

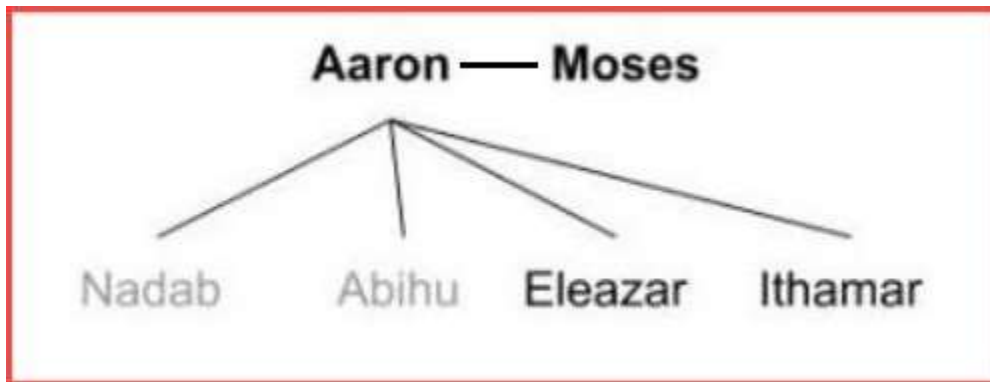
Numbers 3

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.

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



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.

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

See Leviticus 10:1-2

So Nadab and Abihu only served as priests for 1 day.

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.”

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. They set up, dismantled and transported the tabernacle and were responsible for the various furnishings of the tabernacle.

See Numbers 1:50 - 53

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-Levites 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.”

I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn

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 34:19 - 20

But instead God had decided to take the Levites in place of the first-born of Israel.

God did this because the Levites stood up and fought for Him when the people of Israel made the golden calf and worshipped it

See Exodus 32: 19 – 29

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

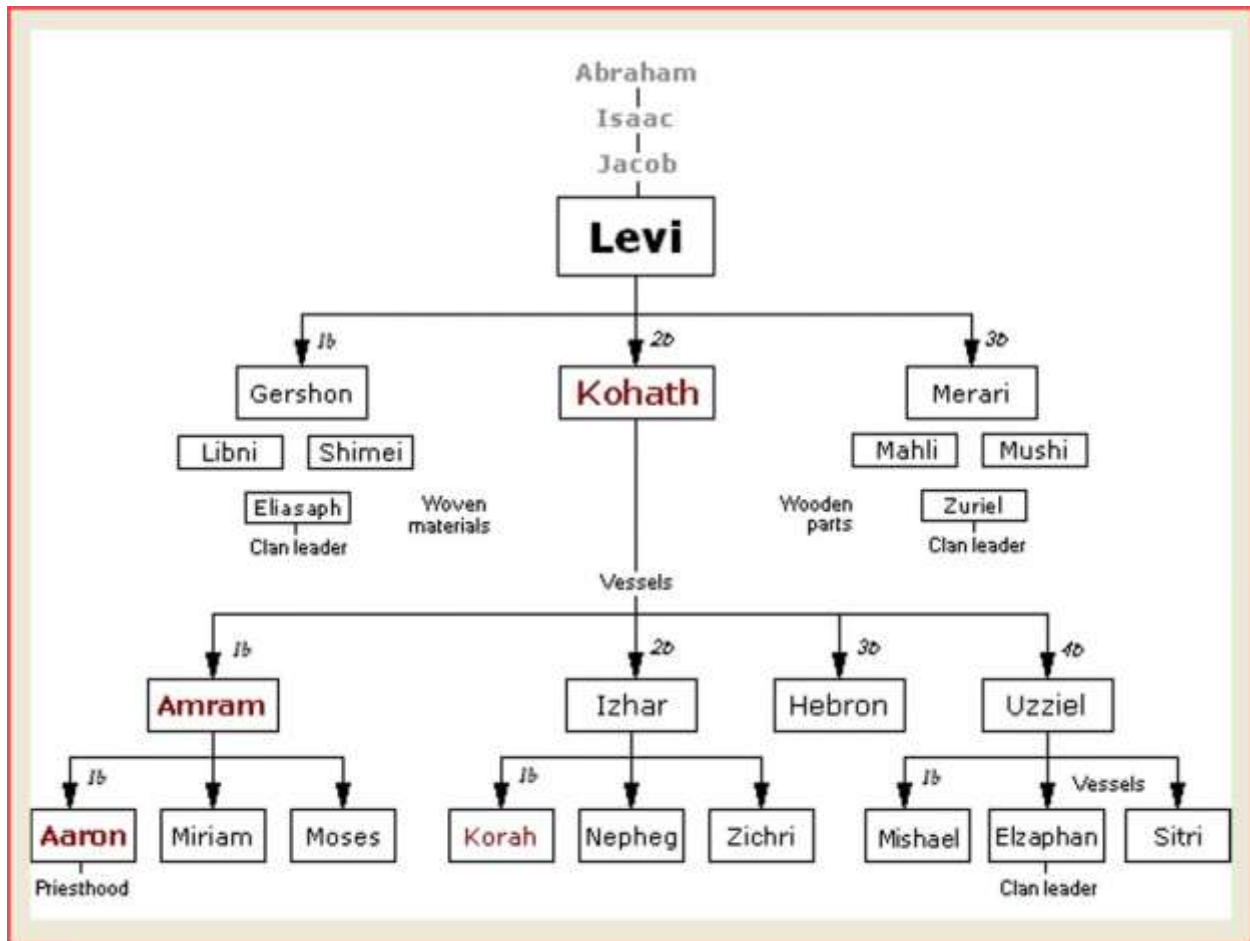
2. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

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.

These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' households.

See chart 310 Levi's sons & grandsons



Number the sons of Levi by their fathers' households

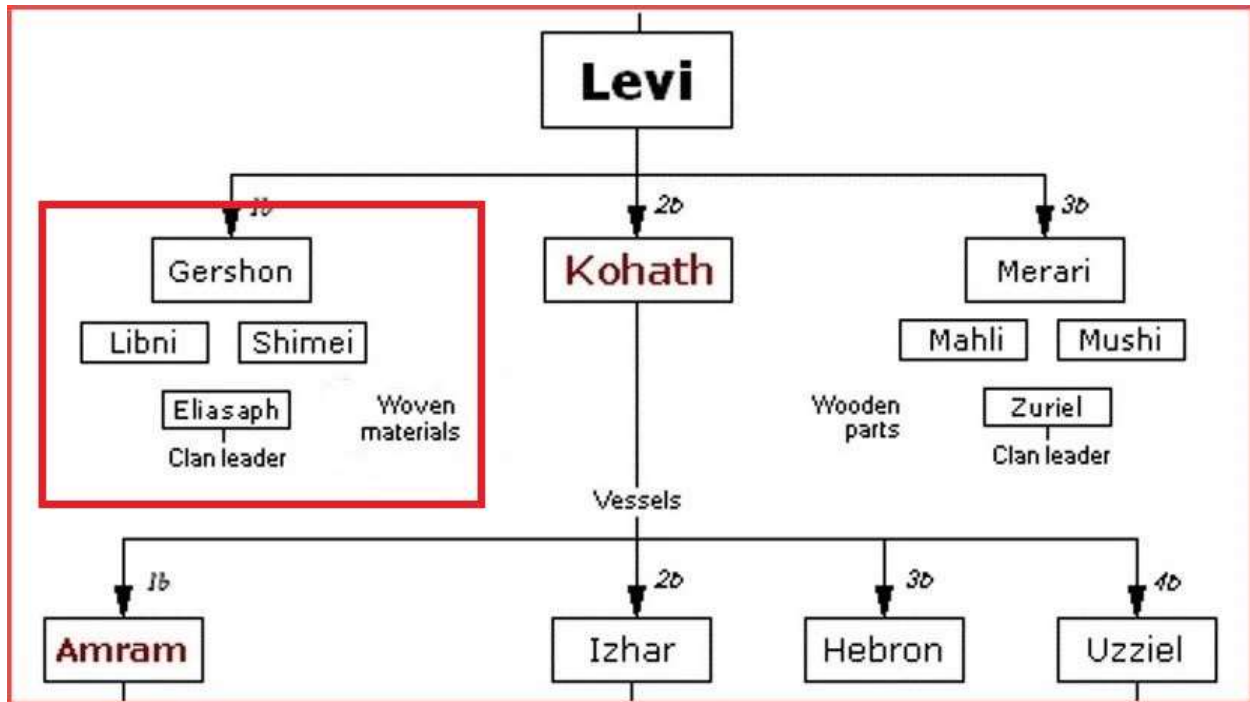
All males above the age of one month were included.

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.

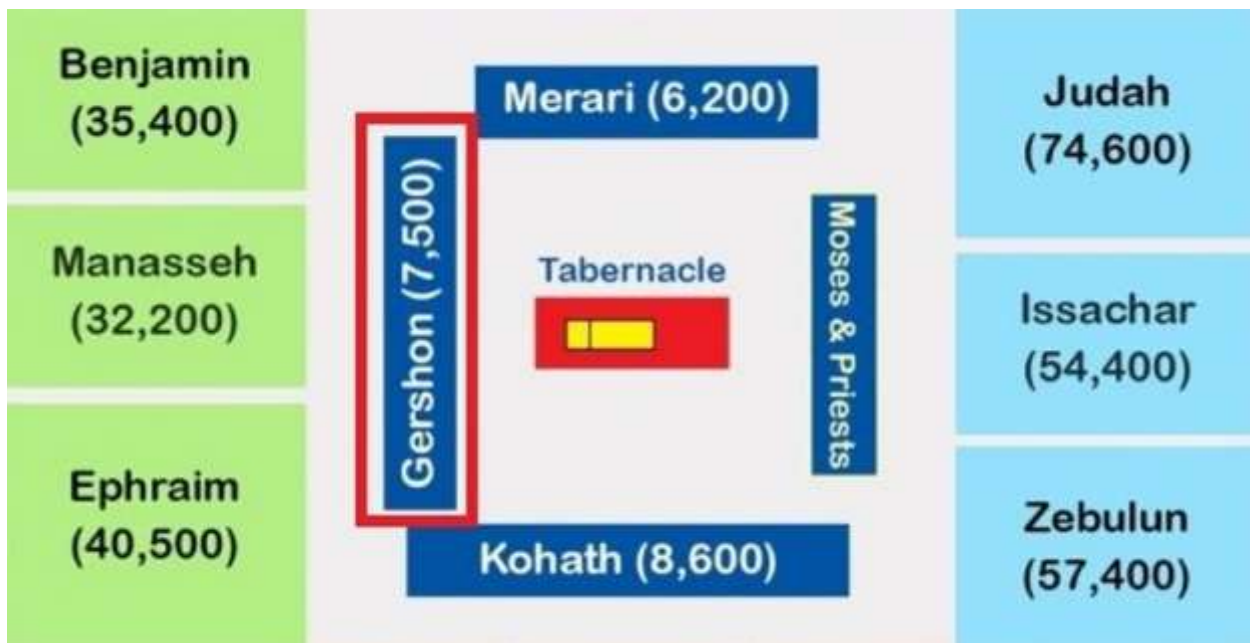
Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimeites

See Pic 312 Gershon



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

See Pic 315 Gershonites west of the Tabernacle



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 woven materials

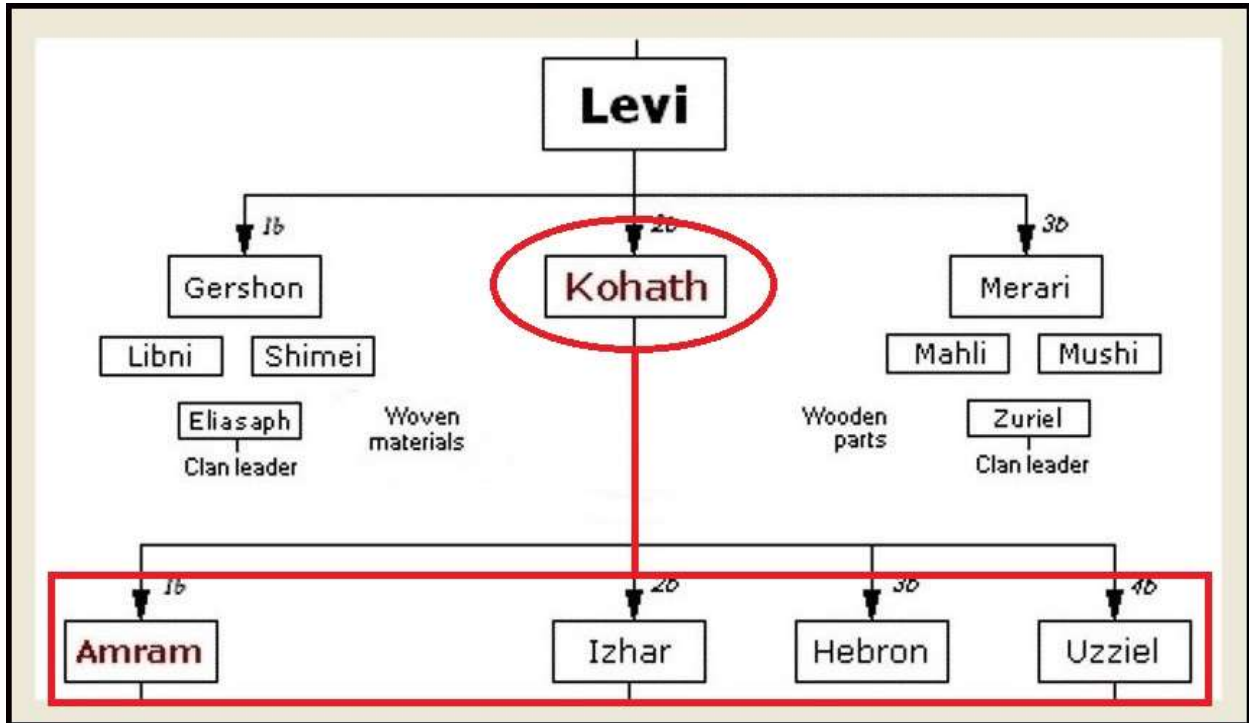


Verses 27 – 32

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.

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



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



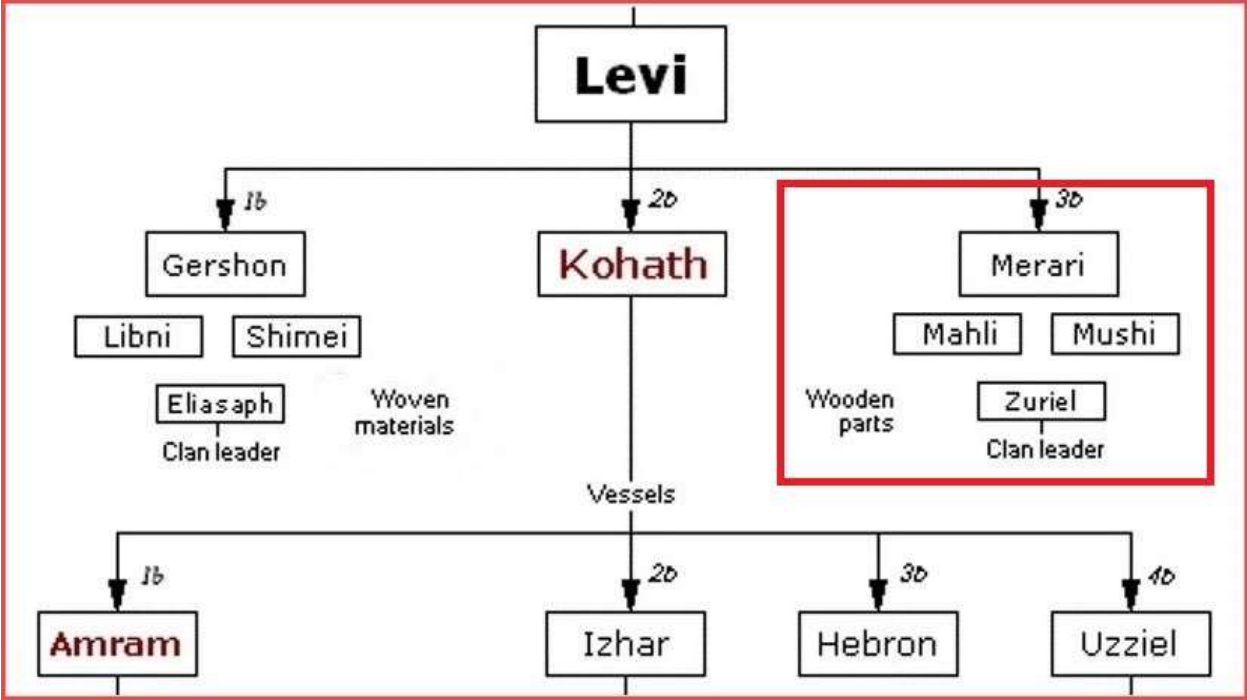
Verses 33 – 37

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.

Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites

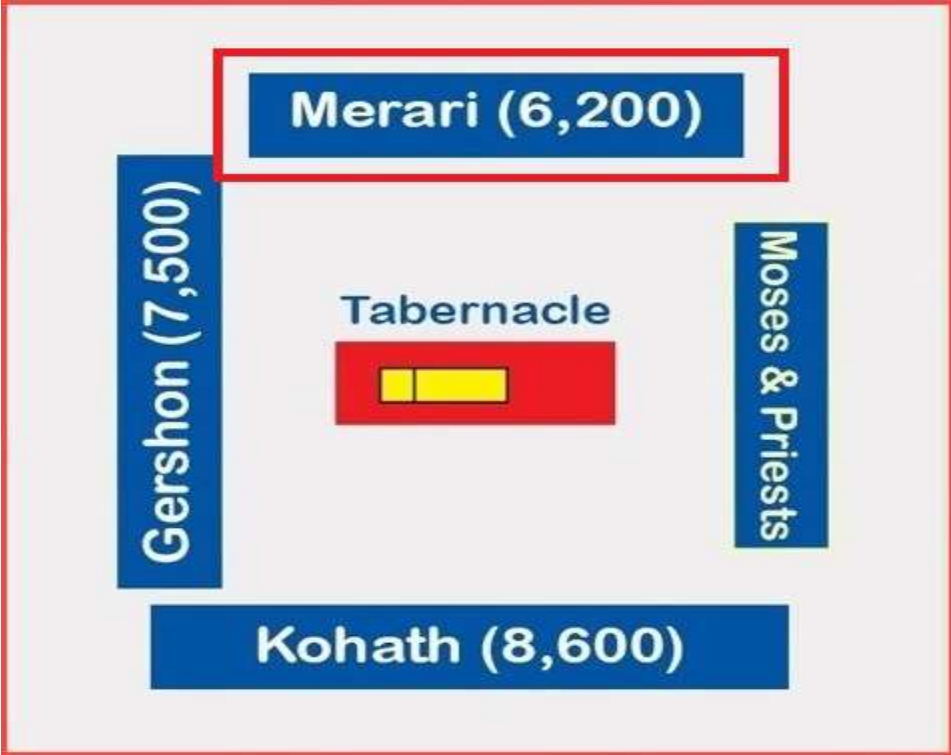
See pic 340

Merari



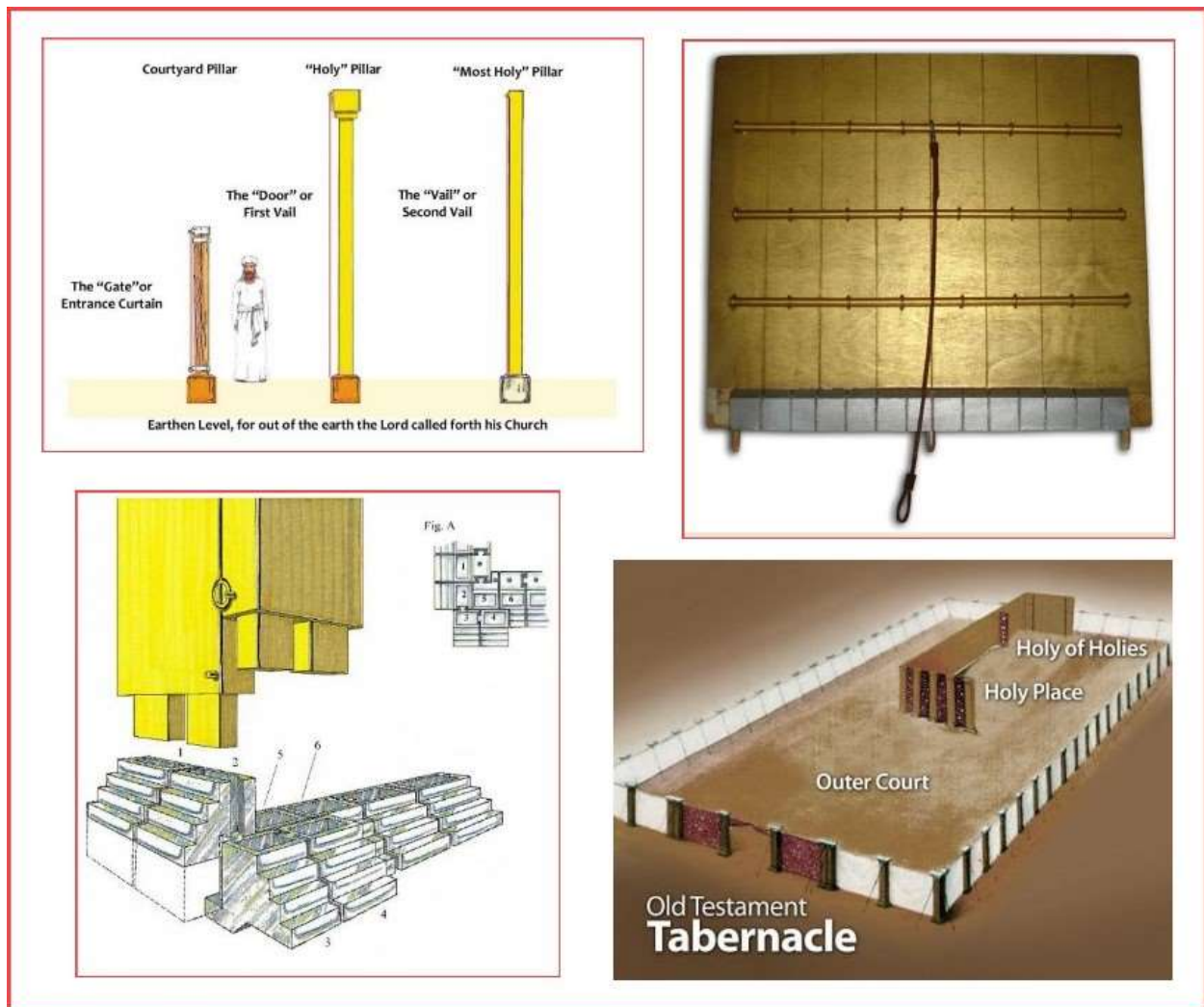
They were to camp on the northward side of the tabernacle

See pic 345 Merari on the North



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, 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.

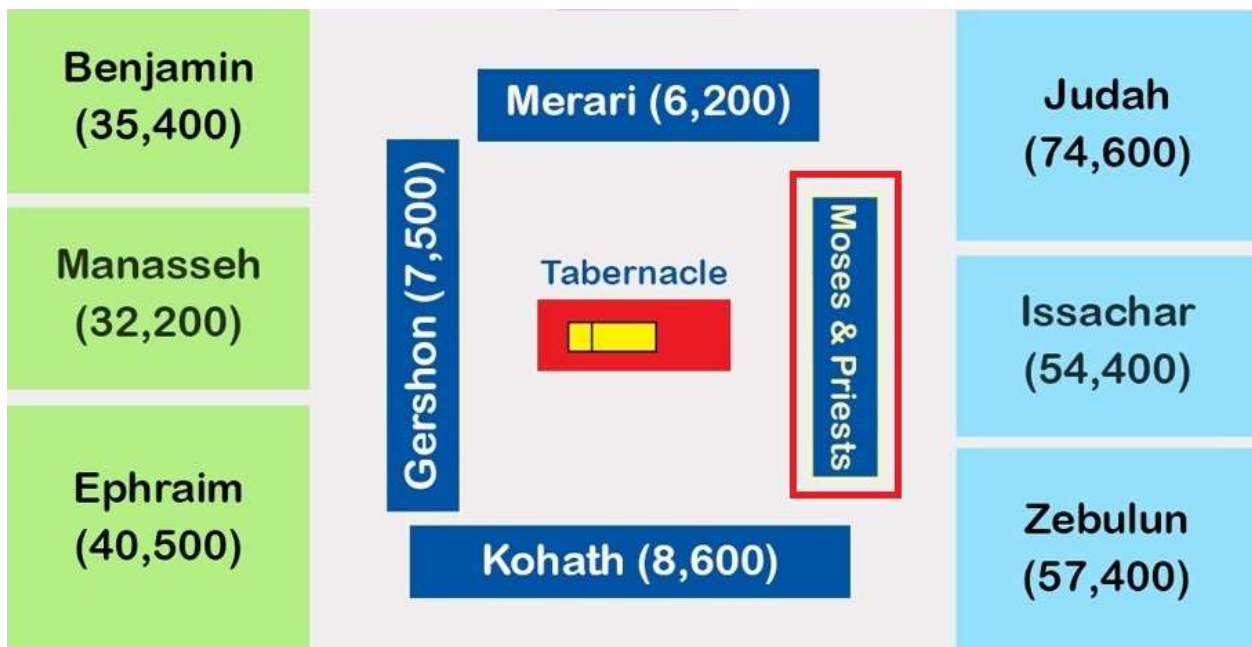
This came to a total of 22,300 men.

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.

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 at the entrance to the tabernacle but Moses' sons were not included.

All the numbered men of the Levites were 22,000.

This is 300 less than the total of the 3 divisions stated above.

Perhaps the author was using a round number.

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.

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. This did not include the Levites.

You shall take the Levites for Me, instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel.

All the Levite males from one month old and upward were 22,000. This included all males not just the 1st born males.

The difference was 273 males.

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

See Exodus 22.29-30

The first born son was to be given to God

The assumption was that they would become the 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

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, ⁴⁸ and give the money 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.

Why did God replace the 1st born of Israel with the Levites?

One reason is obvious the other somewhat less so.

1. The Levites had showed themselves to be faithful during the time of the golden calf incident.
2. This point is speculation but it is worth considering. 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.