



First Chronicles - Chapter Twenty Seven

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

II.e 1 Chronicles 21:1-29:30 - David's Census and Preparation for the Temple (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Seven

The Chronicler concludes this section on David's provision of leadership for Solomon with details derived from four lists of the non-Levitical military and political officials serving the kingdom.

David established a militia twelve divisions, each with its own commander. Each division consisted of either twenty four thousand men or twenty four units, and were on duty for one month of the year.

There follows a list of the chief officers of each of the twelve tribes. David had not counted the men aged under twenty and it is again noted that Joab did not complete the census with which he disagreed and which so angered the Lord.

The chapter concludes with the names of a number of administrative and operations officers.

II.e.xii 1 Chronicles 27:1-15 - The Military Divisions

The twelve military commanders are listed among David's 'mighty men' in 1 Chronicles 11:11-47, and included among the leaders of Israel who were directly involved in the temple preparations (1 Chronicles 28:1). The army depicted here is not David's more permanent force of 2 Samuel 15:18 and 23:8-39, but a militia of twelve divisions, each on duty for a month each year.

¹ This is the list of the people of Israel, the heads of families, the commanders of the thousands and the hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all matters concerning the divisions that came and went, month after month throughout the year, each division numbering twenty-four thousand:

1 Chronicles 27:1

The people of Israel who served the king in all matters. Under David and almost every other king of Israel or Judah, Israel never relied on mercenary soldiers. Israelites themselves served the king in every matter of the military. In this case it seems to have been a militia that supplemented the standing army. They may have been used for guard duties or sent out to support the army in case of war.

The divisions that came and went, month after month throughout the year. David's militia was also divided into units of twelve, with one group of the twelve on alert each month of the year. This was an effective way to keep troops always ready and the inactive troops regularly trained. All these men were prepared, disciplined, and ready at a call, without the smallest expense to the state or the king.

Each division numbering twenty-four thousand. This is probably either an ideal number or 'twenty four units' - refer to the comment made on 1 Chronicles 12:23-37.

² Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division in the first month; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ³ He was a descendant of Perez, and was chief of all the commanders of the army for the first month. ⁴ Dodai the Ahohite was in charge of the division of the second month; Mikloth was the chief officer of his division. In his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁵ The third commander, for the third month, was Benaiah son of the priest Jehoiada, as chief; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁶ This is the Benaiah who was a mighty man of the Thirty and in command of the Thirty; his son Ammizabad was in charge of his division. ⁷ Asahel brother of Joab was fourth, for the fourth month, and his son Zebadiah after him; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁸ The fifth commander, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth, the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁹ Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁰ Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the Ephraimites; in his

division were twenty-four thousand. ¹¹ Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹² Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹³ Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai of Netophah, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁴ Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah of Pirathon, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁵ Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were twenty-four thousand.

1 Chronicles 27:2-15

Of the first division. This section explains the twelve divisions mentioned in the previous verse.

For the first month. The first month of the Hebrew calendar was Abib (pre-exilic) or Nisan (post exilic) and corresponds to March-April in the Gregorian calendar.

Benaiah son of the priest Jehoiada. Second Samuel 23:20-21 describes this same Benaiah as a great hero in Israel, someone who killed two mighty Moabites, a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and a formidable Egyptian. As also stated here he was in command of the Thirty, all great men during David's reign.

Asahel brother of Joab. As recorded in 2 Samuel 2:18-23, Asahel was tragically killed in battle by Abner, who was the commander of Ishbaal's armies, who was the son of Saul who had briefly succeeded him on the throne of Israel. Ishbaal is also known as Esh-baal and Ishbosheth.

II.e.xiii 1 Chronicles 27:16-24 - Leaders of Tribes

These leaders of the tribes are probably David's appointees. Their actual role in his administration is unknown. This section may indicate that the centralisation of power, together with a move away from the old tribal system of eldership during Solomon's reign (1 Kings 4:7-19), had already begun in the latter part of David's reign. The order and enumeration of the tribes differs here from 1 Chronicles Chapter 2, counting Aaron, i.e. the priests as a tribe and omitting Gad and Asher.

¹⁶ Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer son of Zichri was chief officer; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah son of Maacah; ¹⁷ for Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; ¹⁸ for Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri son of Michael; ¹⁹ for Zebulun, Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jerimoth son of Azriel; ²⁰ for the Ephraimites, Hoshea son of Azaziah; for the half-tribe of

Manasseh, Joel son of Pedaiiah; ²¹ for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel son of Abner; ²² for Dan, Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

1 Chronicles 27:16-22

Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer son of Zichri was chief officer. This list describes tribal leaders who were not priests or military leaders, but administrators in the civil service of the kingdom of Israel.

These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. The tribes of Asher and Gad are excluded on this list. There is no reason to believe these tribes were deliberately omitted for political reasons. The most likely explanation seems to be that the registers had been lost by the time the Chronicler compiled his account.

²³ David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the Lord had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of heaven.

²⁴ Joab son of Zeruiah began to count them, but did not finish; yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered into the account of the Annals of King David.

1 Chronicles 27:23-24

David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the Lord had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of heaven. David should not have commissioned the census at all but should have trusted in the Lord's promise. It was his own personal pride that had led him to do so and it had cost the lives of thousands of the citizens he was duty bound to protect as a result of the Lord's punishment on his sin.

Joab son of Zeruiah began to count them, but did not finish. Joab's failure to complete the unauthorised census in 1 Chronicles 21:6 stemmed from his recognition that David's presumptuous act ran counter to God's promise of innumerable descendants to Abraham: <<*He brought him outside and said, 'Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.'* Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'>> (Genesis 15:5).

II.e.xiv 1 Chronicles 27:25-34 - Other Civic Officials

These verses provide a list of twelve administrators of the royal property. David is presented as one blessed with wealth. His estates included storehouses in Jerusalem and the provinces, lands for various crops, and livestock. The incomes from these sources would have met some of the expenses of his bureaucracy.

²⁵ Over the king's treasuries was Azmaveth son of Adiel. Over the treasuries in the country, in the cities, in the villages, and in the towers, was Jonathan son of Uzziah. ²⁶ Over those who did the work of the field, tilling the soil, was Ezri son of Chelub. ²⁷ Over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite. Over the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. ²⁸ Over the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah was Baal-hanan the Gederite. Over the stores of oil was Joash. ²⁹ Over the herds that pastured in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite. Over the herds in the valleys was Shaphat son of Adlai. ³⁰ Over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite. Over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite. Over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. ³¹ All these were stewards of King David's property.

1 Chronicles 27:25-31

Treasuries; the work of the field, tilling the soil; the vineyards; the olive and sycamore trees, the herds, the camels, the donkeys, and the flocks. David had trusted men to oversee these areas, and they were just as important to the kingdom as the more obviously spiritual leaders. David proved himself to be as good a leader over the peaceful administration of the land as he was a brave warrior on the battlefield.

Over the herds that pastured in Sharon. Sharon was a particularly lush plain on which to raise livestock: <<*Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me*>> (Isaiah 65:10).

Over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite. The Ishmaelites were Arabs and therefore he makes sense that such a man should be placed in charge of the camels, for the Arabs were experts with these animals and the Israelites were not. Camels were natives of the Arabian deserts and were used mainly for the transportation of goods over long distances through desert landscapes.

Over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. The Hagrites were shepherds of renown.

All these were stewards of King David's property. These men had to be trustworthy to care for the agriculture of the nation. David could not afford to offer these positions to corrupt officials or else the state would have fallen into chaos rather than the orderly and peaceful nation that he passed on to his son Solomon as he took over the reins from David.

³² Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counsellor, being a man of understanding and a scribe; Jehiel son of Hachmoni attended the king's

sons. ³³ Ahithophel was the king's counsellor, and Hushai the Archite was the king's friend. ³⁴ After Ahithophel came Jehoiada son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. Joab was commander of the king's army.

1 Chronicles 27:32-34

These verses form an additional list of royal counsellors. This Jonathan, David's uncle, is not otherwise known. Being a man of understanding and a scribe, as well as a blood relative made him particularly useful to David.

Ahithophel is mentioned frequently in 2 Samuel 15:12-17:23.

Hushai the Archite was the king's friend. This relationship may well have started out as a personal friendship but here it becomes an official title, perhaps referring to a particularly trusted counsellor on personal matters.

Joab was commander of the king's army. Joab is one of the more complex characters of the OT. He was fiercely loyal to David, yet not strongly obedient. He disobeyed David when he thought it was in David's best interest, and he was cunning and ruthless in furthering his own position.