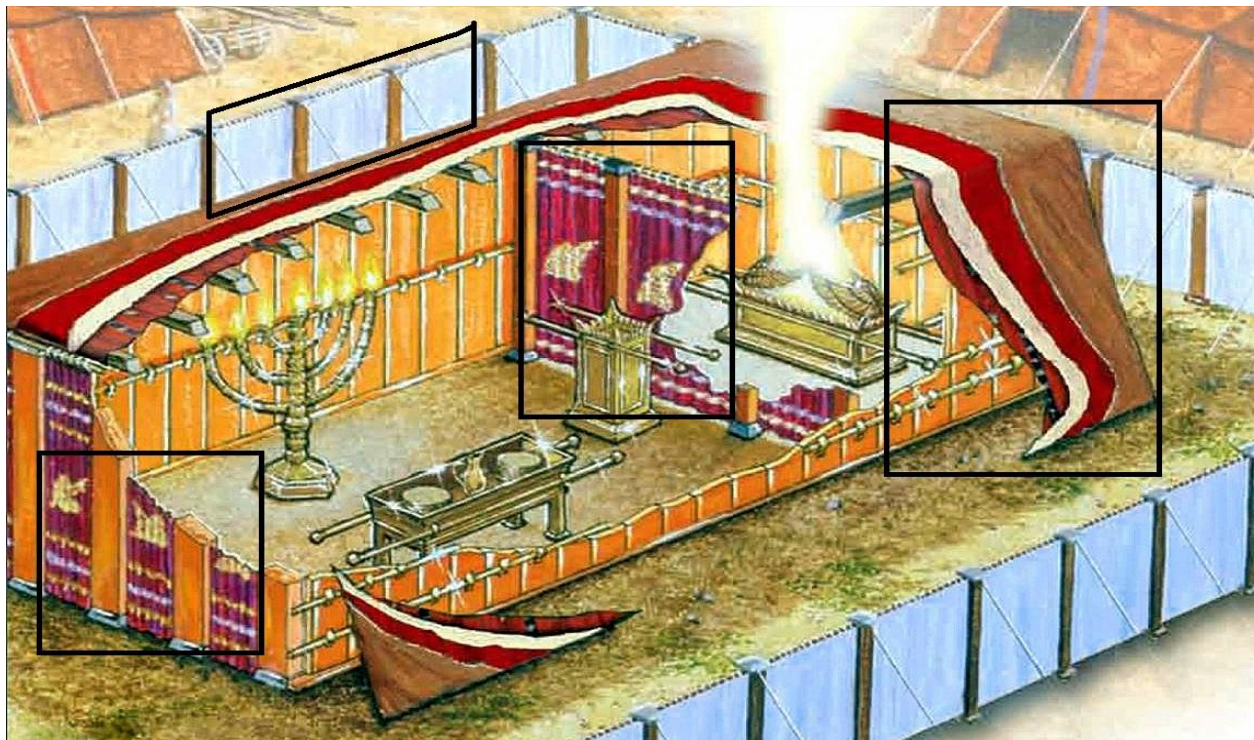
See Pic 315 Gershonites west of the Tabernacle



²⁵ Now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting *involved* the tabernacle and the tent, **its covering**, and the **screen for the doorway** of the tent of meeting, ²⁶ and **the hangings of the court**, and the **screen for the doorway of the court** which is around the tabernacle and the altar, **and its cords**, according to all the service concerning them.

See pic 320

All the woven materials



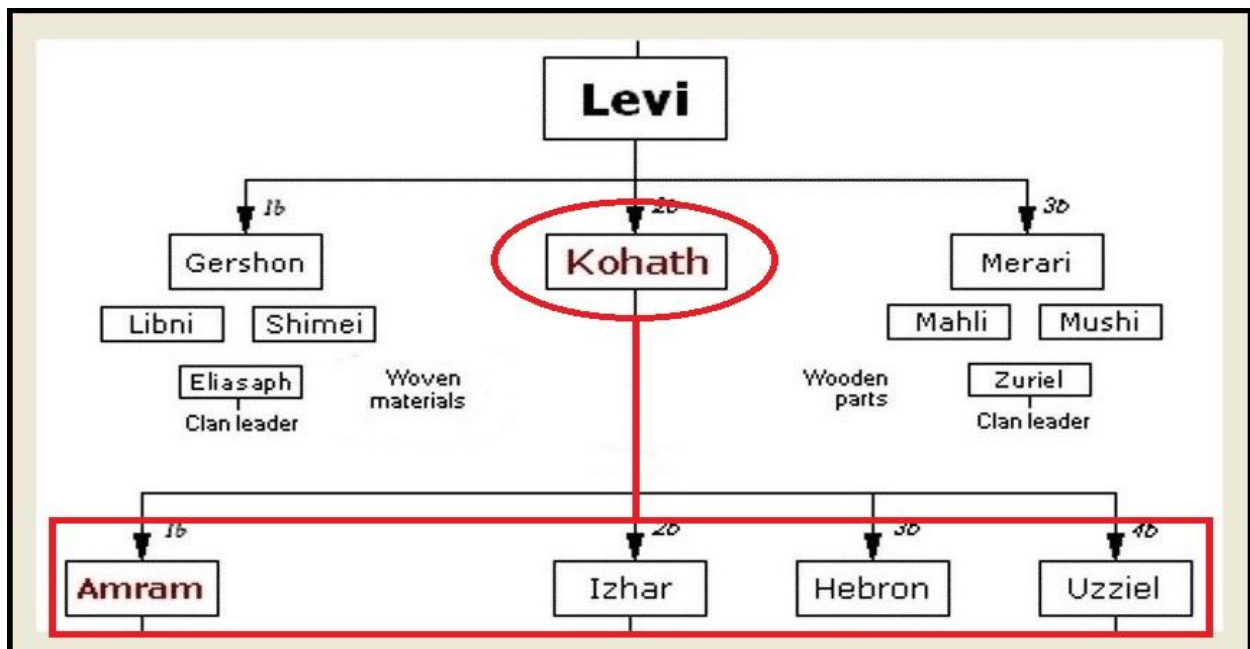
Verses 27 – 32

²⁷ Of Kohath was the family of the Amramites and the family of the Izharites and the family of the Hebronites and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites. ²⁸ In the numbering of every male from a month old and upward, *there were 8,600*, performing the duties of the sanctuary. ²⁹ The families of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the southward side of the tabernacle, ³⁰ and the leader of the fathers' households of the Kohathite families was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. ³¹ Now their duties *involved* the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all the service concerning them; ³² and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was the chief of the leaders of Levi, *and had* the oversight of those who perform the duties of the sanctuary.

²⁷ Of Kohath was the family of the Amramites and the family of the Izharites and the family of the Hebronites and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites.

See pic 325

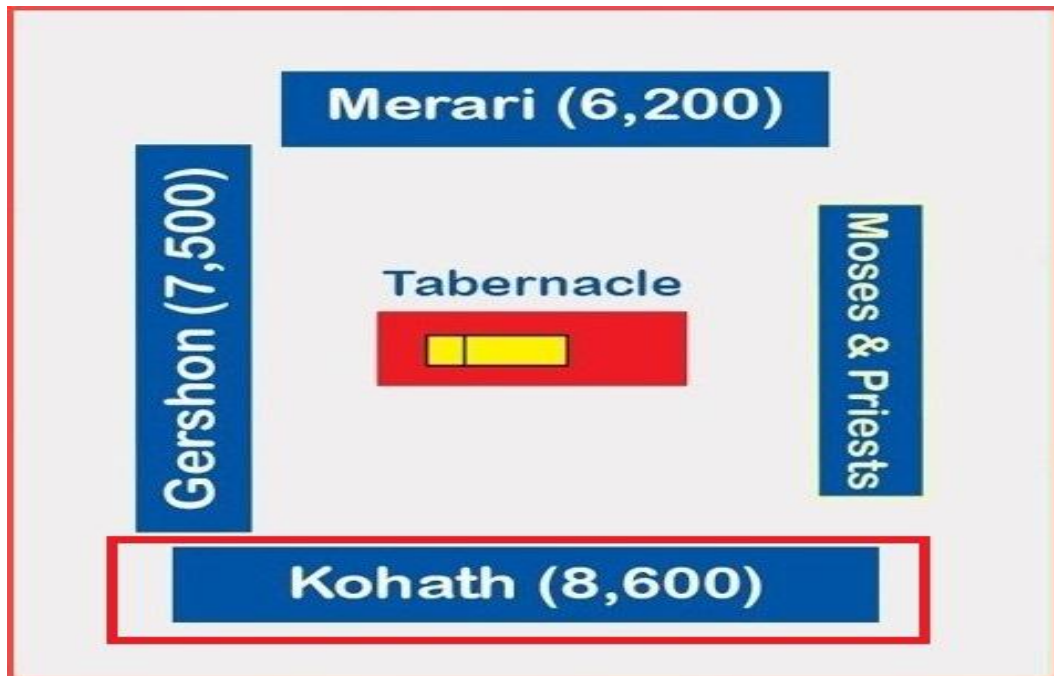
Kohath and his 4 sons



²⁹ The families of the sons of Kohath camped on the south side of the tabernacle.

See pic 330

Kohath south of the Tabernacle



Now their duties *involved* the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister

See pic 335

Vessels of the Tabernacle

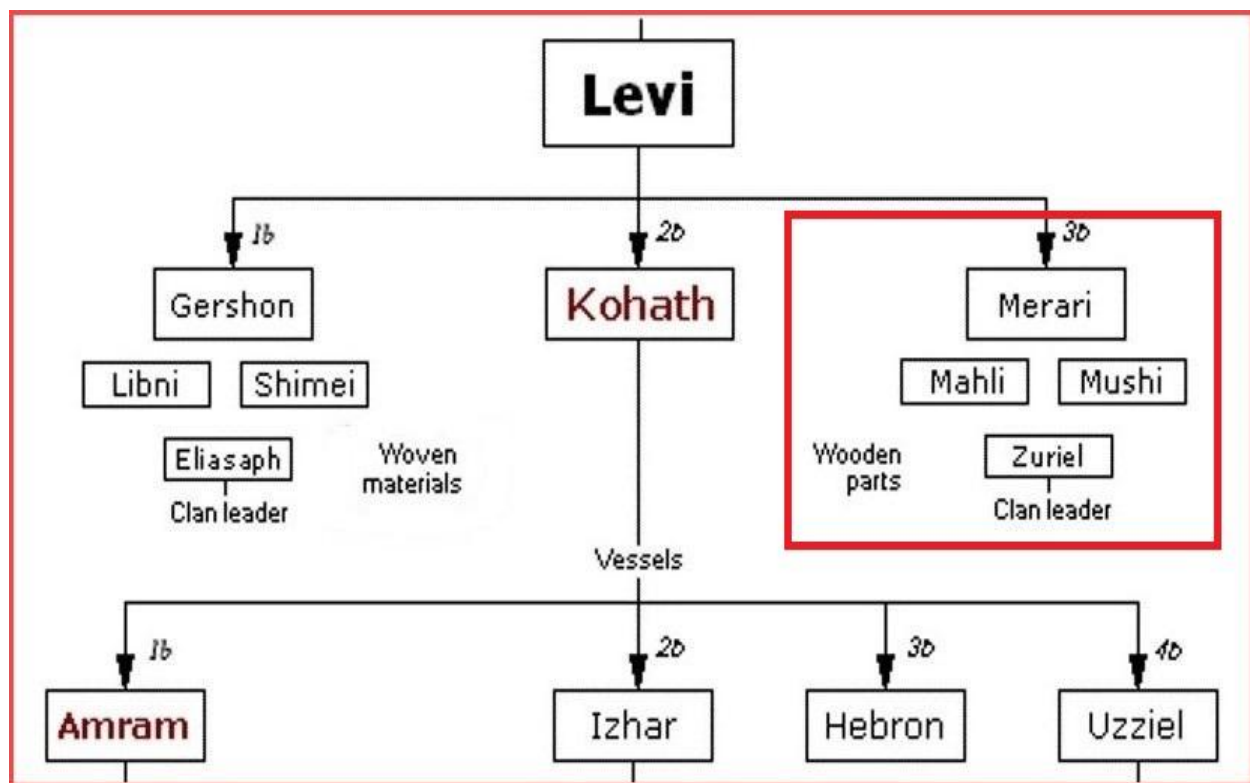


Verses 33 – 37

³³ Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were the families of Merari. ³⁴ Their numbered men in the numbering of every male from a month old and upward, were 6,200. ³⁵ The leader of the fathers' households of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They were to camp on the northward side of the tabernacle. ³⁶ Now the appointed duties of the sons of Merari *involved* the frames of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its equipment, and the service concerning them, ³⁷ and the pillars around the court with their sockets and their pegs and their cords.

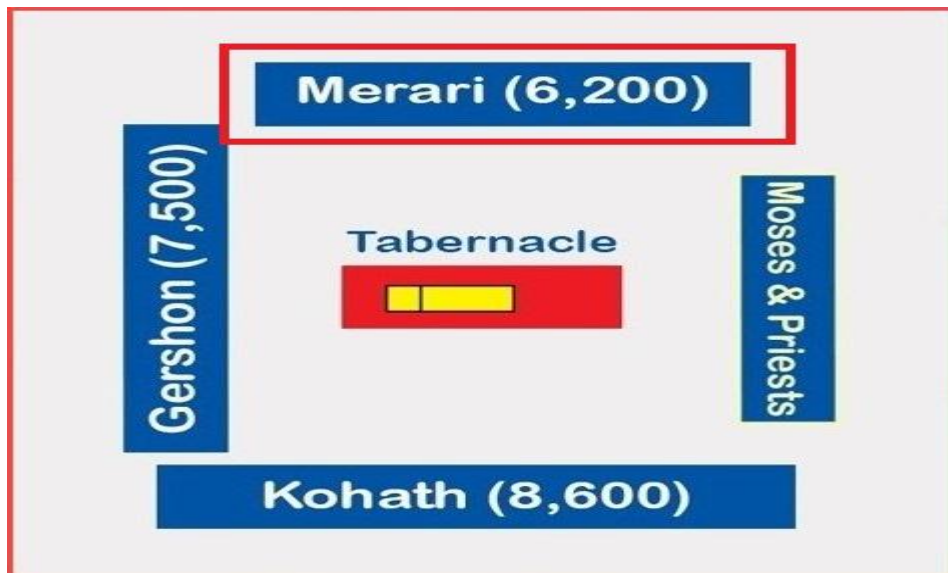
³³ Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were the families of Merari.

See pic 340 Merari



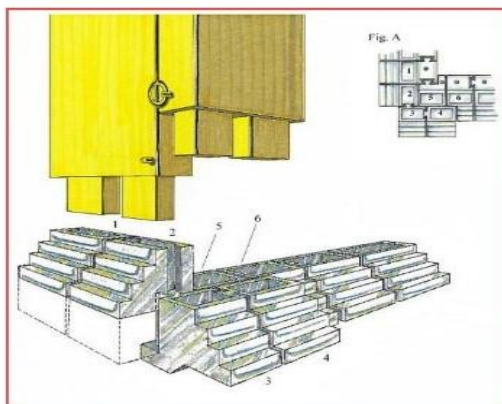
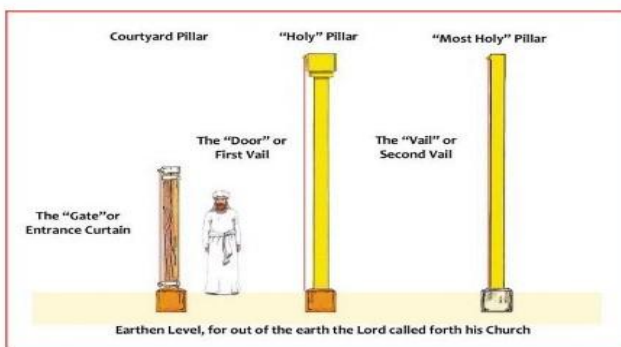
³⁵ The leader of the fathers' households of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They were to camp on the northward side of the tabernacle.

See pic 345 Merari on the North



³⁶ Now the appointed duties of the sons of Merari *involved* the **frames** of the tabernacle, **its bars**, **its pillars**, **its sockets**, and the **pillars around the court** with **their sockets and their pegs and their cords**.

See pics 350 Boards & Alum. Sockets



Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was appointed over the three princes of these divisions giving him charge of the entire tabernacle complex.

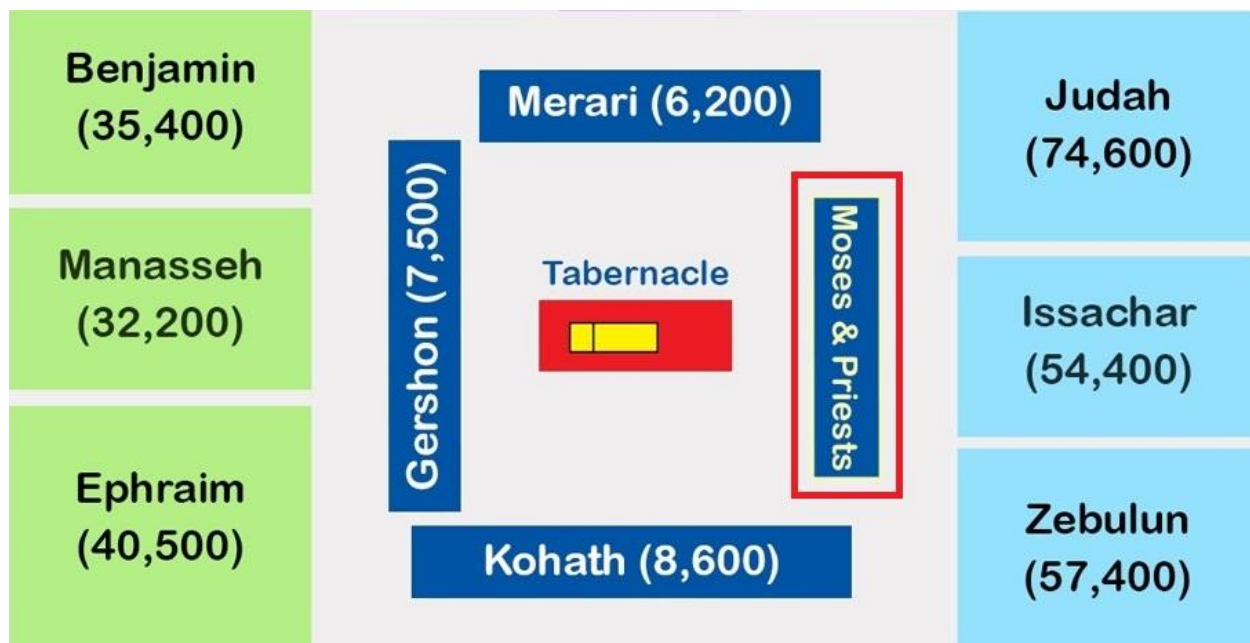
The total number of men for each division was 7,500 for Gershon, 8,600 for Kohath, and 6,200 for Merari. This came to a total of 22,300 men.

Verses 38 – 39

³⁸ Now those who were to camp before the tabernacle eastward, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, are Moses and Aaron and his sons, performing the duties of the sanctuary for the obligation of the sons of Israel; but the layman coming near was to be put to death. ³⁹ All the numbered men of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the command of the Lord by their families, every male from a month old and upward, were 22,000.

³⁸ Now those who were to camp before the tabernacle eastward, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, are Moses and Aaron and his sons....

See Pic 355 Moses & Aaron to the East



Moses was given a place of honor alongside Aaron and his sons before the tabernacle but Moses' sons were not included.

³⁹ **All the numbered men of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the command of the Lord by their families, every male from a month old and upward, were 22,000.**

This is 300 less than the total of the 3 divisions stated above. It seems obvious that the extra 300 were newborns that were less than a month old.

Verses 40 – 43

⁴⁰ **Then the Lord said to Moses, “Number every firstborn male of the sons of Israel from a month old and upward, and make a list of their names. ⁴¹ You shall take the Levites for Me, I am the Lord, instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of the sons of Israel.” ⁴² So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, just as the Lord had commanded him; ⁴³ and all the firstborn males by the number of names from a month old and upward, for their numbered men were 22,273.**

⁴⁰ **Then the Lord said to Moses, “Number every firstborn male of the sons of Israel from a month old and upward, and make a list of their names**

There were 22,273 firstborn males from one month old and upward of the sons of Israel.

See verse 43 below

⁴¹ **You shall take the Levites for Me, I am the Lord, instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of the sons of Israel.”**

All the Levite males from one month old and upward were 22,000.

⁴² **So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, just as the Lord had commanded him; ⁴³ and all the firstborn males by the number of names from a month old and upward, for their numbered men were 22,273.**

This did not include the firstborn males for the tribe of Levi.

Verses 44 – 51

⁴⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites. And the Levites shall be Mine; I am the Lord. ⁴⁶ For the ransom of the 273 of the firstborn of the sons of Israel who are in excess beyond the Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels apiece, per head; you shall take *them* in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), ⁴⁸ and give the money, the ransom of those who are in excess among them, to Aaron and to his sons.” ⁴⁹ So Moses took the ransom money from those who were in excess, beyond those ransomed by the Levites; ⁵⁰ from the firstborn of the sons of Israel he took the money in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary, 1,365. ⁵¹ Then Moses gave the ransom money to Aaron and to his sons, at the command of the Lord, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites. And the Levites shall be Mine; I am the Lord.

Originally God had told Israel that the first born sons belonged to Him.

See Exodus 22.29-30

²⁹ “You shall not hold back *the offering from your entire harvest and your wine. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.* ³⁰ You shall do the same with your oxen *and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother for seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.*

The first born son was to be given to God with the understanding that they would become the priests and caretakers of the Tabernacle. However, when God chose the Levites to replace the first born sons of Israel He put a price of redemption on the first born sons of Israel.

See Exodus 34.19-20

¹⁹ “The firstborn from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the firstborn from cattle and sheep. ²⁰ You shall redeem with a lamb the firstborn from a donkey; and if you do not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None are to appear before Me empty-handed.

⁴⁶ For the ransom of the 273 of the firstborn of the sons of Israel who are in excess beyond the Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels apiece, per head; you shall take *them* in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), ⁴⁸ and give the money, the ransom of those who are in excess among them, to Aaron and to his sons.

Since the 1st born of Israel exceeded the Levite males, Israel had to pay the ransom for the excess males. 273 males' times 5 shekels equals 1365 shekels.

But why did God replace the 1st born of Israel with the Levites? The 1st reason is based on scripture and the 2nd is based on an educated guess.

1. The Levites had showed themselves to be faithful during the time of the golden calf incident.

See Exodus 32:28 - 29

²⁸ So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. ²⁹ Then Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves today to the Lord—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

The blessing that the Levites received was that they would become the tribe dedicated to the Lord in the work of the Tabernacle.

2. Israel as a whole was immature and asking them to give up their **1st born sons** may have been more than they were able to accept at that time. There may have been a lot of grumbling about this matter and God was willing to go another way to prevent a rebellion.

It is amazing how God listened to the complaints of mankind and make provisions for their weakness. Surely this is because God is all knowing and He knows what mankind can accept or not accept at certain stages of their spiritual development.

See Matthew 19:6 - 9

⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate.” ⁷ They *said to Him, “Why, then, did Moses command to give *her* a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ He *said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.” ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

When it says “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives”, does anyone believe that Moses did this without the Lord’s approval? Moses would not do such a thing. So why did God permit these men to divorce their wives. God clearly says he did it because of the hardness of their hearts. They could not accept this law. They could not accept it in 1446 BC and Jewish men of the 1st century were not able to accept this simple truth. Not much had changed in 1,500 years. This is still true of many men in 2025, so not much has changed in 3,500 years.

With this being such a stumbling block for so many men how can they be saved?

See Matthew 19:26

²³ And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁶ And looking at *them*, Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

All of us can keep some of God’s law but in the end we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. This is why salvation by works (keeping the law) is impossible. In the end only those who accept God’s son by faith will be saved.