

Care of the Tabernacle (Chapter 4)

The descendants of Levi were the ones responsible for moving the tabernacle from place to place as the Israelites traveled up to Canaan. Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Marari. Each family had specific responsibilities concerning care of God's house. While chapter three gave a general overview of their tasks, this chapter goes into detail about their specific jobs.

Tasks of the Kohathites

Primary Job: Caring for the most holy things of the tabernacle

Special Provisions: Although the Kohathites were in charge of the sanctuary and its furnishings, they were not allowed to see or touch the items directly. (Remember that only the priests were allowed inside the tabernacle.) Therefore, the priests would go in and cover the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the lampstand, the altar of incense, and all the articles related to these things. Once the items were wrapped up, then the Kohathites could come and carry them when the camp was ready to move.

The Ark The priests would cover it with the hide of the sea cow and then spread a solid blue cloth over it. Poles were attached so it could be carried.

The Table First covered with a blue cloth, then the dishes and bowls were placed on the table. A scarlet cloth then covered everything and the whole was wrapped in sea cow hide.

Lampstand It along with its utensils (wick trimmers, etc.) were covered with blue cloth and then all was wrapped in sea cow hide and placed on a carrying frame similar to a large stretcher.

Altar of Incense Covered with a blue cloth, then wrapped in sea cow hide. Poles were attached to facilitate carrying.

Other Utensils Any other utensils used at the altar were to be covered with a purple cloth and then wrapped in sea cow hide. This included firepans, meat forks, shovels, and sprinkling bowls.

The oil and incense used on the altar and in the lamps was cared for by Eliezar the priest, son of Aaron. When all was prepared, the priests told each Kohathite what to carry.

Tasks of the Gershonites

Primary Job: **The Outer Coverings and Curtains of the Tent**

Details: The Gershonites were to do “all that needs to be done” in connection with the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain for the entrance, the ropes, and all the equipment. They were responsible for carrying these items.

Tasks of the Merarites

Primary Job: **The Frame of the Tabernacle**

Details: The Merarites were to carry the frames, crossbars, posts, and bases, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, ropes, and all their equipment. Each man was assigned the specific thing that he was to carry.

The temple workers ranged in age from 30-50. The total number of Kohathite workers was 2,750; Gershonites 2,630; Merarites 3,200. Altogether there were 8,580 men who did the work of serving and carrying the Tent of Meeting.

! It was a high honor for the Levites to serve in the way they did. Think about what an honor it is for us to serve in the house of our God!