

God's People in the Wilderness  
Christian Education  
*Numbers 26: The Second Census*

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<i>FULL OUTLINE</i>
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1. Why a Census Now?
  - 1.1. *Num 26.1 – 2:* <sup>1</sup> After the plague, the Lord said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, <sup>2</sup> “Take a census of the entire Israelite community by their ancestral houses of those 20 years old or more who can serve in Israel’s army.”
  - 1.2. *Num 26.52 – 56:* <sup>52</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses, <sup>53</sup> “The land is to be divided among them as an inheritance based on the number of names [i.e. size]. <sup>54</sup> Increase the inheritance for a large tribe and decrease it for a small one. Each is to be given its inheritance according to those who were registered in it. <sup>55</sup> The land must be divided by lot; they will receive an inheritance according to the names of their ancestral tribes. <sup>56</sup> Each inheritance will be divided by lot among the larger and smaller tribes.”
2. In Short, a Census...
  - 2.1. Gives the number of fighting age males
  - 2.2. Keeps track of tribal association
  - 2.3. Used for land size of inheritance
  - 2.4. *NOTE ALSO:*
    - 2.4.1. This is a new beginning. The old generation is dead (except for Joshua and Caleb) and the new is on hand.
    - 2.4.2. (And will they obey, or be like the old one?)
3. Num 26 Compared to Num 1 (See the charts)
4. An Aside on the Numbers (w/ thanks to Elaine)
  - 4.1. Computing the Numbers”
    - 4.1.1. Reuben – 46 *eleph* and 500
    - 4.1.2. Simeon – 59 *eleph* and 300
    - 4.1.3. Gad – 45 *eleph* and 650
    - 4.1.4. Judah – 74 *eleph* and 600
    - 4.1.5. Issachar – 54 *eleph* and 400
    - 4.1.6. Zebulun – 57 *eleph* and 400
    - 4.1.7. Ephraim – 40 *eleph* and 500
    - 4.1.8. Manasseh – 32 *eleph* and 200
    - 4.1.9. Benjamin – 35 *eleph* and 400
    - 4.1.10. Dan – 62 *eleph* and 700
    - 4.1.11. Asher – 41 *eleph* and 500

4.1.12. Naphtali – 53 *eleph* and 400

4.1.13. *What do we notice about these Reading eleph as “thousand” and numbers? What do we do with them? simply adding gives total of 603,550.*

5. Things to Remember Re: Censuses

5.1. The word for “one thousand” and the word for “clan” (or group, or family unit [cf. Num 1.16]) is the same: *eleph* (אֶלֶף)

5.2. A phrase, therefore, like: Reuben – 46 *eleph* and 500 does not necessarily mean 46,500. It could mean “46 clans (or troops, or family units, or brigades) that included 500 men.

6. Other Notes

6.1. As for Simeon, note *Gen 49.5 – 7*: <sup>5</sup> Simeon and Levi are brothers; their knives are vicious weapons. <sup>6</sup> May I never enter their council; may I never join their assembly. For in their anger they kill men, and on a whim they hamstring oxen. <sup>7</sup> Their anger is cursed, for it is strong, and their fury, for it is cruel! I will disperse them throughout Jacob and scatter them throughout Israel.

6.2. Note that non-Israelites came out of Egypt (Ex 12.38: “An ethnically diverse crowd also went up with them...” Did these attach (or convert) in order to inherit land? Were they adopted into the Israelite commonwealth? (Cf. Jael [*Yael*, Judg 4.17]).

7. Note the *Schema* of the Census

7.1. All numbers except for Reuben are rounded off to 100s

7.2. There are six (6) tribes (excluding Levi) that have > 50,000 persons, and six (6) that have < 50,000 persons.

7.3. And 50,000 x 12 = 600,000

7.4. Again, a *schema*?

8. An Aside Re: Numbers (as is 1, 2, 3...)

8.1. Let’s look at the number of sacrifices offered by Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8)

8.2. *Vs 2*: So all the men of Israel were assembled in the presence of King Solomon in the seventh month, the month of Ethanim, at the festival (i.e., Tabernacles).

8.3. *Vss 62, 63*: 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep.

8.4. *Vs. 65*: The dedication took seven (7) days.

8.5. OK... Soooo?

9. Let’s Figure Out the Frequency of Sacrifices

9.1. Total number of sacrifices: 22,000 + 120,000 =

9.1.1. 142,000

9.2. How many sacrifices each day:

9.2.1. 142,000 ÷ 7

9.2.2. ~ 20,300

9.3. 86,400 seconds comprise one day, so the number of seconds for each sacrifice is  $86,400 \div 20,300 =$

9.3.1. 4.26 seconds per sacrifice!

9.3.2. WHAT ??????

#### 10. What Do We Conclude?

10.1. We can't trust the Bible (Just kidding!)

10.2. Numbers in the Bible that include *eleph* may mean "groups," "clans," "troops," and *not necessary* one-thousand.

10.3. Numbers can still be used for Intercomparison—like the difference between censuses (Num 1 & 26), or array of military forces, or for "bragging rights" (like the size of the fish that got away), which is not a problem if we recognize that this is the purpose of the number(s) presented.

#### 11. Other Notes for: Reuben, Simeon, Gad

11.1. *Reuben* (vss 5 – 9): Note the mention of Korah's rebellion. Korah was a Levite, but Dathan and Abiram were great-grandsons of Reuben. The death of the two malcontents may reflect the slight decrease in Reuben's numbers.

11.2. *Simeon* (vss 12 – 14): Already discussed. (Cf. Baal-Peor)

11.3. *Gad* (vss 15 – 18): Interesting comparison of names of Gad's sons:

11.3.1. *Gen 46.16*: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

11.3.2. *Num 26*: Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ozni, Eri, Arod, and Areli

11.3.3. Does this raise questions about inspiration?

#### 12. Judah, Issachar

12.1. *Judah* (vss 19 – 22): Like Reuben, the death of two sons (Er & Onan [Gen 46.12] is mentioned. Note the predominance of Perez—the forefather of David, the forefather of Jesus.

12.2. *Issachar* (vss 23 – 25): Name differences as w/ Gad

12.2.1. *Gen 46.13*: Tola, Puvah (Sam, Syr read *Puah*; 1Ch 7:1), Jashub (Sam, LXX; MT reads *Iob*) and Shimron.

12.2.2. *Num 26*: Tola, *Punite* clan from Puvah, Jashubite clan from *Jashub*; the Shimronite clan from Shimron.

#### 13. Zebulon, Manasseh

13.1. *Zebulon* (vss 26 – 27): Nothing abnormal.

13.2. *Manasseh* (vss 28 – 34): I've already mentioned what *might* be happening w/ the numbers.

13.2.1. In addition, note that only one descendent is mentioned for Manasseh, and that is *Makir* (vs 29), even though he had another son *Asriel* (1 Chr 7.14). The most important clan (*Gilead*) in Manasseh was descendant from Makir.

13.2.2. Also note that *Zelophehad* only had daughters (vs 33), and this will be covered next week.

#### 14. Benjamin

14.1.1. *Benjamin* (vss 38 – 41): Again, names differ, but it is beyond the scope of this lesson to explain what is happening.

14.1.2. Consult the commentaries if interested.

#### 15. Dan

15.1. *Dan* (vss 42, 43): Only one clan listed, *Shuham*, but apparently very prolific! Only Judah is larger.

15.1.1. In *Gen 46. 23* Dan's only son mentioned is *Hushim*, but the confusion of letters of this sort is not unknown; i.e., a transposition of letters “h [π] ” and “sh [ψ] ”.

15.1.2. The tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the genealogies of 1 Chr 1 – 8, nor in the list of the 144,000 in Rev 7.3 – 8 (Levi yes; Dan no).

#### 16. Asher

16.1. *Asher* (vss 44 – 47): Note the mention of the daughter Serah, also mentioned in Gen 46.17 & 1 Chr 7.30. No progeny of Serah is mentioned, so what happened to her, and why is she mentioned in the first place?

16.1.1. But then again, what happened to Zilpah and Bilhah. Note only one daughter is mentioned for Jacob (Dinah) and for David (Tamar), but the ratio of men mentioned to that of women is quite high.

16.1.2. The patriarchal narratives are just that...patriarchal.

#### 17. Naphtali

17.1. *Naphtali* (vss 48 – 50): The same sons named here are also in Gen 46.24 and in 1 Chr 7.13.

17.1.1. I.e., nothing unusual, although later we find that Naphtali suffered greatly when foreign armies invaded Israel from the north (Cf. 1 Kgs 15 & 2 Kgs 15).

#### 18. As for the Levites (vss 57 – 62)

18.1. Moses counted the Levites separately. Why?

18.2. They were not part of the fighting men;

18.3. They had no inheritance as w/ the other tribes (vs 62).

#### 19. Some Reflections

19.1. The population remained stable in spite of very trying times—desert, lack of food and water, rebellion—which shows the provision and mercy of the Lord thru 40 years.

19.2. And perhaps the large numbers may be misunderstood or appear inflated, remember that God promised Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the sea shore, so this *may* be a “celebratory inflation” of the numbers.