

NUMBERING THE LEVITES FOR THE SERVICE OF THE TABERNACLE

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Previously we learned that the Levites were exempted from war and given the responsibility for the service of the Tabernacle, further they were not numbered among the children of Israel, nor was the sum of them taken. In fact there were seven specific commands given to them:- 1 Not to be numbered with the rest of Israel, 2: placed in charge of the Tabernacle and its vessels. 3: Ordered to carry Tabernacle and its vessels from place to place. 4: To minister to it 5: to encamp about it. 6. To set it up and take it down and 7. To guard it against all violations. In addition they were required to transport all the vessels, and when it was erected they were required to encamp round about it and to protect it.

Previously the Levites were counted from one month old because they were to replace the firstborn of Israel, but now they were to be appointed from 30 years old and upward. Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus commenced their ministries at 30 years of age. Perhaps indicating that a certain maturity and experience is required in those given responsibilities in the ecclesia of the living God. The service they were given continued until 50 years old.

The Levites were divided into their three families, The Kohathites; the Gershonites and the Merarites. The Levites were not generally permitted to enter the Holy or the Most Holy places of the Tabernacle but when transportation was required, certain parts and vessels had first to be covered over by the priests, before they could be carried by the Kohathites. If it was not done properly their lives were at risk. (of which Uzzah is an example (2 Sam.6:3) When the Tabernacle was being dismantled certain parts had to be covered by a priest. Reminding believers that our approach to divine things must be through our High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Kohathites were required to avert their eyes from the Holy things as Rotherham's translation put it :- They shall not enter to see (to look) at them even for a moment that which is Holy lest they die. (as the men of Bethshemesh discovered to their cost:- He smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter. (1Sa 6:19)

So when the Tabernacle was taken down it was essential that the High Priest Aaron and his sons should first take down the veil and cover the ark of the testimony with it. The veil with the embroidered cherubim represents the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ (Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, **through the veil, that is to say, his flesh**; Heb. 10:19-20) Another covering of Badger's skins was wrapped over this and the whole covered with a cloth wholly of blue, the colour of God manifestation. All the items in the tabernacles were carefully wrapped and covered over by Aaron and his sons and then carefully taken by the Kohathites and conveyed to the next camping place on their wilderness journey. The Kohathites had the responsibility for the ark, the golden altar, the Table of showbread, the Lampstand, the instruments of service and the brazen altar and the Laver. Each of these pieces of furniture represent the principles of Truth as the Ecclesia does today in proclaiming the gospel message.

In verse 16 we are informed that Eleazar the son of Aaron, the high priest designate,(foreshadowing the Lord Jesus whose priesthood superceded that of Aaron) was given the responsibility for the oil for the lampstand, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil, and supervision of all the holy furniture and vessels were properly covered and prepared for travel. Normally the Levites could not enter the tabernacle but an exemption was made in relation for the removal of the furniture. Nevertheless they were to avert their eyes from the holy things themselves.

Attention is now directed to the Gershonites, Gershon was the natural firstborn, but in relation to the Tabernacle, this is superceded and given to the Kohathites. These particular Israelites were given responsibility for the heavy loads under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the High Priest. All the curtains of the Tabernacle; all the hangings of the court, and their cords.

Similarly the third son of Levi, the Merarites is now described. These had responsibility for the heaviest items of the tabernacle. All the boards of the Tabernacle, all the pillars, all the sockets, all the pillars of court, sockets, pins and cords. It is suggested that the pieces of the frame work were all numbered making the reconstruction at the next camping site, relatively easy. D.I.Y on a grand scale over 3,500 years ago!