

# Numbers 1 Commentary

NUMBERS

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Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere <a href="#">(Wilderness)</a>			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

**Numbers 1:1** Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

- **wilderness:** Nu 10:11,12 Ex 19:1 Lev 27:34
- **tabernacle:** Ex 25:22 Lev 1:1
- **on the first day:** Nu 9:1 10:11 Ex 40:17 1Ki 6:1
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Warren Wiersbe's Outline of the Entire Book

### I. The Old Generation Set Aside (1–20)

- Counted (1–4)
- Counseled (5–10)
- Chastised (11–12)
- Condemned (13–20)

### II. The New Generation Set Apart (21–36)

- A. Their journeying (21–25, 33)
- B. Their numbering (26–27)
- C. Their offerings (28–30)
- D. Their dividing of the inheritance (31–36)

#### OUTLINE: Faithfulness of Israel at Sinai (Numbers 1:1–10:10)

##### 1. Sinai Cycle A: Census and Consecration of the Tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:1–6:27)

- (1) Historical Setting: Prologue (Numbers 1:1)
- (2) Military Conscription of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:2–46)
  - Census Instructions (Numbers 1:2–4)
  - Census Assistants Enlisted (Numbers 1:5–16)
  - Census Directed by Moses (Numbers 1:17–19)
  - Census Results by Tribal Households (Numbers 1:20–43)
  - Census Summary and Total (Numbers 1:44–46)
  - Responsibilities of Uncounted Levites (Numbers 1:47–53)
  - Census Conclusion: Faithful Obedience (Numbers 1:54)

#### ANOTHER OUTLINE - Irving Jensen PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY (Nu 1:1–10:10)

##### I. Order and Organization (Nu 1:1–4:49)

- A. Order of Inventory (Nu 1:1–54)
- B. Order of Encampment (Nu 2:1–34)
- C. Order of Ministry (Nu 3:1–4:49)

##### II. Cleansing, Consecration and Final Instructions (Nu 5:1–10:10)

- A. Put Out the Unclean (Nu 5:1–4)
- B. Judge the Guilty (Nu 5:5–31)
- C. Separate Yourself (Nu 6:1–27)
- D. Offer Gifts (Nu 7:1–88)
- E. Transition (Nu 7:89–8:4)
- F. Cleanse the Levites (Nu 8:5–26)
- G. Keep the Passover (Nu 9:1–14)
- H. Follow Your Leaders (Nu 9:15–10:10)

LEVITICUS	NUMBERS
Humanity worshipping.	Humanity serving.
Believer's worship	Believer's walk
Believer's privileges	Believer's test in wilderness
Purity	Pilgrimage
Our Spiritual Position	Our Spiritual Progress
Ceremony in the Sanctuary	History in the Wilderness

The word "number" (or some variation) occurs 126 times (out of 320x in entire Bible) in 107 verses in this book which gives us some clue as to why it is commonly designated the "Book of Numbers"

Num. 1:2; Num. 1:3; Num. 1:18; Num. 1:19; Num. 1:20; Num. 1:21; Num. 1:22; Num. 1:23; Num. 1:24; Num. 1:25; Num. 1:26; Num. 1:27; Num. 1:28; Num. 1:29; Num. 1:30; Num. 1:31; Num. 1:32; Num. 1:33; Num. 1:34; Num. 1:35; Num. 1:36; Num. 1:37; Num. 1:38; Num. 1:39; Num. 1:40; Num. 1:41; Num. 1:42; Num. 1:43; Num. 1:44; Num. 1:45; Num. 1:46; Num. 1:47; Num. 1:49; Num. 2:4; Num. 2:6; Num. 2:8; Num. 2:9; Num. 2:11; Num. 2:13; Num. 2:15; Num. 2:16; Num. 2:19; Num. 2:21; Num. 2:23; Num. 2:24; Num. 2:26; Num. 2:28;

Num. 2:30; Num. 2:31; Num. 2:32; Num. 2:33; Num. 3:15; Num. 3:16; Num. 3:22; Num. 3:28; Num. 3:34; Num. 3:39; Num. 3:40; Num. 3:42; Num. 3:43; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:29; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:34; Num. 4:36; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:38; Num. 4:40; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:42; Num. 4:44; Num. 4:45; Num. 4:46; Num. 4:48; Num. 4:49; Num. 7:2; Num. 14:29; Num. 14:34; Num. 15:12; Num. 23:10; Num. 26:7; Num. 26:18; Num. 26:22; Num. 26:25; Num. 26:27; Num. 26:34; Num. 26:37; Num. 26:41; Num. 26:43; Num. 26:47; Num. 26:50; Num. 26:51; Num. 26:53; Num. 26:54; Num. 26:57; Num. 26:62; Num. 26:63; Num. 26:64; Num. 29:18; Num. 29:21; Num. 29:24; Num. 29:27; Num. 29:30; Num. 29:33; Num. 29:37; Num. 31:36; Num. 32:1;

#### Related Passages:

Deut 1:6 The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, **You have stayed long enough at this mountain.**

### TIME TO MOVE OUT!

Between the last chapter of Exodus and the first chapter of Numbers a month elapses and the book of Leviticus intervenes. The events covered in Numbers occupy a period of about thirty-eight years.

A note of caution in reading commentaries on the Book of Numbers -- many commentaries are very critical of this book from a number of standpoints and they do a great disservice to the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16. The notes you are reading receive the Words of Numbers as fully inspired with no errors and no need to make apologies sections that are difficult to understand. Do not shy away from reading and studying this great book, for you will be both edified and blessed if you come to it as a little child trusting that the Author will speak to your heart.

**John Phillips** - The lessons of the book of Numbers are full of interest and are of a very practical nature. Leviticus deals with the believer's worship, Numbers with the believer's walk. Purity dominates Leviticus, whereas pilgrimage dominates Numbers. (Exploring the Scriptures)

**POSB** - Numbers—what an unappealing, uninteresting title. Numbers sounds more like a math book than a spiritual journey. Yet, this is exactly what this great book is: one of the greatest spiritual journeys ever taken

**Ray Stedman** - Now we come to the book of Numbers. In Numbers we have dramatically set forth what is perhaps the hardest lesson a Christian has to learn -- **to trust God instead of his own reason.** This is where we struggle, isn't it? We think that what we want to do and the way we want to do it is the right way. The hardest struggle we have, even as these Israelites had, is to learn to believe that God knows what he is talking about and that what he tells us is the truth, and is for our good, and to operate on that basis despite what friends and others around are telling us concerning the right way. Proverbs puts it so graphically, "There is a way which seems right to a man, and its end is the way to death." (Pr 14:12) The book of Numbers is a picture of that experience in the believer. You will recognize, of course, that it is the experience of Romans 7 where the unhappy, defeated Christian, who is his own worst enemy, is being disciplined by God because God as a father loves him. He is experiencing in the midst of this discipline the fatherly love and care of God and protection from his enemy. That is what the book of Numbers portrays. It is a picture of people who have come out of Egypt but who have not yet reached Canaan. **They had the faith to follow God out of the bondage and slavery of sin but have not yet come into the fullness of liberty and rest in the Holy Spirit -- Canaan being a picture of the Spirit-filled life.** ([Overview of Numbers- The Incomplete Christian Life](#))

**Wiersbe** - Someone has described Israel's wilderness wanderings as "the longest funeral march in history." Numbers has an important spiritual lesson for Christians today, as explained in Hebrews 3–4 and 1 Cor. 10:1–15. **God honors faith and punishes unbelief.** At the root of all of Israel's sins in the wilderness was unbelief: they did not trust God's Word

**Gilbrant** - Comparing Exo. 19:1 with Num. 1:1, we see that Israel had encamped at Sinai for just short of a year. In this busy year, Moses, under God, had organized the nation with its laws, its Tabernacle and its worship. They were now to prepare to march on Canaan. (Complete Biblical Library – Leviticus-Numbers)

**MacArthur** - The English title "**Numbers**" comes from the Greek (LXX = *arithmoi*) and Latin (Vg.) versions. This designation is based on the numberings that are a major focus of chaps. 1–4 (ED; THE OLD GENERATION AT MT SINAI) and chap 26 (ED: THE NEW GENERATION ON PLAINS OF MOAB). The most common Hebrew title comes from the fifth word in the Hebrew text of 1:1, "in the wilderness [of]." This name is much more descriptive of the total contents of the book, which recount the history of Israel during almost 39 years of wandering in the wilderness....The book of Numbers must be dated ca. 1405 B.C., since it is foundational to the book of Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy is dated in the 11th month of the 40th year after the Exodus (Deut. 1:3).

**Ronald Allen** - The Book of Numbers, while presenting unusual problems for the modern interpreter, yields significant rewards for

the patient reader. In a day marked by pop art, quick fixes, and fast foods, the Book of Numbers is particularly troublesome. It simply does not appeal to the person who is unwilling to invest time and energy in the study of Scripture. Often the modern reader first will be discouraged just by the name of the book. "Numbers" seems to be a particularly inappropriate title for a part of the revelation of God. The title seems as interesting as a book named, for example, "Telephone Directory" or, perhaps, "Principles of Arithmetic." A suspicion of increasing dullness settles in long before finishing the first chapter. By the fifth chapter the reader may have dropped out altogether. Numbers is not "fast food" literature! Indeed, some wonder whether it is any kind of literature at all. Once a reader braves these murky waters, he or she will discover that there are four major problems to face in the Book of Numbers: (1) its seeming lack of coherence as a book, (2) the dizzying variety of the contents, (3) the problematic large numbers of the tribes of Israel, and (4) the fascinating but confusing story of Balaam (Num 22–24). These factors combine to arrest even the interest of the most pious readers. (EBC)

**Brian Bell** asks what was Numbers originally known as in the Hebrew Bible? **Bemid-bar** - *in the wilderness/desert*. {which better indicates what the book is about} Also been called *Book of Journeys*; *Book of the Murmuring*; *4th Book of Moses*. It's a book of **Transition**: setting aside the **old generation** because of **unbelief** (ch 1-20); Then preparing the **new generation** to inherit **the Promised land** (ch.21-26). It's a book of **Wanderings**: for God made His people wander in the wilderness for 40 years. [Till, the old generation, 20 yrs & older, died off] **Application**: "Unless by faith you enter into your spiritual inheritance in Christ, you will "wander" in unbelief & rob yourself of the blessings God has planned for you." (Warren Wiersbe) What would God teach them/us in the wilderness? How to be wholly dependent on Him for food, clothing, health, protection, & all things. So we can learn what He can be to the heart that trusts Him.

Why study the Book of Numbers? Paul explains they provide us an example and are for our instruction

**"Now these things happened to them as an example,  
and they were written for our instruction,  
upon whom the ends of the ages have come."**

(1 Cor.10:11, cf Ro 15:4+)

**Jensen** - THE FIRST PROMINENT TRUTH about the ways of God revealed in the Book of Numbers is His order and planning. This is vividly demonstrated in the Genesis account of the creation of the universe. Here in Numbers it is manifested in His leading a great host of people (at least two million) on a journey through strange lands. At this point in the history of the Israelites everything pointed to a goal not yet attained, the occupation of the land of Canaan. This was not the goal of a dreamer, but the goal promised by the God who already had done marvelous miracles in behalf of His very own people. He had formed them into a nation as He had promised Abraham: "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). He had delivered them from the utmost in human bondage in Egypt. He had also encouraged them as to the reality of occupying Canaan by making prior specific provision for the kind of life and worship which would be theirs. The Book of Leviticus is filled with such provision and direction, e.g., "When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto Jehovah" (Lev. 25:2). ([Numbers-Journey to God's Rest-Land](#))

**Arnold Goldberg** - "For the Christian reader, this book is first of all an epoch of Heilsgeschichte an epoch of that history that moves forward from Adam the fallen man to Jesus"

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses** - The words Moses records in this book are God's holy words. As one writer has said "It is necessary to assume that the writer of these words was a fraud if this writing did not originate with Moses." Contrary to what some liberal writers might say the Bible itself ascribes to Moses the authorship of the Law or Pentateuch (see Josh. 8:31; 2 Kin. 14:6; Neh. 8:1; Mark 12:26; John 7:19). The book of Numbers itself refers to the writing of Moses. Nu 1:1 says **the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai** and in the closing verse Nu 36:13 reminds that God had spoken through Moses, ending with "These are the commandments and the ordinances which the LORD commanded to the sons of Israel through Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho."

Numbers 33:2 **Moses recorded** their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the LORD,  
and these are their journeys according to their starting places.

This formula **the LORD spoke to Moses** is repeated in Numbers - Beloved as frequent as this phrase is in the OT, it pales in comparison to our continual access to God's throne room through Christ in prayer (Hebrews 4:16+) and through His Word. In theory, it should be said of you and I each day that Jehovah spoke to \_\_\_\_\_. (Put your name in that blank). No, He won't speak audibly, but if you confess your sins and submit yourself to Him, seeking to hear from Him in His Word, you will "hear" from Him through His Word and His Spirit! (cf Ps 145:18+, Pr 8:17, Isa 55:6, Mt 6:33+)

Num. 1:1; Num. 2:1; Num. 3:5; Num. 3:11; Num. 3:14; Num. 3:44; Num. 4:1; Num. 4:17; Num. 4:21; Num. 5:1;  
Num. 5:5; Num. 5:11; Num. 6:1; Num. 6:22; Num. 7:4; Num. 8:1; Num. 8:5; Num. 8:23; Num. 9:1; Num. 9:9;  
Num. 13:1; Num. 14:26; Num. 15:1; Num. 15:17; Num. 16:20; Num. 16:23; Num. 16:36; Num. 16:44; Num.

17:1; Num. 18:25; Num. 19:1; Num. 20:7; Num. 20:23; Num. 25:10; Num. 25:16; Num. 26:1; Num. 26:52; Num. 27:6; Num. 28:1; Num. 31:1; Num. 31:25; Num. 33:50; Num. 34:1; Num. 34:16; Num. 35:1; Num. 35:9;

**Believers Study Bible** adds that "That the Lord spoke to and through Moses is stated over 150 times in Numbers, which testifies to the fact that this is indeed the Word of God as given to Moses."

**THOUGHT ON REPEATED EMPHASIS THAT YAHWEH SPOKE TO MOSES** - "Apart from the revelation of God's will, Israel would not have known what to do or where to camp. "You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. 77:20NKJV)." (Wiersbe). Beloved, how will we know how to move about in this wilderness world unless He speaks to us? Short answer - we won't know! We need to daily go to God for instructions in His Word (Jer 33:3, Jn 15:7 Ps 48:14+, Ps 91:15+, Isa 30:21) and trust that His Spirit will be our Guide during the day (Jn 16:13,). Can you see the problems one might encounter if they are reading the Word of Truth only once or twice a week (or even worse only once or twice a month!)?

**THOUGHT** - Hearing God's Word - In the book of Numbers, we read that the Lord spoke over 150 times. The children of Israel were without excuse in terms of knowing God's will regarding many different aspects of life and worship. How much more should we be without excuse today. We have the entire Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments. God still speaks today through the authors of Scripture, we should devote ourselves to studying the Word of God in order to discern His will for our lives. Since God still speaks today through the authors of Scripture, we should devote ourselves to studying the Word of God in order to discern His will for our lives.(Getz)

**In the wilderness of Sinai In the tent of meeting** -Yes God **spoke to Moses in the wilderness** but in the Tabernacle that was **in the wilderness**. "The Hebrew word for **wilderness** (midbar) means a place for driving flocks. It is not a completely arid desert, but contains little vegetation and a few trees. The rainfall in such areas is too light, a few inches per year, to support cultivation." (Wenham) The scant rainfall of the wilderness could support crops but it could support flocks. [

**Wilderness in Numbers** - Num. 1:1; Num. 1:19; Num. 3:4; Num. 3:14; Num. 9:1; Num. 9:5; Num. 10:12; Num. 10:31; Num. 12:16; Num. 13:3; Num. 13:21; Num. 13:26; Num. 14:2; Num. 14:16; Num. 14:22; Num. 14:25; Num. 14:29; Num. 14:32; Num. 14:33; Num. 14:35; Num. 15:32; Num. 16:13; Num. 20:1; Num. 20:4; Num. 21:5; Num. 21:11; Num. 21:13; Num. 21:18; Num. 21:23; Num. 24:1; Num. 26:64; Num. 26:65; Num. 27:3; Num. 27:14; Num. 32:13; Num. 32:15; Num. 33:6; Num. 33:8; Num. 33:11; Num. 33:12; Num. 33:15; Num. 33:16; Num. 33:36; Num. 34:3;

**THOUGHT** - The Book of Numbers approaches it all God's way. When we are in the wilderness, we are tempted to launch a hundred different schemes and plans to escape. But only God's way really works; and the Book of Numbers gives us God's way. The idea that the LORD spoke to Moses is repeated more than 150 times and more than 20 different ways in Numbers. (Guzik)

**On the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying** - This census was taken one month after the Tabernacle was erected for we read

Exodus 40:17 "Now in the **first month of the second year, on the first day of the month** the tabernacle was erected."

**Ryrie** explains that "The Tabernacle was set up one year after the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex 12:2+) and nine months after Israel's arrival at Sinai (cf. Ex 19:1+)."

**Wenham** - "The theme of the book of Numbers is the journey to the Promised Land of Canaan. Its opening ten chapters, covering a mere fifty days, describe how Moses organized Israel for the march from Sinai to the Promised Land." (TOTC-Numbers)

**Elmer Smick** - The priests and the Tabernacle were consecrated in this one month (Ex 40; Lev 8); the princes brought their gifts in this month (Num 7); and the first commemorative Passover took place then (Nu 9:1-14). (Wycliffe Bible Commentary)

**Kay Arthur** reminds us of the hymn "[When the Saints Go Marching In](#)."...I was to be among that number when the saints would go marching into heaven! Hallelujah! It was something to rejoice over. Well, Beloved, our study of Numbers is all about when the saints, God's holy people, **go marching out** — out from Sinai to the land promised to them as an everlasting possession." [Numbers Study](#)

**Morgan** - "So the Israelites had been slaves in the land of Goshen; their tasks were appointed, and their taskmasters compelled their obedience. Their difficulties had been great, their bondage cruel, but they were free from the necessity of thought and arrangement. Having escaped from their taskmaster, they imagined that freedom meant escape from rule. They had been taught in

their year of encampment under the shadow of the mountain that they had to submit to law, and it was irksome to them, and they became discontented. This discontent resulted from lack of perfect confidence in God.”

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### **NUMBERS 1:1—How could Moses have written Numbers when critics claim it was written centuries after his death?**

**PROBLEM:** Many modern critics claim that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible traditionally attributed to him (see comments on Ex. 24:4). But the Bible declares here that “the Lord spoke to Moses” (1:1) and that “Moses wrote down” the events of this book (33:2).

**SOLUTION:** The critics have no real evidence for their claim, either historical or literary. The fact that Moses used different names for God (Elohim, Jehovah [Yahweh]) is no proof. Each name of God informs us of another characteristic of God that fits the narrative in which it is used (see comments on Gen. 2:4). Furthermore, there is strong evidence that Moses wrote the Book of Numbers.

1. First, there is all the evidence mentioned earlier (in comments on Ex. 24:4+) that the book reflects a detailed, first-hand knowledge of the time, places, and customs of the period it describes—all of which Moses possessed.
2. Second, the book claims to have been written by Moses (Nu 1:1; Nu 33:2). This would make the book an outright fraud, unless Moses is really its rightful author.
3. Third, there are a number of NT citations from the Book of Numbers which are associated with Moses (Acts 7; 13; 1 Cor. 10:2–8; Heb. 3:7–16). If Moses did not write Numbers, then these inspired NT books would be in error too.
4. Fourth, our Lord quoted from Numbers and verified that it was indeed Moses who lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14/joh/john-3-commentary#3:14; cf. Num. 21:9). This places the stamp of Christ’s authority on the authenticity of the question. (When Critics Ask - Norman Geisler)

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### **Question: [What was the tent of meeting?](#)**

**Answer:** The phrase **tent of meeting** is used in the Old Testament, specifically in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as the name of a place where God would meet with His people, Israel. Usually, the “**tent of meeting**” was used as another name for the **Tabernacle of Moses**. However, before the **tabernacle** was constructed, God met with Moses in a temporary **tent of meeting**: “Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘**tent of meeting**.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the **tent of meeting** outside the camp. . . . As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses” (Exodus 33:7, 9). The fact that Moses set up the **tent of meeting outside of the camp** underscored that the people had broken fellowship with God at Sinai when they had made the golden calf (see Exodus 33:3). After the tabernacle was built, Moses no longer needed his temporary tent, and the term **tent of meeting** began to be applied to the **tabernacle**.

In the Law that God gave Moses, God provided specific instructions to build a place of worship (Exodus 25–27). This “tent of meeting” or tabernacle could be taken up and moved each time they changed locations while wandering in the wilderness. The word tabernacle is an English rendition of the Hebrew word *miskan*, or “dwelling place.” The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy items that the Israelites were instructed to use in the worship of and sacrifice to Yahweh.

Interestingly, the word tent or tabernacle is also used in the New Testament to draw profound spiritual conclusions about salvation. Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews make a distinction between a heavenly tent and an earthly tent, between what was “built by human hands” and what is “not part of this creation” (2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11). Hebrews 9:1–10 describes the earthly tabernacle, or “tent of meeting,” as a place into which the priests would go to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Then, in verse 11, Christ is shown to be a better “high priest” who entered once through the “greater and more perfect tent,” referring to His body, to offer a sacrifice that would satisfy the wrath of God completely, for all time. This refers to His blood shed on the cross. The point of the passage is to show how, if the blood of animals could temporarily cleanse worshipers of the guilt of sin, the perfect blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, would cleanse His followers perfectly—that is, eternally—of their sins.

In Hebrews 10:14<sup>+</sup>, the writer says that Jesus has “**perfected forever those who are being** (ED: [present tense](#) in divine passive = continually being = A PROCESS) **sanctified**.” This verse expresses a spiritual paradox. By entering the “tent of meeting,” which was His own body, and offering up His own blood, Christ “perfected forever” those who have faith in Him. And the result of belief in Christ is sanctification, a continual upward spiral of holiness and closeness to God, as the Holy Spirit performs His work within Christ’s followers. In this way, we are eternally “perfect” because of the preciousness of Christ’s blood applied to our lives (ED: OUR ETERNAL POSITION IN CHRIST = “POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION” - DESCRIBED IN Hebrews 10:12<sup>+</sup> WHERE SANCTIFIED IS [perfect tense](#) = PAST COMPLETED ACTION, ONGOING EFFECT), yet at the same time we are “being sanctified” (divine passive) by the Holy Spirit Who indwells us and changes us into the image of Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9<sup>+</sup>; Romans 8:29<sup>+</sup>; ED: cf 2 Cor 3:18<sup>+</sup>).



Paul also mentions the “**tent of meeting**” or the **tabernacle**, comparing it to the earthly human body:

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this **tent** we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 5:1–5<sup>+</sup>).

When Paul says, “**The tent that is our earthly home**,” he is referring to our earthly body, our temporary dwelling place. Just as the Israelites moved the tent of meeting from place to place waiting for entrance to the Promised Land, believers in Christ are wanderers on the earth—people who are not “at home” in the world and who “**seek a city that is to come**” (Hebrews 13:14). Paul says that those who belong to God will be “further clothed” with immortality upon their deaths and that their earthly tent (their body) will be replaced with a “heavenly dwelling.” God does the work of preparing us for that day of glorification by the process of sanctification by the Spirit, and that work happening within us is a “guarantee” that our inheritance and our heavenly dwelling are real. “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13–15<sup>+</sup>). (Source: [Gotquestions.org](http://Gotquestions.org))

### **Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head"**

NET Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of the entire Israelite community by their clans and families, counting the name of every individual male.

NLT Numbers 1:2 "From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their clans and families. List all the men

ESV Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head.

NIV Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.

KJV Numbers 1:2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls;

YLT Numbers 1:2 'Take ye up the sum of all the company of the sons of Israel by their families, by the house of their fathers, in the number of names -- every male by their polls;

LXE Numbers 1:2 Take the sum of all the congregation of Israel according to their kindreds, according to the houses of their fathers' families, according to their number by their names, according to their heads: every male

ASV Numbers 1:2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of the names, every male, by their polls;

CSB Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of the entire Israelite community by their clans and their ancestral houses, counting the names of every male one by one.

NKJ Numbers 1:2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually,

- **Take a census.** Nu 26:2-4,63,64 Ex 30:12 38:26 2Sa 24:1-3 1Ch 21:1,2 27:23,24
- **of the sons of Israel:** Ge 49:1-3 Ex 1:1-5
- **after:** Nu 1:18,22,26-54 Ex 6:14-19
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**TAKE A CENSUS  
OF ISRAEL**



**Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head** - God calls for a literal "head count" for the Hebrew word for head is *gulgoleth* which gives us the Greek transliteration of [Golgotha](#) comes from this noun (Mt. 27:33; Mk 15:22+; Lk 23:33+, Jn 19:17). The phrase head by head is rendered in the KJV as "**by their polls**" which "means "by their heads," that is, one by one. The modern "poll tax" means "head tax." In ancient times, men "polled" their heads, i.e., thinned out their hair (2 Sam. 14:26)." (Wiersbe)

Note that the census was begun on the very day that God commanded it to be taken.

**Gaebelein** has an interesting comment on **by their families, by their fathers' households**- "They had to declare their pedigrees after their families, and only those who could do that had a place in this mustering and could be warriors. This showing of their pedigree was necessary on account of the mixed multitude which had joined themselves to the people of God. "And a mixed multitude went up also with them" (Exod. 12:38). This mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting (Num. 11:4). Therefore only those who could show by their pedigree their rightful place among the people of God were mustered and could go to war. Our pedigree, which gives us a place among the people of God, is the new birth, by which we become children of God. And our calling is to a spiritual warfare, not with flesh and blood, but against the devil and his wiles and the wicked spirits (Eph. 6:11-12). ([Commentary](#))

**Weinberg** - Midbar (wilderness) ahead, ADONAI-Tsva'ot (the LORD of Hosts/Armies) reorganizes Yisra'el into a military camp. God orders a census in the second year on the new moon of Iyar, two weeks after Passover. In contrast to the count at Sinai by half-shekel ransom (Ex. 30:12, 38:26), this count lifts up individuals l'gul'g'lotam (by their skulls, Nu. 1:2).

**Head** ([01538](#))(**gulgoleth** from **galal** = to roll, roll away) means a skull, head, and thus a person (as in Ex 16:16, Ex 38:26, Nu 3:47) and is usually used for counting people (Ex. 16:16; 38:26; Nu. 1:2, 18, 20, 22). In Jdg 9:53 it describes Abimelech's head, specifically "crushing his **skull**." When Jezebel was killed, her skull was one of the few remnants of her body when people buried her (2 Ki. 9:35). The Philistines hung up Saul's head in the temple of Dagon (1 Chr. 10:10).

**Gulgoleth** - 12x - apiece(2), census(2), head(11), skull(2). - Exod. 16:16; Exod. 38:26; Num. 1:2; Num. 1:18; Num. 1:20; Num. 1:22; Num. 3:47; Jdg. 9:53; 2 Ki. 9:35; 1 Chr. 10:10; 1 Chr. 23:3; 1 Chr. 23:24

**Henry Morris** on their **names** - In accord with the Biblical principle of [plenary verbal inspiration](#), even the long lists of names and numbers in this book (as well as similar apparently mundane information in other books) have divine purposes. Among those that might be suggested are: **(1)** to illustrate God's concern for all individuals and each one's distinct role in God's economy (Ge 1:27); **(2)** to emphasize that God is a God of order and structure, not chaos and randomness (1 Cor 14:33); **(3)** to demonstrate His faithfulness to Abraham, fulfilling His promise to multiply Abraham's seed (Ge 12:2+); **(4)** to confirm His interest in maintaining the integrity of families, as well as individuals. ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

God is not a God of confusion but of peace

-- 1 Cor 14:33a

**Gaebelein** - It must not be overlooked that there was a previous numbering of the people in connection with the atonement money. Then all who were twenty years and above, the same as in this census, were numbered. This took place nine months before, and the number of men twenty years and over was 603,550. The same number is given in this first chapter. See Exodus 38:25-26+ and Nu. 1:46+.

**Wiersbe** - Genesis pictures God's people as pilgrims and strangers, looking for their inheritance. Exodus and Leviticus depict Israel as a holy nation of priests, worshiping the Lord. The book of Numbers emphasizes God's people as warriors, overcoming the enemy and claiming the promised inheritance.

#### **There were several purposes for a census in the ancient world**

1. For taxation as in Lk 2:1-5 (cf Josephus, Antiquities 18. i. 1)
2. Funds for the Sanctuary of God (Ex 30:13-16)
3. For workers for the Sanctuary (Nu 3:14-39)
4. Most commonly to determine the number of men eligible to fight in a war - It was a regular feature of warfare in Bible times to count the troops before and after a battle (e.g. 1 Sa 11:8; Nu. 31:49).

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Why did God order a census in the book of Numbers? | GotQuestions.org](#)

## A Bold God and a Bold People Numbers 1:1–46; John 11:1–27; Psalms 1:1–6

Imagine a God so bold that He would say, “Take a census of the entire community of the children of Israel according to their clans and their ancestors’ house ... from twenty years old and above, everyone in Israel who is able to go to war. You and Aaron must muster them for their wars. A man from each tribe will be with you, each man the head of his family” (Num 1:2–4). It wouldn’t be easy to hear God tell you that you must be ready for war.

Yet our daily decisions to follow God are not so different than the decisions and preparations Moses had to make. Every day we have opportunities to choose God—or not. It’s easy to agree to this as a principle, but living it is an entirely different story. How often do distractions deter us from actually hearing God? Yet if we can’t hear Him, we can’t obey Him.

It’s also easy to be distracted by sin, but following sinful ways will only make us like “the chaff that the wind scatters” (Psa 1:4). We must be a people constantly seeking God instead—a people that makes His law our “delight” (Psa 1:2). We must “meditate” upon it “day and night” (Psa 1:2).

We’re also distracted by wicked people prospering. It’s easy to think, “Why is that person moving up in the world while I seem to be falling back?” But we must remember that this world is not “the dream,” and God will bring justice: “for Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (Psa 1:6).

What’s distracting you from listening to God and following Him? What are you going to do about it? - JOHN D. BARRY - Connect the Testaments

**Numbers 1:3 from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies.**

- twenty: Nu 14:29 32:11 Ex 30:14
- able: Nu 26:2 De 3:18 24:5 2Sa 24:9 2Ch 17:13-18 26:11-13
- by their: Nu 33:1 Ex 12:17
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### MUSTERING MEN ELIGIBLE FOR WARFARE

In America there was a saying ["You're in the Army Now!"](#) That saying is apropos to all Israeli men over the age of 20, for they were automatically in the army. God was not asking for volunteers. The age of conscription in the United States is 18. As Wenham says "it was envisaged that some men may have good reason not to enlist (Deut. 20:5–9). But here no exceptions for age, marriage or timidity are allowed. So fundamental is the campaign for Canaan that every able bodied man must join in. This census list then conveys the urgency and imminence of the battle for the land."

**THOUGHT** - This fact that all men of a certain age were "automatically" enlisted in the army relates to what happens were we come to faith in Christ. We are supernaturally transferred from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light and by default are immediately engaged in spiritual warfare with the forces of darkness. Neutrality is not an option. We are all soldiers, either a **good** one or a **bad** one! Many Christians seem to think that we can sit back and not engage in spiritual warfare, not realizing that the enemy is continually active in warfare. As Paul said we are charged to "**Suffer hardship** ([aorist imperative](#) = JUST DO IT!) with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Ti 2:3-4+). Note the pattern is the same in the NT - God gives us the victory in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 15:57) but we are still responsible to carry out the good fight of faith until the end of our life! (1 Ti 6:12+) The pattern is **not** "Let go, let God," **but** "Let God and let's go!" His plan, power and provision and our responsibility to follow through enabled by the Holy Spirit Who gives us the desire and the power to follow through (Php 2:13NLT+, see also Eph 6:10-18+).

The idiom dictionary has the following for [You're in the Army Now!](#) - Shape up—things are done differently here. One of the stock comedy bits in World War II movies was the rude awakening that recruits received during basic training. Any buck private who tried to oversleep or do anything else that wasn't according to military procedure would be chewed out by his drill sergeant, with an unceremonious, "Hey, you ain't no civilian no more, mister—you're in the army now!" The phrase followed the soldiers home, and well into the '50s anyone who was corrected by an ex-GI was liable to be told, "Do it right, mister—you're in the army now!"

**From twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their**

**armies** - God is preparing His people for the coming warfare they would encounter as they entered the promised land of Canaan. Little did they know that this generation would not enter into Canaan but would die in the wilderness because of their subsequent unbelief.

The key phrase of Numbers 1 is **go out to war**, used 14x - Num. 1:3; Num. 1:20; Num. 1:22; Num. 1:24; Num. 1:26; Num. 1:28; Num. 1:30; Num. 1:32; Num. 1:34; Num. 1:36; Num. 1:38; Num. 1:40; Num. 1:42; Num. 1:45. Clearly the main thrust of Numbers 1 is to "prepare for war!"

**Wiersbe on go out to war** - If Genesis is the book of beginnings and Exodus the book of redemption, then Numbers is the book of warfare. The Jews were in enemy territory, marching toward the land God would help them conquer, and they had to organize for confrontation and conflict....If God were to number the believers in the church today according to their ability to wage spiritual warfare, we wonder how big the army would be.

**Gaebelein** adds "The significance of the statement "all that are able to go forth to war in Israel " must not be overlooked. God wanted His people to go forward and reach in a few days the land of promise, enter in and conquer that land. How this plan was frustrated by their unbelief, and the men of twenty years and over died in the wilderness, without seeing the land is the sad history of this book." (Ibid)

**THOUGHT** - Can you see the principle? Obedience brings blessing. Disobedience takes one out of the sphere of divine blessing. The Israeli soldiers would miss the once in a lifetime opportunity to possess the promised land. We need to take our disobedience seriously, for we never know for certain when a particular disobedience may disqualify us from future blessings. Don't take a chance of missing out on God's best for you life. Obey! As the hymn says "There is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to [trust and obey!](#)"

**Wiersbe** - Some people are disturbed by the emphasis on warfare in certain parts of the Bible, and a few denominations have even removed from their hymnals militant songs like "Onward, Christian Soldiers." But their fears and criticisms are unfounded. "The Lord is a man of war" (Ex. 15:3) when it comes to punishing sin and removing evil. The nations that Israel destroyed in Canaan were living in abominable moral filth and sinning against a flood of light, and the Lord had been long-suffering with them (Gen. 15:13–16; Rom. 1:18ff). Would anybody today criticize a surgeon for removing a cancerous life-threatening tumor from a patient's body? Yet that's what God did for society when He used Israel to judge the degenerate nations in Canaan. Furthermore, the military image is used frequently in the New Testament, even by Jesus (Matt. 16:18) and especially by Paul (Rom. 8:31; Eph. 6:10–18; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; 1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Tim. 2:1–4). The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground, and there's an enemy to fight and territory to gain for the Lord. God declared war on Satan long ago (Gen. 3:15) and there can be no neutrality in this spiritual conflict, for Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). (Be Counted)

#### Related Resources -

- [Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Midianites in Numbers 31:17? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God command the extermination / genocide of the Canaanites, women and children included? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God condone such terrible violence in the Old Testament? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 1:4 "With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one head of his father's household.**

- Nu 1:16 2:3-31 7:10-83 Nu 10:14-27 13:2-15 17:3 25:4,14 34:18-28 Ex 18:25 Jos 22:14 1Ch 27:1-22
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ASSISTANTS IN TAKING CENSUS

**With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one head of his father's household**- These tribal leaders are also named in Numbers 2; 7; and 10. These head from each tribe will aid Moses and Aaron in conducting the census. The census was completed in less than 20 days for in Nu 10:11 "the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony" and it was God's signal to move out! Compare the taking of a census in the days of Israel's monarchy, when the government conducted the census, laboriously taking the count tribe by tribe and district by district, this task taking more than nine months! (2 Sa 24:8). When God is "King" as He in essence He still was in the wilderness, the system was far more efficient. This same principle applies to our lives -- we can try to do it in our strength and ingenuity or we can submit to the will and ways of Yahweh! God won't force us. The choice is ours, but the consequences are not our choice!

Recall that Moses had made this task of census taking easier for Moses' father in law had directed him to "select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens." (Ex. 18:21)

**Numbers 1:5 "These then are the names of the men who shall stand with you: of Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur;**

- **Elizur:** Nu 2:10 7:30 10:18 Ge 29:32-35 30:5-20 35:17-26 46:8-24 49:1-33 Ex 1:2-5 De 33:1-29 Rev 7:4-8
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEHOVAH CHOOSES THE ASSISTANTS!

**These then are the names of the men who shall stand with you: of Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur-** These choices were not left to Moses but were decreed by divine fiat.

**THOUGHT** - Getz relates this to the Biblical teaching of "The Book of Life. As believers, when we are tempted to doubt God's love and concern, we should remember that our names are forever written in the book of life." As believers, when we are tempted to doubt God's love and concern, we should remember that our names are forever written in the book of life. (Life Essentials Study Bible)

**Reuben** means "behold my firstborn," but he became as "uncontrollable as water." Why? Ge 35:22 says "It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that **Reuben** went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob." And then in Ge 49:3-4 we read "Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. **Uncontrolled** (pahaz = to be reckless, to be arrogant. It means to be undisciplined, wild, insolent) **as water**, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it—he went up to my couch. **Ryrie** adds "Reuben, the firstborn, forfeited his place of preeminence because of his fornication with Bilhah (Ge 35:22). Jacob predicted instability and ineffectiveness. No prophet, judge, or hero came from this tribe (Judg. 5:15-16; 1 Chr. 5:1)."

**Rayburn** makes an interesting observation - You will notice that while the list of Israelite tribes varies – largely as to whether Levi is included or not – there is always a concern to maintain the number 12. Levi is not listed here – replaced by the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh – because the Levites were exempt from military service.

**Gilbrant** on **Elizur** - This name means "God is a rock" and refers to Elizur, the son of Shedeur from the tribe of Reuben. During Israel's Exodus from Egypt, Elizur was the leader of his tribe (Num. 2:10). He assisted Moses and Aaron as they conducted a census of the Israelite community (Num. 1:5). When Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle (7:1), Elizur represented his tribe in the offering of a gift on the fourth day of the tabernacle's dedication (7:30-35). Later, as the Israelite community broke camp and left Sinai (cf. 10:11-13), Elizur led his tribe (v. 18). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**McGee** - **Elizur**, the son of Shedeur, was the man. Elizur means "My God is a rock" and Shedeur means "The Almighty **Shaddai** is a fire." I like that. This man **Elizur**, "My God is a rock," may belong to a tribe that is unstable as water, but he knows a Rock that is stable. He reminds me of the little Scottish lady who said, "I may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembles under me." Remember that they had sung in the song of Moses that God was their Rock. This fellow had learned that. He knew that God is a Rock in a weary land. He is the foundation Rock for us to rest on also. It is wonderful to know, my friend, that you maybe an unstable person and come from an unstable family, but there is a Rock for you. "My God is a Rock."

**Elizur** - Num. 1:5; Num. 2:10; Num. 7:30; Num. 7:35; Num. 10:18

**Shedeur** (The name may mean "**Shaddai** is fire," "Shaddai is light" or "Shaddai gives light.") Num. 1:5; Num. 2:10; Num. 7:30; Num. 7:35; Num. 10:18

**Gaebelein** - With Moses and Aaron were associated the princes of the tribes mentioned in verses 5-16. The names of these princes are of deep interest when we translate them into English.

- The prince of Reuben is Elizur, "My God is a rock."
- The Prince of Simeon, Shelumiel, "At peace with God."
- The Prince of Judah, Nahshon, "A diviner."
- Then comes Nathaniel, "The gift of God."
- The Prince of Issachar, Zebulun, is represented by Eliab, "My God is father."
- Joseph has his double portion and Ephraim has Elishama, "My God hath heart." Manasseh's Prince is Gamaliel, "My God is a

rewarder." Benjamin has Abidan, "My father is judge."

- The Prince of Dan is Ahiezer, "Brother of help."
- Asher has Pagiel, "Event of God."
- Gad's Prince is Eliasaph, "God addeth," and
- Naphtali is represented by Ahira, "Brother is evil."
- Nearly all these names are an encouragement to faith. These helpers in forming the mighty army speak by their names of the victory and blessing in store for His people if they go forward in faith.

COMPARISON OF CENSUS NUMBERS 1 AND NUMBERS 26			
TRIBE	FIRST NUMBERING	SECOND NUMBERING	CHANGE
Reuben	46,500	43,730	2,770 decr.
Simeon	59,300	22,200	37,100 decr.
Gad	45,650	40,500	5,150 decr.
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900 incr.
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900 incr.
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100 incr.
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500 incr
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	8,000 decr.
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200 incr.
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700 incr.
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900 incr
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	8,000 decr.
TOTAL	603,550	601,730	.1,820 decr

**Warren Wiersbe** - It is interesting to note that the nation did not grow during their wilderness wanderings. In fact, the second census showed **1,820 fewer men of war**. The nation wasted thirty-eight years, endured unnecessary afflictions, failed to grow, and failed to honor God all the while they were on their "death march." This is what unbelief does to Christians. It wastes time, effort, and manpower and brings no real blessing. How sad it is when churches fail to step out by faith and, as a result, start to degenerate spiritually, numerically, and materially. May God help us to trust His Word!

**Gene Getz** - God instructed Moses and Aaron to have 12 men help them organize Israel's military divisions. God Himself chose them, identifying each by name. Jesus also chose 12 men to become the leaders of His spiritual army. As a group, their names were recorded four times (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:13-16; Ac 1:13). Even more significant, their names will be inscribed forever on the 12 foundations of the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:14). God has prepared this eternal city for all true believers whose names are recorded in "the book of life" (Php 4:3). How encouraging to know that God knows our names. Jesus provided two illustrations of God's intimate care: Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's consent. But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So don't be afraid therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Mt 10:29-31) When we're tempted to conclude that God doesn't really care about each one of us, we should remind ourselves that we are secure in Christ and that our names will never be blotted out of the book of life. In fact, He knew us by name before He laid the foundations of the world (Rv 13:8; 17:8). (Life Essentials Study Bible)

**Norman Geisler** - **NUMBERS 1:1–4:49—How accurate is this census of the tribes of Israel?**

**PROBLEM:** According to the census taken in chapters 1–4 of Numbers, the newly formed nation of Israel must have numbered about 2 million people. According to Numbers 1:1, this census was taken while the people were in the wilderness of Sinai at the beginning of their 40 years of wandering. However, the dry and desolate conditions of the Sinai desert would have made it impossible for such a large group to survive. So, is the census inaccurate?

**SOLUTION:** The naturalistic presupposition of this criticism is contrary to the historic facts. Although there has been some controversy over the meaning of the Hebrew word which is translated “thousand,” the evidence is clear that this is the proper understanding of this word in this context. For example, Numbers 1:21 does not say, as some have claimed, that the children of Reuben numbered 46 families and 500. The verse clearly states that the number of individual men from twenty years old and up was 46 thousand and 500. According to the census in these chapters, the total number of male Israelites from 20 years old and up was 603,550. This number is confirmed by the passage in Exodus 12:37 which states that 600,000 males, along with women and children, departed from Egypt.

The fact that the arid and barren desert would not be able to sustain such a large group of people is a valid observation. However, the problem which modern scholarship has with the size of the multitude and the possibility of their survival in the wilderness rests upon an unwillingness to consider the supernatural element. Modern scholarship is decidedly anti-supernatural. Since the Book of Exodus records the divine judgments upon Egypt, and the miraculous deliverance of Israel from bondage, the daily provision for the people by the mighty hand of God is sufficient to explain the survival of the people of God in that destitute land. Indeed, many passages record the miraculous provisions which God made for His people, from the daily supply of manna (Ex. 16), which was provided for the whole nation until the new generation ate the food of the Promised Land (Josh. 5:12), to the miraculous provision of water from that supernatural rock which followed them (1 Cor. 10:4; Ex. 17:6), to the miraculous provision of meat in Numbers 11:31, to the fact that neither their clothes nor their sandals wore out in all their wanderings (Deut. 29:5). God was able to meet all their needs. Although the desert was not able to sustain, the Lord God of Israel certainly was (see also discussion on Deut. 32:13–14). (When Critics Ask)

#### Numbers 1:6 of Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai;

- Shelumiel: Nu 2:12 7:36
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SIMEON'S SON "PEACE OF GOD"

**Of Simeon** - The second of Leah's sons from Jacob. His name means "hearing" (Gen. 29:33; 35:23). He and Levi savagely avenged the rape of their sister Dinah by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite (Gen. 34:1-4). He had many sons, one by a Canaanite woman (Gen. 46:10). Jacob noted his violent nature in his prophetic utterance (Gen. 49:5). Simeon's tribal inheritance lay within Judah. It included some strategic cities, such as Beersheba, Hormah and Ziklag in the Negev area. Ezekiel allotted Simeon's descendant a place in his vision of a new Temple and New Jerusalem (Ezek. 48:24-33). (Baker)

**Shelumiel the son** - **Shelumiel** means something like "God is my peace." or "At Peace With God" and is from the verb שלם (shalem), to be or make whole or complete, and אל (el), God. (Num. 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19).

**Of Zurishaddai** has the familiar name **Shaddai** ([Shadday](#)) and means "The Almighty is my rock and strength." (Nu 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19)

[Robert Rayburn](#) makes a good point regarding the liberal view that Numbers was written much later than Moses' day - There are several features of this early section of Numbers that betray its great antiquity (i.e. that it was not composed much later in Israel's history as is usually assumed in skeptical scholarship. One is the means by which the census was taken, a practice unknown after the rise of the monarchy. Another is the numerous parallels in vocabulary and procedures to the census documents found at Mari and other ANE sites from this time or still earlier. Mari flourished, for example, in the 3rd millennium B.C., a thousand years or more before the exodus and continued to exist until the 18th century B.C. when it was overrun by Hammurabi. In other words, the census we have here is like that of earlier peoples, not later. Another ancient feature is these names: sixteen of them never occur again in biblical literature and not one of them is a compound of Yahweh (remember we read in Exodus 6:3 that the name “Yahweh” was first revealed to Moses and was not known to the Jews before). Many of these names are compounds of El and some of Shaddai. Later Hebrew names are in large numbers compounds of Yahweh; virtually any name in your English Bible that starts with a “J”! [Milgrom, 6]



**Simeon** - the second son of Jacob by his wife Leah (Gen. 29:33). Simeon and his brother Levi slaughtered the inhabitants of Shechem because of the ravaging of their sister Dinah (Ge 34:24-31). Joseph kept him prisoner in Egypt until his brothers brought Benjamin to him (Ge 42:24). "Simeon" was also the name of the tribe of Israel that descended from Jacob's son Simeon. He had six sons: Jemuel or Nemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin or Jarib, Zohar or Zerah and Shaul (Gen. 46:10; Nu. 26:12f). Except for Ohab, all these became heads of households within the tribe (1 Chr. 4:24). At the first census in the wilderness, the tribe of Simeon numbered 59,300 men of military age (Nu. 1:23), and at the census at the end of the forty years journeying, the tribe numbered 22,200 (Nu 26:12ff). The tribe of Simeon received no territorial inheritance at the conquest but was distributed within the territory of Judah (Josh. 19:1). The tribe was credited with destroying the Meunites and the people of Ham, who occupied the Valley of Gedor, and with slaughtering the Amalekites that lived in Mount Seir (1 Chr. 4:39-43). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Shelumiel** - "Peace of God," "at peace with God," "My health comes from God" or "My friend is God."

Num. 1:6; Num. 2:12; Num. 7:36; Num. 7:41; Num. 10:19

**Zurishaddai** - "My rock is Shaddai ([Shadday](#))." 'my rock is the Almighty,'

Num. 1:6; Num. 2:12; Num. 7:36; Num. 7:41; Num. 10:19

#### Numbers 1:7 of Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab;

- **Nahshon**: Nu 2:3 7:12 10:14 Ru 4:18 1Ch 2:10,11 Mt 1:2-5 Lu 3:32
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab** - These are notable names **Nahshon** (that foretells, that conjectures) was in the family tree of David as we see in Ruth

Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, 19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, 20 and to Amminadab was born **Nahshon**, and to **Nahshon**, Salmon, 21 and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, 22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, **David**. (Ruth 4:18–22)

The significance of course is that **Nahshon** was an ancestor of Christ

Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of **Nahshon**, and **Nahshon** the father of Salmon. (Matt. 1:4+, see also Lk 3:32+).

#### Numbers 1:8 of Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar;

- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of Issachar** - Jacob's fifth son by Leah (Ge 30:18; 35:23). His name means "a man of hire," i.e., "a hired man." "Jacob's prophetic assertion about Issachar that he was a beast of burden between two saddle bags (niv) or burdens (kjv) supports this view of the name. Issachar is often paired with Zebulun (Gen. 49:14; Deut. 33:18, 19) and his wealth with maritime riches. He had four sons (1 Chr. 7:1)." (Baker)

**Nethanel** - Nethanel occurs fourteen times in the OT as the name of ten different men and is from nāthan literally meaning "God gave" or 'given of God.' He was next to Judah in the marching assignments and when the tribes pitched their tents (Num. 2:5; 10:15).

Num. 1:8; Num. 2:5; Num. 7:18; Num. 7:23; Num. 10:15

**the son of Zuar** - 'little one,' or "small one."

#### Numbers 1:9 of Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon;

- Eliab: Nu 2:7 7:24 10:16
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



**of Zebulun** - The sixth son of Jacob. His mother was Leah (Gen. 35:23). He and his sons went to Egypt (Gen. 46:14). He lived near the shore of the Mediterranean and had some access to the sea (Gen. 49:13), evidently Galilee. The name of the tribe and territory of Zebulun. The territory, in lower Galilee, was bounded on the east by Asher, on the north and south by Issachar and Naphtali, on the southeast by Issachar, and on the southwest by Manasseh. It was located near major trade routes through the Jezreel Valley to the south (Josh. 19:10-16; Judg. 1:30). The tribe failed to drive out some Canaanites from a few cities. This tribe showed itself valiant for the Lord in various battles (Judg. 4:6, 10; 5:14, 18; 6:35; 1 Chr. 12:33, 40). Its population was conquered and deported by the Assyrians (722 b.c.). Ezekiel's new Temple vision reserves a place for this tribe (48:26, 27, 33). (CWD)

**Eliab** ('God is father,') - "There are six men with this name. The first was the son of Helon and leader of the tribe of Zebulun during the Exodus. He assisted Moses and Aaron in the military census which was taken while they were in Sinai. He was responsible for bringing the tribe's offering when the altar was dedicated at the tabernacle (Num. 1:9; 7:24; 10:16)." (Gilbrant)

**the son of Helon** ("the strong one.")

#### Numbers 1:10 of the sons of Joseph: of Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud; of Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur;

- **Elishama**: Nu 2:18 7:48 10:22 1Ch 7:26,27
- **Gamaliel**: Nu 2:20 7:54 10:23
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of the sons of Joseph** ("he increase"): **of Ephraim,**

**Elishama** ('God has heard' "God hears" - Num. 1:10; Num. 2:18; Num. 7:48; Num. 7:53; Num. 10:22 1Ch 7:26,27) Name used by six persons in the Old Testament. **Gilbrant** - Elishama also was the father of Nun and the grandfather of Joshua, the leader of Israel who succeeded Moses (1 Chr. 7:26). During Israel's exodus from Egypt, Elishama was the head of his tribe and assisted Moses and Aaron as they conducted a census of the Hebrew community (Nu. 1:2-5, 10). When Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle (cf. Nu 7:1), Elishama represented his tribe in the offering of a gift on the seventh day of the tabernacle's dedication (cf. Nu 7:48-53). Later, as the Israelite community broke camp and left Sinai (cf. Nu 10:11-13), Elishama led his tribe (Nu 10:22). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**the son of Ammihud** ('my kinsman is majesty,' - Num. 1:10; Num. 2:18; Num. 7:48; Num. 7:53; Num. 10:22; Num. 34:20; Num. 34:28; 2 Sa 13:37; 1 Chr. 7:26; 1 Chr. 9:4);

**of Manasseh** - The firstborn son of Joseph in Egypt. His mother was Asenath, an Egyptian woman whose father was a priest in Heliopolis (On) (Gen. 41:50). The name means "cause to forget" and was given by Joseph because Manasseh's birth helped Joseph forget his family and hard times (Gen. 41:51). Jacob gave his firstborn blessing, however, to Ephraim whose descendants outstripped Manasseh's (Gen. 48:19-20). Both became key tribes in northern Israel, and Jacob blessed both under Joseph's name (Gen. 49:22-26). Their fruitfulness and God's care for them are emphasized. Manasseh had a son named Machir (Gen. 50:23). (Bake)

**Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur** means 'the Rock has ransomed or rescued,' -

Nu 1:10; Nu 2:20; Nu 7:54; Nu 7:59; Nu 10:23

**Elishama the son of Ammihud** was the leading commander of the tribe of Ephraim (Nu 1:10), son of Ammihud (Nu 2:18), grandson of Joshua (1 Chr. 7:26).

Num. 1:10; Num. 2:18; Num. 7:48; Num. 7:53; Num. 10:22; 2 Sam. 5:16; 2 Ki. 25:25; 1 Chr. 2:41; 1 Chr. 3:6; 1 Chr. 3:8; 1 Chr. 7:26; 1 Chr. 14:7; 2 Chr. 17:8; Jer. 36:12; Jer. 36:20; Jer. 36:21; Jer. 41:1

#### Numbers 1:11 of Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni;

- **Abidan**: Nu 2:22 7:60 10:24
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

of Benjamin ('son of right hand' from yasph = to add),

**Abidan** ('my father is judge' - Nu 1:11; Nu 2:22; Nu 7:60; Nu 7:65; Nu 10:24) **the son of Gideoni**

#### Numbers 1:12 of Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai;

- Ahiezer: Nu 2:25 7:66 10:25
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Of Dan, Ahiezer** ('my brother is help,') **the son of Ammishaddai** ("servant of Shaddai" or 'my kinsman is Shaddai,' [Shadday](#)) - **Gilbrant** says **Ammishaddai** "used in combination with 'el , a general term for God, to mean "the God who provides all that is needed" (El Shaddai), though we translate the term "God Almighty." **Ammi** means "my people"; thus, Ammishaddai can mean "the people of the Almighty." (Ibid)

#### Numbers 1:13 of Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran;

- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of Asher** - 'happy one,' a son of Jacob

**Pagiel** - 'occurrence of God,'

Num. 1:13; Num. 2:27; Num. 7:72; Num. 7:77; Num. 10:26

**the son of Ochran** - his name is derived from the verb 'ākhar, meaning "trouble," "perplexed" or "afflicted one."

Num. 1:13; Num. 2:27; Num. 7:72; Num. 7:77; Num. 10:2

#### Numbers 1:14 of Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel;

- **Eliasaph**: Nu 7:42 10:20, Son of Reuel, Nu 2:14
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of Gad,**

**Eliasaph** - 'God has added' (el = God + yasaph = add) Used of two people. Ten days after Moses had finished setting up the Tabernacle, Deuel's son Eliasaph presented an offering on behalf of his brethren (Nu 7:42, 47). When the Israelites left Sinai, Deuel's son was placed in charge of the warriors belonging to the tribe of Gad (Nu 10:20).

Chief of Gad (Num. 1:14; 2:14; 3:24; 7:42, 47; 10:20)

Chief of Gershon (Num. 3:24).

**the son of Deuel** - 'known of God,'

Num. 1:14; Num. 2:14; Num. 7:42; Num. 7:47; Num. 10:20

#### Numbers 1:15 of Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan.

- Ahira: Nu 2:29 7:78 10:27
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**of Naphtali, Ahira - Gilbrant - Ahira** appears five times in Numbers, referring to the same individual (Nu 1:15; 2:29; 7:78, 83; 10:27). He was the son of Enan, the leader of the tribe of Naphtali. His name means "the (divine) kinsman is a friend." The first mentioning of Ahira is in the context of taking a census of the people of his tribe, as each tribe supplies an individual to aid Moses in this endeavor who was "the head of the house of his fathers" (Nu 1:4). Part of the task of the leader was to organize the community

of the tribe, evidenced in Nu 2:29, as the tribe was to encamp on the northern fringe of the wilderness camp, under the direction of Ahira. The tribe followed Ahira when moving (Nu 10:27). Finally, as representative of the tribe, Ahira offers the dedicatory offering of the tribe on the newly consecrated altar in the wilderness (Nu 7:78, 83). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**the son of Enan** - 'having fountains,' or "spring (of water)."

**Numbers 1:16 "These are they who were called of the congregation, the leaders of their fathers' tribes; they were the heads of divisions of Israel."**

- **the called of the congregation** - those who were summoned by name to attend. Nu 2:3-31 7:2,10-83 10:14-27 11:17 16:2 26:9 Jud 6:15 1Ch 27:16-22
- **heads:** Nu 1:4 Ex 18:21,25 De 1:15 1Sa 22:7 23:23 Mic 5:2
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**These are they who were called of the congregation, the leaders of their fathers' tribes; they were the heads of divisions of Israel."**

**Numbers 1:17 So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name,**

- Nu 1:5-15 Joh 10:3 Rev 7:4-17
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name**

**Jeffrey Feinberg** - Each nasi oversees his own list of names (Nu 1:17–18). What takes David over nine months to count (2 Sa 24:8; cf. Num. 10:11), Moshe and Aharon delegate and complete in under 20 days! (Walk Numbers)

**Numbers 1:18 and they assembled all the congregation together on the first of the second month. Then they registered by ancestry in their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, head by head,**

BGT Numbers 1:18 καὶ πᾶν τὸν συναγωγὴν συναγαγόντων μὴ τὸ μῆνός το δευτέρου τοὺς καὶ πηξονοσάν κατ' ἑκαστὸν τῶν κατὰ πατρὶς αὐτῶν κατὰριθμὸν νομτῶν αὐτῶν πᾶν ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ ἑξήκοντα ἔτος καὶ πρὸς ἑξήκοντα ἔτος καὶ ἄνω καὶ ἄνω κατὰ κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν

NET Numbers 1:18 and they assembled the entire community together on the first day of the second month. Then the people recorded their ancestry by their clans and families, and the men who were twenty years old or older were listed by name individually,

NLT Numbers 1:18 and they assembled the whole community of Israel on that very day. All the people were registered according to their ancestry by their clans and families. The men of Israel who were twenty years old or older were listed one by one,

ESV Numbers 1:18 and on the first day of the second month, they assembled the whole congregation together, who registered themselves by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head,

NIV Numbers 1:18 and they called the whole community together on the first day of the second month. The people indicated their ancestry by their clans and families, and the men twenty years old or more were listed by name, one by one,

KJV Numbers 1:18 And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls.

- **they registered by ancestry:** Ezr 2:59 Ne 7:61 Heb 7:3,6 \*margins
- **by their fathers' households** Nu 1:2
- **according:** Nu 1:20-54
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TIME FOR A "SKULL" COUNT

**and they assembled all the congregation together on the first of the second month-** It's time to count "skulls."

**Then they registered by ancestry in their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, head by head** - The groups ascend in size: family, clan, tribe, and the entire assembly.

**Head** ([01538](#)) see note above on [gulgolet](#)

### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Numbers 1:18 They declared their pedigrees.**

It was not enough to be a true-born Israelite, a man must be able to show his descent. The genealogical tables were kept with the greatest care; and there was a holy pride in being able to vindicate the claim of having the blood of the patriarchs in the veins.

It is a blessed thing to be sure that we have passed from death unto life, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. True, our eternal destiny does not hinge on it. Many will doubtless be saved at last, who have spent their lives between hope and fear. But it is very needful for our comfort and growth in grace to be able to declare our pedigree, and to know that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Gospel of John was written that we might believe; the Epistle that we might know. But many seek this knowledge in the wrong way, and are exposed to endless questionings. They try to discover the date, place, or experience in the past, when they were incorporated into the Divine family; and because they cannot point to these, they imagine that they are still outside. Now for every one that has had a definite experience of the new birth, there are perhaps a score who entered the Divine family almost as a sailor passes the line of the Equator. Yet it is possible for you to know that you are born again, though you may not be able to tell your birthday.

If you are trusting Jesus, if the Spirit witnesses with your spirit that God is your Father, if you are full of a holy fear of grieving Him, if you are becoming like Him, if you love the brethren — you may certainly declare yourself his child.

**J Vernon McGee** - Why did they declare their pedigree? Why are pedigrees so important in the Word of God? They serve a threefold purpose.

1. They were interesting and beneficial to those who were concerned. It's well to know something of your ancestry, what kind of stock you came from.
2. The reason some names and genealogies are omitted in the Bible and others are recorded is because it was important to preserve the genealogy of Jesus Christ. We saw in our study of Genesis how the rejected line was given first and then dropped and forgotten. Then the genealogical line which would lead to the Lord Jesus is given, and this line is followed all the way through the Scriptures.  
The New Testament opens with a genealogy, and the whole New Testament stands or falls on the accuracy of that genealogy. This genealogy was kept on record, and probably was open on display, in the temple of that day. Probably the enemy checked it many times, hoping to find that Jesus did not have the legal right to the throne of David. It is interesting that the accuracy of the genealogy of Jesus Christ was never questioned by His enemies.
3. God forbade intermarriage, and a true Israelite had to be able to declare his pedigree. They were the beneficiaries of the covenant made to Abraham. Also the genealogy was necessary to determine who was eligible for the priesthood. We find an example of this in the Book of Nehemiah. "And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood" (Neh. 7:63–64). Levites who could not declare their genealogy were put out of the priesthood.

There is a message in all of this for us today. Can you imagine a young man of that day being called up and asked, "Are you an Israelite?" If he answered, "Well, I hope I'm an Israelite, but I can't be sure until I die," what do you think would have happened? They

would have pushed him aside! Suppose another young man stepped up and they asked, “Are you an Israelite?” What do you think they would have done to him if he answered, “Well, I try to be an Israelite, I’m working real hard at it, and I hope to become one”? Would that have been acceptable? Do you see how important it was for them to declare that they were Israelites? Each one must know that he was the son of Abraham.

Now I have a question for you—a quite personal question. Can you declare your pedigree as a Christian? If you don’t know whether you can or not, may I say to you that you had better be able to declare it. Listen to this: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Can you say that, my friend?

How can you become a son of God? “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). There is no other way. You become a son of God by faith in Christ Jesus. “But as many as received him, [the Lord Jesus], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). The authority to become the sons of God is given to those who do no more nor less than simply believe in His name.

And our genealogy is important! If we are a true child of God through faith in Christ, then we are heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ! “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:14–17).

You can know it. You can be born again through the blood of Christ and so be a member of the family of God. That is the only way! In this wilderness journey today, you must know who you are! You must know that you are a child of God. If you are not sure of that, you ought to make sure of it and you can make sure of it. How can you be sure? By taking God at His Word. It is not what you think or what you feel; He says that if you put your trust in Christ, you are His child. You can rest on the Word of God. Here we are given the twelve tribes of Israel and the numbers in each tribe. If you were to take an adding machine and go through this chapter, you would find that it is accurate. (Thru the Bible)

**Numbers 1:19 just as the LORD had commanded Moses. So he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.**

- Nu 1:2 26:1,2 2Sa 24:1-10
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES OBEYS GOD

**just as the LORD had commanded Moses. So he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.**

**Numbers 1:20 Now the sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,**

- Nu 2:10,11 26:5-7 Ge 29:32 46:9 49:3,4 1Ch 5:1
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE TRIBES NUMBERED

Numbers 1:20-46 describes the numbering of the tribes, twelve minus one, the tribe of Levi being set aside to minister over God's Tabernacle.

**Now** - literally: “and there were” (NET says “And they were as follows”) which forms an inclusio with Nu 1:46 which gives us the final total.

**the sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go**

out to war,

**THOUGHT** - Getz associates Nu 1:20-2:2 with the call on believers to live "Well-Ordered Lives. Since we are made in God's image, we should live our lives in an orderly fashion.

**Numbers 1:21 their numbered men of the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.**

- Nu 2:10,11 26:7
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**their numbered men of the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.**

**Numbers 1:22 Of the sons of Simeon, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, their numbered men, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,**

- Nu 2:12,13 26:12-14 Ge 29:33 34:25-30 42:24 46:10 49:5,6
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Of the sons of Simeon, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, their numbered men, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war**

**Head** ([01538](#)) see note above on [gulgolet](#)

**Numbers 1:23 their numbered men of the tribe of Simeon were 59,300.**

- Nu 2:13 25:8,9,14 26:14
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**their numbered men of the tribe of Simeon were 59,300**

**Numbers 1:24 Of the sons of Gad, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,**

- The tribe of Gad marched, along with that of Simeon, under the standard of Reuben; and it seems, on that account, to have been introduced in this order. The other tribes also, are here classed together according to their encampments, and the order of their subsequent march.
- Nu 2:14,15 26:15-18 Ge 30:10,11 46:16 49:19
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Of the sons of Gad, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war**

**Numbers 1:25 their numbered men of the tribe of Gad were 45,650.**

- Nu 2:15 26:18
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**their numbered men of the tribe of Gad were 45,650**

**Numbers 1:26** Of the sons of Judah, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Nu 2:3,4 26:19-22 Ge 29:35 46:12 49:8-12 2Sa 24:9 1Ch 5:2 2Ch 17:14-16
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Judah, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:27** their numbered men of the tribe of Judah were 74,600.

- Nu 2:3,4 26:22 2Sa 24:9 2Ch 17:14-16
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Judah were 74,600

**Numbers 1:28** Of the sons of Issachar, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Nu 2:5,6 23:23-25 Ge 30:18 46:13 49:14,15
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Issachar, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:29** their numbered men of the tribe of Issachar were 54,400.

- Nu 2:6 26:25
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Issachar were 54,400

**Numbers 1:30** Of the sons of Zebulun, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Nu 2:7,8 26:26,27 Ge 30:20 46:14 49:13
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Zebulun, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

**Numbers 1:31** their numbered men of the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400.

- Nu 2:8 26:27
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400



**Numbers 1:32** Of the sons of Joseph, namely, of the sons of Ephraim, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Nu 2:18,19 26:35-37 Ge 30:24 37:1-36 39:1-23 46:20 48:1-22 Ge 49:22-26 De 33:17
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Joseph, namely, of the sons of Ephraim, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:33** their numbered men of the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500.

- the tribe: Ge 48:5 De 33:17
- were forty: Nu 2:19 26:37
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500

**Numbers 1:34** Of the sons of Manasseh, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Manasseh: Nu 26:34 Ge 41:51 46:20 48:1 50:23 De 33:17 Jos 4:12 17:1 1Ch 7:14 Rev 7:6
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Manasseh, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:35** their numbered men of the tribe of Manasseh were 32,200.

- Nu 2:21 26:34 Ge 48:19,20
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Manasseh were 32,200

**Numbers 1:36** Of the sons of Benjamin, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Ge 35:16-18 44:20 46:21 49:27
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Benjamin, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:37** their numbered men of the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400.

- Nu 2:23 26:41 Jud 20:44-46 2Ch 17:17
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400

**Numbers 1:38** Of the sons of Dan, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Ge 30:5,6 46:23 49:16,17
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Dan, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:39** their numbered men of the tribe of Dan were 62,700.

- Nu 2:26 26:43
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Dan were 62,700

**Numbers 1:40** Of the sons of Asher, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Ge 30:12,13 46:27 49:20
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Asher, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:41** their numbered men of the tribe of Asher were 41,500.

- Nu 2:28 26:47
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Asher were 41,500.

**Numbers 1:42** Of the sons of Naphtali, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war,

- Naphtali: Ge 30:7,8 46:24 49:21
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Of the sons of Naphtali, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war

**Numbers 1:43** their numbered men of the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400.

- Nu 2:30 26:50
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

their numbered men of the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400

**Numbers 1:44** These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each of whom was of his father's household.

- Nu 1:2-16 26:64
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each of whom was of his father's household

**Numbers 1:45** So all the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers' households, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war in Israel,

- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Numbers 1:46** even all the numbered men were 603,550.

- Nu 2:32 23:10 26:51 Ge 12:2 13:16 15:5 17:6 22:17 26:3 28:14 Ge 46:3,4 Ex 12:37 38:26 De 10:22 1Ki 4:20 2Sa 24:9 1Ch 21:5 2Ch 13:3 17:14-19 Heb 11:11,12 Rev 7:4-9
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE GRAND TOTAL

**Even all the numbered men were 603,550** - Keep in mind this is just the men, not the women or children so that the total number of Israelites would be about 2.5 million. Consider the logistics of moving a large city today to another area. As [Brian Bell](#) says "And they did this over & over again...dismantle, pack up, the tabernacle, move, re-set up camp somewhere else. And then be ready to do it again!"

This is the same number given Exodus 38:25-26+ in determining the atonement money...

The silver of those of the congregation who were numbered was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; 26 a beka a head (that is, half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for each one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for **603,550** men.

**Comment** - The total number, by the way, is the same given in Exodus 38:26, suggesting again that the "books" of the Pentateuch are really one book.

The commentaries have a major problem with these numbers and feel they are exaggerated. As Eugene Merrill asks "how could millions of people have gotten organized, maintained their cohesion, and traveled through deserts, frequently on narrow routes and difficult terrain? The answer does not lie in the possibility of text corruption, for the large figures prevail throughout the accounts....**It seems best then to take the facts and figures literally and to view the movement and provision of this vast host as a part of the Lord's miraculous provision.**" (BKC) Amen! If He could arrange to get them out of Egypt without being slaughtered by Pharaoh, He is certain able to orchestrate events to lead them through the wilderness. Obstacles are really opportunities to see the greatness of God.

### Related Resource:

- [Are the numbers in the Bible accurate? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 1:47** The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe.

- Nu 1:3,50 2:33 3:1-51 4:1-49 8:1-26 26:57-62 1Ch 6:1-81 21:6
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE LEVITES SEPARATED UNTO SERVICE TO THE TABERNACLE

Numbers 1:47-54 describes the separation of the tribe of Levi unto the service to Jehovah in His Tabernacle.

**The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe**

**A C Gaebelein** - The tribe of Levi is not included. The end of this chapter gives the reason. They were not to be among the warriors, but appointed over the tabernacle of testimony, over all the vessels, and what belonged to it. They were to bear it and their place was round about the tabernacle. Their service, divinely appointed and the beautiful lessons connected with it, we shall follow more fully in our annotations of the third and fourth chapters.

**Jeffrey Feinberg** -No one counts the Levites, excluded from this census as well as from the judgment falling on this generation (Num. 1:47, 26:64). As a result, Levites survive to become great-grandfathers passing on their priestly heritage. (Walk Numbers)

**James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE LEVITES AS A PECULIAR PEOPLE Numbers 1:47–54**

The Levites were a peculiar people among the thousands of Israel. Their peculiarities, like the Christians, lay in their relationship to God Himself. To be closely associated with Him will always make us peculiar in the eyes of others. Think of their—

### 1. Separation. They were—

1. **NOT NUMBERED** with the others (Nu 1:47). God always makes a difference between the ordinary believer and those wholly devoted to Himself.
2. **CHOSEN BY GOD** (Nu 3:12). He took them instead of the firstborn in Israel, so that each had a representative character. Every firstborn not represented by a Levite had to be redeemed (Nu 3:46–48). Ye see your calling, brethren, ye who belong to the inner circle of His chosen ones. In Christ's stead, who is the Firstborn of every creature.
3. **GIVEN TO AARON** (Nu 3:9). So are we, as His elect, given to Christ. Jesus revealed this thought when He said, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." All that the Father hath given Me shall come unto Me.
4. **CLAIMED BY GOD**. "The Levites shall be Mine" (Nu 3:12). Peter, James, and John were the peculiar three among the Twelve, they seemed to drink most deeply of the Spirit of Jesus their Master, and so were owned by Him not so much as historians as teachers. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

### 2. Occupation. The work of the Levites was manifold. In these verses something of this variety is apparent. We see them as—

1. **OVERSEERS**. "Thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle, over the vessels, and over all things" (Nu 1:50). The chosen servants of God ought to take a general interest in everything connected with the work and worship of God. We must have a sympathetic concern for all that has to do with the service and honour of God.
2. **BEARERS**. "They shall bear the tabernacle" (Nu 1:50). The carrying of the things of the tabernacle was to them the "burden of the Lord." Not every professed follower of Christ is a burden-bearer. Paul understood this experimentally when he said, "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren's sake."
3. **MINISTERS**. "They shall minister unto Me" (Nu 1:50). They were not the servants of the tabernacle, but of God. It is quite possible to be the willing servants of a Church, and yet not be ministering unto the Lord.
4. **DEMOLISHERS**. "The Levites shall take it down" (Nu 1:51). When the pillar moved it was theirs to take the tabernacle to pieces. Those whose office it is to handle Divine things should know how to open up and rightly divide the Word of Truth. Dissection does not mean destruction in this case.
5. **BUILDERS**. "The Levites shall set it up" (Nu 1:51). They had at times to take the house board from board, but they could and did put it up again. They were no type of those destructive critics who can only pull down, but cannot build up. Those who cannot set the things of God's house in order had better let them alone.
6. **MEDIATORS**. "The Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle that there be no wrath upon the congregation" (v. 53). According to their position they were a channel of blessing or of curse to the people.

Such are they who occupy the position of public teachers of the Word and will of God. Taking our true place before God and the people we may save many from the wrath to come. Ye are the salt of the earth. Ours should be the position of devoted ones.

7. **KEEPERS.** "The Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle" (Nu 1:53). They were custodians of the Lord's treasure. At their hands He required every vessel and curtain, every board, pillar, and pin. Are we as His servants faithfully keeping all that the Lord has committed unto us. Hath He not committed unto us the word of reconciliation? (2 Cor. 5:19). Paul, almost with his dying breath, said, "O Timothy, keep what is committed to thee." "I have kept the faith" (2 Ti 4:6-8).

**Numbers 1:48 For the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying,**

- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying,**

**Numbers 1:49 "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel.**

- Nu 2:33 26:62
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MILITARY EXEMPTIONS

**Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel-** The Levites are exempted from war to minister to God through care of the Tabernacle.

**Rayburn** notes that "One interesting feature of the literary organization of Numbers is the use of prolepses, passages that anticipate material to be given later. This section on the duties of the Levites has nothing particular to do with the census that comes before it or the arrangement of the camp that comes after it. But those duties will be reported in great detail in chapters 3 and 4. This is, in other words, something of a tease. There are a number of these prolepses or anticipations throughout the book. [Milgrom, xxx].

**John R Spence** says "'It is in the context of developing a military organization for war that the Levites are assigned their tasks in relation to the tabernacle. In a sense, their military assignment is the care and transportation of the religious shrine. Num. 1:49-53 clearly outlines the requirements for the militaristic protection of the tabernacle by the Levites."

**Numbers 1:50 "But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it; they shall also camp around the tabernacle.**

- thou shalt: Nu 3:1-10 4:15,25-33 Ex 31:18 32:26-29 38:21 1Ch 23:1-32 1Ch 25:1-26:32 Ezr 8:25-30,33,34 Ne 12:8,22,47 13:5,10-13,22
- the tabernacle: Nu 1:53 20:11 Ex 31:18 38:21 Ps 122:4
- shall encamp: Nu 2:17 3:23-38 10:21
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LEVITES DUTIES TO THE TABERNACLE

**But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings and over all that belongs to it - Tabernacle of the testimony** is the same as Tent of meeting (see [note](#))

**Appoint** (number, numbered) ([06485](#))([pequddah/pāqadh/paqad](#)) conveys the root idea of something that is attended to or set in order -- fighting men under an officer (2 Chr. 17:14), priests in an order (1 Chr.

23:11; 24:19); arrangement of Tabernacle (Nu 4:16[2x]). Office of one in charge of something (Ps 109:8) or officers (2 Ki. 11:18; Isa. 60:17). Usually pequddah means accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Nu 16:29; Jer. 48:44). In Job 10:12 God's attention was for Job's good. "The basic meaning is to exercise oversight over a subordinate, either in the form of inspecting or of taking action to cause a considerable change in the circumstances of the subordinate either for the better or for the worse." (TWOT) "Most often, the word means accounting and refers to a time of accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Num. 16:29; Jer. 48:44)." (Baker)

**Paqad in Numbers** - (103x in 90v in Numbers out of about 297x in OT) Num. 1:3; Num. 1:19; Num. 1:21; Num. 1:22; Num. 1:23; Num. 1:25; Num. 1:27; Num. 1:29; Num. 1:31; Num. 1:33; Num. 1:35; Num. 1:37; Num. 1:39; Num. 1:41; Num. 1:43; Num. 1:44; Num. 1:45; Num. 1:46; Num. 1:47; Num. 1:49; Num. 1:50; Num. 2:4; Num. 2:6; Num. 2:8; Num. 2:9; Num. 2:11; Num. 2:13; Num. 2:15; Num. 2:16; Num. 2:19; Num. 2:21; Num. 2:23; Num. 2:24; Num. 2:26; Num. 2:28; Num. 2:30; Num. 2:31; Num. 2:32; Num. 2:33; Num. 3:10; Num. 3:15; Num. 3:16; Num. 3:22; Num. 3:34; Num. 3:39; Num. 3:40; Num. 3:42; Num. 3:43; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:27; Num. 4:29; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:32; Num. 4:34; Num. 4:36; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:38; Num. 4:40; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:42; Num. 4:44; Num. 4:45; Num. 4:46; Num. 4:48; Num. 4:49; Num. 7:2; Num. 14:18; Num. 14:29; Num. 16:29; Num. 26:7; Num. 26:18; Num. 26:22; Num. 26:25; Num. 26:27; Num. 26:34; Num. 26:37; Num. 26:41; Num. 26:43; Num. 26:47; Num. 26:50; Num. 26:51; Num. 26:54; Num. 26:57; Num. 26:62; Num. 26:63; Num. 26:64; Num. 27:16; Num. 31:14; Num. 31:48; Num. 31:49;

**NET Note** - The same verb translated "number" (פָּקַד, paqad) is now used to mean "appoint" (הִפְקִיד, hafqed), which focuses more on the purpose of the verbal action of numbering people. Here the idea is that the Levites were appointed to take care of the tabernacle. On the use of this verb with the Levites' appointment, see M. Gertner, "The Masorah and the Levites," VT 10 (1960): 252.

**They shall also camp around the tabernacle** - Think about this one for a moment. What does that picture if all the other tribes are outside of them? Clearly they are the "go between" to the Tabernacle, the place and presence of God. They were in effect mediators. Although it is not specifically stated, it is fairly certain that the Tabernacle was marked by the [Shekinah glory cloud](#).

**NET NOTE on tabernacle** - The Hebrew name used here is מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת (mishkan ha'edut). The tabernacle or dwelling place of the LORD was given this name because it was here that the tablets of the Law were kept. The whole shrine was therefore a reminder (הַעֲדוּת, a "warning sign" or "testimony") of the stipulations of the covenant. For the ancient Near Eastern customs of storing the code in the sanctuaries, see M. G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King, 14–19, and idem, The Structure of Biblical Authority, 35–36. Other items were in the ark in the beginning, but by the days of Solomon only the tablets were there (1 Kgs 8:9).

**Tabernacle** (Dwelling) ([04908](#))([mishkan](#) from verb **shakan** = to settle down, to abide, to dwell) is a masculine noun which means dwelling place or sanctuary and is most often translated "**tabernacle**." And in over half of the uses mishkan was preceded by the definite article which conveyed the sense that it was "the tabernacle," not just any tabernacle, but is the one where Jehovah dwelt. In the first use Jehovah declares His intent to dwell (Hebrew = shakan) among Israel (Ex 25:8, Lev 26:11), for which He instructs them to construct the tabernacle (Ex 25:9). Addressing Israel Jehovah says "Moreover, I will make My **dwelling** among you, and My soul will not reject you." (Lev 26:11) **Mishkan** is often found in parallel with or described by the Hebrew word for tent (Ex. 26:35; Jer. 30:18). In one of the saddest verses in the OT, we read "For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the **dwelling place** (mishkan; Lxx = [skene](#)) of the LORD, and have turned [their] backs." (2Chr 29:6) The **Lxx** translates **mishkan** here with the noun [skene](#) which describes a temporary lodging place. The related verb [skenoo](#) is used to describe Jesus "tabernacling" with men - "And the Word (Jn 1:1-3+) became flesh, and dwelt ([skenoo](#)) among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn 1:14+) Skene is used in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) to translate the Hebrew noun [mishkan](#) which was the dwelling place of God. The verb from which mishkan is derived is shakan which gives rise to the term Shekinah ([wikipedia](#)), not found in the Bible but introduced in the Talmudic literature to describe the cloud of glory over the Holy of holies in the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), which was the visual manifestation of the presence of Jehovah (See discussion of the [Shekinah glory cloud](#))

**Mishkan** as it related to God's Dwelling place had at least two names - (1) **Tent of meeting** - First Chronicles we read "they ministered with song before the **tabernacle** (Lxx = [skene](#) = generally used to describe a transitory, movable lodging place for nomads, pilgrims, etc) of the tent (Heb = ohel) of meeting (See [discussion](#) of "tent of meeting"), until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order." (2) **Tent of Testimony** - (Ex. 38:21; Nu 9:15) because the the Ten Commandments (God's "Testimony") were kept in the Holy of Holies. Of note is that once

Solomon's Temple was finished, the word mishkan was almost never used of that structure.

**They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it** - NET has "They **must** carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; and they **must** attend to it and camp around it," noting that "The imperfect tense here is an obligatory imperfect telling that they are bound to do this since they are appointed for this specific task. The addition of the pronoun (**THEY**) before the verb is emphatic—they are the ones who are to attend to the tabernacle. The verb used is שָׂרַת (sharat) in the Piel, indicating that they are to serve, minister to, attend to all the details about this shrine."

**Numbers 1:51 "So when the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman who comes near shall be put to death."**

BGT Numbers 1:51 καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἡ σκηνὴ καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ Λευαΐται καὶ ὅταν παρεμβάλῃ τὴν σκηνὴν ἐν ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ Λευαΐται προσπορεύμενος ποθάντω

NET Numbers 1:51 Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites must take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be reassembled, the Levites must set it up. Any unauthorized person who approaches it must be killed.

NLT Numbers 1:51 Whenever it is time for the Tabernacle to move, the Levites will take it down. And when it is time to stop, they will set it up again. But any unauthorized person who goes too near the Tabernacle must be put to death.

ESV Numbers 1:51 When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death.

NIV Numbers 1:51 Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall do it. Anyone else who goes near it shall be put to death.

- the Levites: Nu 4:5-33 10:11,17-21
- the stranger: Nu 3:10,38 16:40 18:22 Lev 22:10-13 1Sa 6:19 2Sa 6:7
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TABERNACLE DISASSEMBLING AND ASSEMBLING

**So when the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up** (literally = "raise it up.") - Only the Levites were to come in contact with the tabernacle, because it was holy. God's presence and holiness was not to be taken lightly. The Levites had an awesome responsibility before the Lord. Without a doubt, it was not to be taken lightly.

**NET NOTE** - The construction uses the infinitive construct with the temporal preposition; the "tabernacle" is then the following genitive. Literally it is "and in the moving of the tabernacle," meaning, "when the tabernacle is supposed to be moved," i.e., when people are supposed to move it. The verb נָסַח (nasa') means "pull up the tent pegs and move," or more simply, "journey."

**But the layman who comes near shall be put to death**- What is the simple but clear message? God is holy and he who approaches Him must be holy! How incredible that we can today approach Him with boldness and without fear of death because of the death of His Son Who has clothed us in His righteousness and holiness! The story of Uzzah is testimony to this strict rule. See 2 Sam. 6:1-10. See also 1 Sa 6:19-20;

**Layman** (stranger, , outsider) ([02114](#))(zur) is a verb which means to be a stranger. Things described as strange (in this sense the verb seems to be used as an adjective) - fire, gods (Dt 32:16, Ps 44:20), waters (2Ki 19:24 = water in foreign lands), children ("illegitimate" - NAS, "alien" - ESV)

There were certain preparations that had to be made for a person to approach the Tabernacle. The Levites had to make sure that no one approached it unprepared. It was their duty to keep God's wrath from falling upon the people because of some neglect or because someone came unprepared. It was their duty to teach the people to approach God with fear and reverence.

**Wenham** - Similar precautions were taken to prevent men straying on to Mount Sinai when God appeared on it (Exod. 19:11-13, 21-24). The New Testament also insists on men approaching God with reverent fear (Matt. 5:23-26; Acts 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 11:27-32; Heb. 12:18-29). (TOTC-Num)



**THOUGHT-** Holy-God was not making arbitrary and harsh regulations for the people. There was a serious educational purpose in this matter. The people had to learn that God is holy and they are sinful; they had to learn that they cannot approach God in any way they choose. They approach God only on God's own terms. We belong to God. He does not belong to us. We must respect the holiness, the complete otherness of God. (Disciple's Study Bible)

**Disciples Study Bible - GOD, Holy**—God was not making arbitrary and harsh regulations for the people. There was a serious educational purpose in this matter. The people had to learn that God is holy and they are sinful; they had to learn that they cannot approach God in any way they choose. They approach God only on God's own terms. We belong to God. He does not belong to us. We must respect the holiness, the complete otherness of God.

**Numbers 1:52 "The sons of Israel shall camp, each man by his own camp, and each man by his own standard, according to their armies."**

- Nu 2:2,34 10:1-36 24:2
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Levites surround the Tabernacle (not shown) Then the placement of the other 12 Tribes.  
(See another schematic)

**The sons of Israel shall camp, each man by his own camp, and each man by his own standard, according to their armies-** "The army was organized, each tribe with its leaders and its standard. There was unity in diversity. Perhaps the camp of Israel pictures the church. There are different "tribes" and standards, with their different leaders, but it is one army, following one Commander and fighting one enemy:" (Wiersbe - WWBC)

**Standard** (01714)(**degel**) is a masculine noun used almost exclusively in Numbers and which denotes a flag, a banner, or a standard which identified the various tribes of Israel (Nu 1:52; 2:2). It represented the tribe to which a group belonged (Nu 2:3, 10). It depicted the attitude and intent of the lover toward his bride (Song 2:4). "He has brought me to his banquet hall, And his **banner** over me is love." The love of the maiden for the man was the rallying point of her life.

**Degel** - 14x in 14v - banner(1), standard(10), standards(3). Num. 1:52; Num. 2:2; Num. 2:3; Num. 2:10; Num. 2:17; Num. 2:18; Num. 2:25; Num. 2:31; Num. 2:34; Num. 10:14; Num. 10:18; Num. 10:22; Num. 10:25; Song. 2:4

**Numbers 1:53 "But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there will be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony."**

- **shall camp around** Nu 1:50 3:7 18:3 1Ti 4:13-16 2Ti 4:2
- **there be:** Nu 8:19 16:46 18:5 Lev 10:6 1Sa 6:19 Jer 5:31 23:15 Ac 20:28-31
- **and the:** Nu 3:7,8 8:24-26 18:3-5 31:30,47 1Ch 23:32 2Ch 13:10
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LEVITES SURROUND THE TABERNACLE OF YAHWEH

**But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony-** The priestly tribe was not only the mediator, the go between, but the guardian. The Lxx uses the verb **paremballo** for **shall camp around**, this verb literally meaning to throw up and so to enclose an object or area on all sides. **Paremballo** was actually a military technical term expressing preparations to besiege a city (Lk 19:43+), so the Levites were in a sense prepared to guard against unwanted intrusions by encircling the Tabernacle of God.

**So that** (TERM OF PURPOSE) **there will be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel-** Wrath is the Hebrew word qetseph

**Wrath** (07110)(**qesep**) is a masculine noun meaning wrath. "The verb qāṣap is used to give pointed expression to the relationship between two or more persons, one or both of which can be said to feel anger ('ap), have wrath (hēmā), indignation (ka'as), or express anger." (TWOT) "The word refers to anger aroused

by someone's failure to do a duty. For example, a wife in Persia who showed contempt for her husband by not doing her duties would arouse his wrath (Esther. 1:18). This word usually refers to God's wrath aroused by people failing to do their duties (Deut. 29:28; Ps. 38:1; Isa. 34:2). In some cases, this wrath was directed against sinful Gentile nations (Isa. 34:2; Zech. 1:15; cf. Ro 1:18). In Israel's case, this duty was expressed in the Law of Moses (2 Chr. 19:10; Zech. 7:12; cf. Ro 4:15). Atonement performed by priests turned away God's wrath when laws were broken (Num. 16:46; 1 Chr. 27:24; 2 Chr. 29:8)." (Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament) **Gilbrant** - "**Qesep** is one of the strongest words for anger and is heightened to "great wrath" in several passages (Deut. 29:28; 2 Ki. 3:27; Jer. 21:5; 32:37; Zech. 1:15; 7:12). Three passages place "great wrath" at the climax of a trio of synonyms for anger. In Deut. 29:28, God warns that apostasy from the Covenant will result in Israel being uprooted from their land by his "anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation." Jeremiah predicts the day when the Lord will fight against Israel in overwhelming anger as He carries out the curse of Deuteronomy (Jer. 21:5). Later, he foretells the nation's restoration; even though God has banished the people in anger and great wrath, He will bring them back (Jer. 32:37)." (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Qesep** - 28x in 28v - Num. 1:53; Num. 16:46; Num. 18:5; Deut. 29:28; Jos. 9:20; Jos. 22:20; 2 Ki. 3:27; 1 Chr. 27:24; 2 Chr. 19:2; 2 Chr. 19:10; 2 Chr. 24:18; 2 Chr. 29:8; 2 Chr. 32:25; 2 Chr. 32:26; Est. 1:18; Ps. 38:1; Ps. 102:10; Eccl. 5:17; Isa. 34:2; Isa. 54:8; Isa. 60:10; Jer. 10:10; Jer. 21:5; Jer. 32:37; Jer. 50:13; Zech. 1:2; Zech. 1:15; Zech. 7:12

**So the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony**- The verb **charge** is mishmereth meaning: to a guard, watch and in the Lxx is [phulasso](#) means to carry out the function of watching even like a military guard or sentinel (cp Ac 23:35, 28:16), guarding the integrity of the Tabernacle. The NT uses phulasso of guarding truth (eg, 1Ti 5:21, 6:20) which is a good picture, because the Tabernacle was the Source of Truth from Jehovah.

**THOUGHT** - Believers are Yahweh's **royal priesthood** today (1 Pe 2:9+) and He has given each of us a charge to "**Guard** ([phulasso](#) command in [aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) (2 Ti 1:14+) through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."

**Numbers 1:54 Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all which the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did.**

- Nu 2:34 Ex 23:21,22 39:32,43 40:16,32 De 12:32 1Sa 15:22 Mt 28:20
- **Numbers 1 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ISRAEL'S PROMPT OBEDIENCE

**Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all which the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did**- This is an amazing statement in light of their disobedience and disbelief in the near future. This shows one can have a good beginning but a disastrous ending (all died in the wilderness because of their disobedience). O how we each need to memorize, meditate on and continually practice Paul's admonition in 1 Cor 10:12 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) that he does not fall."

As **Rayburn** says "We have here, in other words, the same reality often described in the NT: people who started well but quit at some point, people who tasted the powers of the age to come and the goodness of the word of God and shared in the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4-5) but who, nevertheless, fell away never to be renewed to repentance. It is this that will make Numbers such an important warning for every generation of Christians, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:6, 11.

**Disciples Study Bible** - Obedience is possible. God does not set up imperatives we cannot follow (ED: Of course in NT we have the indwelling Spirit - see Php 2:13NLT+) Human weakness is not an acceptable excuse, God calls us to full-time obedience (Dt 30:11).