

# 1 Chronicles 6:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. And these are the families of the Levites according to their fathers.

## Analysis

**The sons of Merari** (בְּנֵי מֶרָרִי)—Merari means 'bitter' or 'sad,' yet this Levitical clan served joyfully in God's sanctuary. **Mahli** (מַחֲלִי 'mild' or 'sick') and **Mushi** (מוֹשִׁי 'yielding') bear names suggesting weakness, yet they bore the heavy tabernacle framework (Numbers 4:29-33)—the boards, bars, pillars, and sockets that gave structure to God's dwelling place.

**These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers** (אֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּחוֹת הַלְלוּ לְאַבְוֹתֵיהֶם)—the phrase emphasizes patrilineal inheritance of sacred duty. Unlike the priesthood (restricted to Aaron's line), all Levi's descendants shared sanctuary service, with Merari's descendants carrying the foundational structural elements. God's choice of the 'bitter' clan for foundational work reveals His pattern: using the weak things to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27).

The Merarites' service—hauling heavy beams and sockets through wilderness—was unglamorous compared to Kohathite care of sacred vessels or Gershonite handling of fine curtains, yet without their burden-bearing, the tabernacle couldn't stand. This foreshadows Christ's foundation-laying (1 Corinthians 3:11) and the Church's need for unsung servants.

## Historical Context

Merari's clan received specific assignments during the wilderness wanderings (1400s BC) and continued these traditional roles through the temple period. The

Chronicler, writing to post-exilic Levites (450-400 BC) reestablishing temple service with limited resources and workforce, emphasizes that even the 'bitter' and 'mild' clans had indispensable roles. This countered any hierarchical thinking that devalued support roles compared to more visible priestly functions.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's choice of the 'bitter' (Merari) clan for foundational structural work challenge your assumptions about which roles in God's kingdom are most important?
2. What 'heavy framework' responsibilities in your church are unglamorous but essential, and how can you honor those who bear these burdens?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּנֵי י	מְרָרִי י	מַחֲלִי י	וּמֹשִׁי י	וְאֵלֶּה	מִשְׁפְּחֹת זֹאת
<b>The sons</b>	<b>of Merari</b>	<b>Mahli</b>	<b>and Mushi</b>	H428	<b>And these are the families</b>
H1121	H4847	H4249	H4187		H4940
הַלְוִיִּם	לְאֻבֵּיתֵיהֶם:				
<b>of the Levites</b>	<b>according to their fathers</b>				
H3881	H1				

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Chronicles 23:21** (Parallel theme): The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. The sons of Mahli; Eleazar, and Kish.

**1 Chronicles 24:26** (Parallel theme): The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno.

