

# OpenTheo

## Numbers 26

May 15, 2022



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The second census.

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## Transcript

Numbers chapter 26. The sons of Reuben, of Hainot the clan of the Hainokites, of Palyu the clan of the Palyuites, of Hezron the clan of the Hezronites, of Carmi the clan of the Carmites. These are the clans of the Reubenites, and those listed were 43,730, and the sons of Palyu, Eliab, the sons of Eliab, Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram.

These are the Dathan and Abiram chosen from the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, and they became a warning. But the sons of Korah did not die.

The sons of Simeon, according to their clans, of Nemuel, the clan of the Nemuelites, of Jamin, the clan of the Jaminites, of Jachan, the clan of the Jachanites, of Zerah, the clan of the Zerites, of Shaul, the clan of the Shaulites. These are the clans of the Simeonites, 22,200. The sons of Gad, according to their clans, of Zephon, the clan of the Zephonites, of Haggai, the clan of the Haggaites, of Shunai, the clan of the Shunites, of Osnai, the clan of the Osnites, of Eri, the clan of the Erites, of Arad, the clan of the Aradites, of

Orelai, the clan of the Irelites.

These are the clans of the sons of Gad as they were listed. 40,500. The sons of Judah were Ur and Onan, and Ur and Onan died in the land of Canaan.

And the sons of Judah according to their clans were Of Shelah the clan of the Shelanites, Of Perez the clan of the Perezites, Of Zerah the clan of the Zerahites, And the sons of Perez were Of Hezrong the clan of the Hezronites, Of Hamel the clan of the Hamelites. These are the clans of Judah as they were listed. 76,500.

The sons of Issachar according to their clans, Of Tola the clan of the Tolaites, Of Puvah the clan of the Punites, Of Jashub the clan of the Jashubites, Of Shimran the clan of the Shimranites. These are the clans of Issachar as they were listed. 64,300.

The sons of Zebulun according to their clans, Of Sired the clan of the Siridites, Of Elon the clan of the Elanites, Of Jaliel the clan of the Jalielites. These are the clans of the Zebulunites as they were listed. 60,500.

The sons of Joseph according to their clans, Manasseh and Ephraim. The sons of Manasseh, Of Mekir the clan of the Mekirites, And Mekir was the father of Gilead, Of Gilead the clan of the Gileadites. These are the sons of Gilead, Of Eazar the clan of the Eazarites, Of Helek the clan of the Helakites, And of Azrael the clan of the Azraelites, And of Shechem the clan of the Shechemites, And of Shemaida the clan of the Shemaidaites, And of Hepha the clan of the Hephaites.

Now Zelophehad the son of Hepha had no sons but daughters, And the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Melah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Terzah. These are the clans of Manasseh and those listed were 52,700. These are the sons of Ephraim according to their clans, Of Shuthalah the clan of the Shuthilahites, Of Beqah the clan of the Beqahites, Of Tehan the clan of the Tehanites, And these are the sons of Shuthalah, Of Eran the clan of the Eranites.

These are the clans of the sons of Ephraim as they were listed, 32,500. These are the sons of Joseph according to their clans, The sons of Benjamin according to their clans, Of Bela the clan of the Belaites, Of Ashbel the clan of the Ashbelites, Of Ahiram the clan of the Ahiramites, Of Shephutham the clan of the Shephumites, Of Hutham the clan of the Huthamites, And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman, Of Ard the clan of the Ardites, Of Naaman the clan of the Naamites. These are the sons of Benjamin according to their clans and those listed were 45,600.

These are the sons of Dan according to their clans, Of Shuham the clan of the Shuhamites, These are the clans of Dan according to their clans, All the clans of the Shuhamites as they were listed were 64,400. The sons of Asher according to their clans, Of Imnah the clan of the Imnites, Of Ishvai the clan of the Ishvites, Of Beriah the clan of

the Beriahites, Of the sons of Beriah, Of Heber the clan of the Heberites, Of Malkiel the clan of the Malkielites, And the name of the daughter of Asher was Sirah. These are the clans of the sons of Asher as they were listed, 53,400.

The sons of Naphtali according to their clans, Of Jaziel the clan of the Jazielites, Of Gunai the clan of the Gunites, Of Jizah the clan of the Jizahites, Of Shillam the clan of the Shillamites, These are the clans of Naphtali according to their clans, And those listed were 45,400. This was the list of the people of Israel, 601,730. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Among these the land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names.

To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, And to a small tribe you shall give a inheritance. Every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list. But the land shall be divided by lot, According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit.

Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller. This was the list of the Levites according to their clans, Of Gershon the clan of the Gershonites, Of Kohath the clan of the Kohathites, Of Morari the clan of the Morarites. These are the clans of Levi, The clan of the Libnites, The clan of the Heberites, The clan of the Malites, The clan of the Mushites, The clan of the Korahites, And Kohath was the father of Amram.

The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. And she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses and Miriam their sister. And to Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord. And those listed were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward. For they were not listed among the people of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the people of Israel.

These were those listed by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who listed the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. But among these there was not one of those listed by Moses and Aaron the priest, who had listed the people of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall die in the wilderness.

Not one of them was left, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nan. Numbers chapter 26 records the second census of the book, here taken before they were to enter into the promised land. This census was for the purpose of military preparation and also for the purpose of the equitable division of the land among the tribes.

It occurs after the plague of chapter 25, in which 24,000 people were killed. The number of Israel then is greatly reduced from what it would have been. In chapter 25, Phinehas

had killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman.

The Israelite man was Zimri, one of the sons of the chiefs of the fathers' houses of Simeon. In the census of Numbers chapter 1, the number of Simeon was 59,300. In Numbers chapter 26, however, their numbers are greatly depleted.

They are down to 22,200. It seems reasonable to speculate that the 24,000 killed in the plague were mostly of the tribe of Over the period of time between the two censuses, the tribe of Manasseh had greatly increased in number by over 20,000. Asher, Issachar and Benjamin had also greatly increased, while Naphtali and Ebrahim had seen a significant drop in their numbers.

The sum total of Israel's number is much the same as it was in Numbers chapter 1. There it was 603,550. Now it is 601,730. The difference between the two numbers is 1,820, perhaps significant because the number 182 is half the number of days in a year.

The tribes are numbered in the same order as they were back in chapter 1. Here as there, the numbering starts with the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob. However, while senior in age, Reuben does not enjoy the preeminence among the brothers. Judah is the leading brother and tribe.

The tribes are also numbered in the clusters that they appear in their camps around the tabernacle. Though here it starts with the southern camp of Reuben, Simeon and Gad, then moves to the eastern of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, then to the west Ebrahim, Manasseh and Benjamin, and then finally to the north Dan, Asher and Naphtali. Of the four different sections of Israel's camp, the camp to the east Judah, Issachar and Zebulun was by far the most numerous, with 201,300 persons within it.

Dan, Asher and Naphtali to the north was the second largest with 163,200, then Ebrahim, Manasseh and Benjamin to the west with 130,800. Finally, the least numerous part of the camp was Reuben, Simeon and Gad to the south with 106,430 men. Both the tribes of Reuben and Simeon had lost significant numbers of persons through judgments of the Lord upon them.

In numbering the tribes here, the tribes are broken down into various clans. These subdivisions would be more important for the division of the land that would later occur, enlisting the sons of Jacob, their sons, and the tribes that arose from them with their various clans within them. The text also recalls earlier parts of the story, particularly related to unfaithful acts of the people that led to judgment.

The people being numbered here are the survivors and descendants of persons who have been judged on account of their unfaithfulness, and they need to learn relevant lessons from their forefathers' bad examples. Dathan and Abiram, for instance, descended from Reuben, were leaders of the rebellion of Korah, perishing along with

their company with the Lord's fire of judgment devouring 250 men. Judah had lost two sons, Ur and Onan, on account of their unfaithfulness in the land of Canaan.

A fact recalled in verse 19. The two sons of Aaron who were killed by the Lord for offering strange fire in Leviticus chapter 10, Nadab and Abihu, are mentioned in verse 61. Finally, in verses 64 and 65 of the chapter, we are told that not one of those numbered in the census had been among the people of Israel listed in the wilderness of Sinai.

Like Dathan and Abiram and their company, Ur and Onan, and Nadab and Abihu, they had all died on account of their sin, save for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. Besides preparing for war, the numbering of the tribes is for the purpose of the division of the inheritance of the land. Larger tribes like Judah would be given a large inheritance, but smaller tribes like Simeon would be given a smaller one.

The land itself would be divided by lot. This does not make the manner in which the land was apportioned immediately obvious. How was it actually divided? According to lot or according to the size of the tribe? The text says it was both, but we might struggle to understand how both could be the case.

This division of the land is also described in places like Numbers chapter 33 verse 54. You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance.

Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. The answer to the problem, it seems to me, is that the location of the tribe's land was determined by lot, and the size of the tribe's land was determined according to their relative population.

This division of the land among the tribes can be seen later on in the book of Joshua. The tribes in the main census are numbered according to their males from 20 years and upward. In the case of the Levites, they're numbered according to their males from a month old and upward.

The number of the Levites increased by 1,000 over the period of the Exodus. They do not receive land with the rest of the tribes, but cities will be apportioned for them, cities about which we read in chapter 35. Moses, Aaron and Miriam are here all presented as the sons and daughter of Amram and Jochebed, the daughter of Levi.

It seems quite unlikely that Jochebed was the direct daughter of Levi, rather she was a descendant of Levi, perhaps of uncertain tribal genealogy. A question to consider, what effect might the reminder of all of the unfaithful people who had died to that point have had upon Israel as they prepared to enter the promised land?