

Numbers 26:57

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And these are they that were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites: of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites: of Merari, the family of the Merarites.

Analysis

These are they that were numbered of the Levites after their families—the Levites (לֵוִיִּם) receive separate census treatment. While other tribes numbered fighting men 20+, Levites counted all males from one month old (v. 62). Gershon (גֵרְשׁוֹן, "exile/stranger"), Kohath (קָהָת, "assembly"), and Merari (מֵרָרִי, "bitter")—the three divisions—organized tabernacle service.

The names carry meaning: exiles who assemble in bitterness? Or strangers who gather despite bitterness? Levites owned no land ("exile"), gathered for worship ("assembly"), and tasted life's bitterness serving a stiff-necked people. Yet they were God's treasured possession, His inheritance. Landlessness became their greatest wealth: "The LORD is their inheritance" (Deuteronomy 10:9).

Historical Context

This second Levitical census (the first was Numbers 3:14-39) confirmed the tribe chosen to replace Israel's firstborn sons after the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:26-29). Levites demonstrated loyalty when others apostatized, earning perpetual priestly service. This census counted the new generation of that faithful tribe.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do the meanings of the Levitical divisions (stranger, assembly, bitterness) describe Christian ministry's costs and purposes?
2. What does the Levites' landlessness but divine inheritance teach about possessing God Himself rather than earthly possessions?
3. How did the Levites' choice to stand with God during the golden calf rebellion earn their descendants a perpetual inheritance?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה H428	פְּקוּדֵי י' H6485	הַלְוִי H3881	מִשְׁפֵּחַת H4940
And these are they	that were numbered	of the Levites	after their families
לְגֵרְשׁוֹן H1648	מִשְׁפֵּחַת H4940	הֵגֵרְשֹׁנִי H1649	לְקַהַת H6955
of Gershon	after their families	of the Gershonites	of Kohath
הַקֹּהֲתִי H6956	לְמֵרָרִי H4847	מִשְׁפֵּחַת H4940	הַמֵּרָרִי H4848
of the Kohathites	of Merari	after their families	of the Merarites

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 46:11 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

1 Chronicles 6:1 (Parallel theme): The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

