

Numbers 4:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers,

Analysis

The sons of Gershon—Named after Levi's firstborn (Genesis 46:11), the Gershonites handled the tabernacle's fabric components: curtains, coverings, and hangings (4:24-26). Though firstborn, Gershon's descendants held secondary status to Kohathites, illustrating God's sovereign right to reverse birthright expectations (Jacob over Esau, Ephraim over Manasseh, David over his brothers).

Throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers—The dual classification (מִשְׁפָּחוֹת, mishpachot and בֵּית אֲבָדָם, beit avotam) provided both tribal identity and accountability structure. This ensured no one served anonymously; each worker's faithfulness or failure reflected on his entire household, cultivating corporate responsibility that American individualism often misses.

Historical Context

Gershonites camped west of the tabernacle (3:23), positioned behind the tabernacle during Israel's march. Their service role—transporting fabrics rather than sacred objects—required different skills (fabric care, weather protection) than Kohathite duties, demonstrating God's varied distribution of service assignments.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's pattern of elevating younger sons (Kohath over Gershon) challenge cultural assumptions about seniority and inheritance?
2. What would change in modern church culture if we recovered the biblical sense of corporate responsibility for individual faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וְנִפְלָאֵת	בָּנִים	גַּרְשֹׁן וְלִ	לְמִשְׁפָּחוֹת
And those that were numbered	of the sons	of Gershon	throughout their families
H6485	H1121	H1648	H4940

וְלִבְית	אֲבָתָם:
and by the house	of their fathers
H1004	H1

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