

Numbers 4:34-45

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-4/numbers-434-45/>

Verses 34-45 cover the census itself. This census counted how many males there were that were between 30 and 50 years old in each family. Verses 34-37 contain the number of Kohathites, verses 38-41 contain the number of Gershonites, and verses 42-45 contain the number of Merarites. These sections are very similar in structure and content.

After all of the responsibilities had been laid down, the leaders of Israel then performed the census. First, and appropriately so because of their role in managing the holy objects of the tabernacle, *Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' households* (v.34). As stated earlier in verses 3, 23, and 30, they counted those who were *from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old* (v. 35), which was *everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting*. Presumably in this census of the sons of the *Kohathites*, the priests would be omitted, as Aaron was a descendent of Kohath.

In the family of Kohath, *their numbered men by their families were 2,750* (v. 36). This number represented *the numbered men of the Kohathite families, everyone who was serving in the tent of meeting* (v. 37), and they were the ones *whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses*.

Next were *the numbered men of the sons of Gershon by their families and by their fathers' households* (v. 38). As before, they counted those who were *from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting* (v. 39).

The result of the census was that *their numbered men by their families, by their fathers' households, were 2,630* (v. 40). This was the result of *the numbered men of the families of the sons of Gershon, everyone who was serving in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord* (v. 41).

The same rules that were used in the previous two families were implemented to count *the numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari by their families, by their fathers' households* (v. 42). The criteria were the same as before. They were to count all the males *from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting* (v. 43).

In the family of Merari, *their numbered men by their families were 3,200* (v. 44). This was the count of *the numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses* (v. 45).

What is striking about this section is that the leaders of Israel were meticulous about obeying the “commandment of the LORD through Moses” (verses 37, 41, and 45). They obeyed His

command to the letter. They were not as obedient in other areas, such as forbidding the worship of other gods, as can be seen with the golden calf episode in Exodus 32-34. It does seem they were very obedient in all matters relating to the tabernacle.

This could be because of an incident recorded in Exodus 33. There, God told the people He would no longer go with them, because they were so obstinate. He told them to go possess the Promised Land themselves, since they were so bent on doing everything their way. When the people heard this, they went into mourning. They stopped wearing their ornaments. Moses intervened, and God relented, and agreed to go among them. This apparently made a deep impression on Israel. They willingly offered from their treasures to fund the building of the tabernacle, and faithfully constructed it according to the plans God gave them. It seems that while they often disobeyed God, they knew they were in deep trouble without God's presence.

Biblical Text:

³⁴ So Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' households, ³⁵ from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting. ³⁶ Their numbered men by their families were 2,750. ³⁷ These are the numbered men of the Kohathite families, everyone who was serving in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses.

³⁸ The numbered men of the sons of Gershon by their families and by their fathers' households, ³⁹ from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting. ⁴⁰ Their numbered men by their families, by their fathers' households, were 2,630. ⁴¹ These are the numbered men of the families of the sons of Gershon, everyone who was serving in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord.

⁴² The numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari by their families, by their fathers' households, ⁴³ from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting. ⁴⁴ Their numbered men by their families were 3,200. ⁴⁵ These are the numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses.