

MERE NUMBERS OR BLESSINGS!?

(Scripture: Numbers 1:41-44)

Numbers 1:41-44.

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

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

46all the numbered men were 603,550.

Introduction: There are a couple of books in the Bible that people do not like to read. One is Leviticus, and the other is Numbers! We tend to skip those books because we do not understand the deep valuable insights in those books. But if you dig deep into it, you will come across a wealth of heavenly information! I hope and pray that God will give us the special spiritual insight to understand these books through His Holy Spirit and make us wiser!

Numbers 1:1-4.

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

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.

3from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall count them by their armies. 4With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one head of his father s household.

Second year, second month.... it was just one year since they came out of Egypt! Lot of things happened in that one year! The plagues, the miracles, God's deliverance through Red Sea, His miraculous provisions of water and Manna in the wilderness for over two million people for forty years, His presence on the Sinai mountains, and His law came from Him at that time! The Tabernacle was built, and the worship began! It all happened in one year, and that is amazing!

Census was already taken in Exodus 30, and 38. Why again? Previously it was taken to collect half a shekel for every person who was 20 or above and that money was to be used for tabernacle expense. But now the census was taken by the tribes, their families, and by their family names! We must not go by raw statistical number alone. We must associate their names and faces, when we calculate their family numbers. The number of people who died of COVID is 566,000 as of today. But behind every number, there is a face, there is a family that is still grieving, and there is a gripping story behind every person who died. Do not let anyone make this a political issue. Learn to see people behind these numbers.

Remember, this census was initiated by God Himself, for His glory. But when David took the census in I Samuel chapter 24, he did it with his own personal agenda for his

own glory. He tried to trust in his own military strength, rather than God, and the nation of Israel was punished for it! The purpose behind Numbers 2 is very obvious, to create 4 divisions of the tribes, and it sets the order and hierarchy of each tribe.

Leadership for each tribe was appointed by God Himself! God chose those 12 people as captain of their own tribes.
(Num. 1:5-16).

Numbers 1:17-19.

*17So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name,
18and they assembled all the congregation on the first day 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
19just as the LORD had commanded Moses. So, he counted them in the wilderness of Sinai.*

Moses obeyed and took the census!

Please note they were traced through their father's genealogy, and not through mother's genealogy! I would say, keeping your father's last name for the males is a good way to keep your family name intact. If you take up the first name of your dad as your last name, and then your son takes up your first name, the family name keeps changing! Try to retain your family name as much as possible and carry it to children's children!

Important points to remember! (Num. 2:4-32)

The largest tribe was Judah?

74,600 men.

The smallest tribes? Benjamin. 35,400.

Manasseh tribe is less than that, but they were only half tribe of Joseph, and the other half tribe was Ephraim.

The total number of Israelites?

Numbers 1:45,46.

*45So all the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers households, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go to war in Israel,
46all the numbered men were 603,550.*

Just men 20 and above were 603,550! But the total number must be over 2 millions! After Abraham's promise 430 years ago was being fulfilled! 2 million for a nation in those days is a great number.

Are they mere numbers, or mighty men of God? They are indeed mighty blessings from God!

What about Levites? Levites were separated and exempted!

Numbers 1:47-50.

47 The Levites, however, were not counted among them by their fathers' tribe.

48 For the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying,

49 Only the tribe of Levi you shall not count nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel.

50 And you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings and over everything 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.

Numbers 1:51.

51 So when the tabernacle is to move on, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman who comes near it shall be put to death.

Levites had the privilege of dwelling next to the tabernacle, and they oversaw setting up and dismantling and carrying the tabernacle! No one else could even come near it because they would be put to death.

What a great privilege to engage in setting up and putting back everything in order! God is watching you guys and girls who are working hard in this church, and he is delighted in you very much! Just preaching and singing is not the only ministry. Please come early and help us open the church and close the church. I look up to those people who would love to help us around the church.

Numbers 2:1,2.

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

2 The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own flag, with the banners of their fathers' households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance.

Now God teaches them how to set up their camp in order! Our God is a God of order and harmony. He divides their camps into 4 colonies, bringing 3 tribes in each colony. They are to have their tribal flag or banner. They had to camp at a distance from the tabernacle. Only the Levites could camp close to the tabernacle.

Numbers 2:3-8.

3 Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the flag of the camp of Judah, by their armies; and the leader of the sons of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab,

4 and his army, their numbered men: 74,600. 5 Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar; and the leader of the sons of Issachar: Nethanel the son of Zuar,

6 and his army, their numbered men: 54,400. 7 Then follows the tribe of Zebulun; and the leader of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab the son of Helon,

8 and his army, his numbered men: 57,400.

Now Judah was the first one to be mentioned, not only because he had the largest tribe, but because he was blessed and called the lion of Judah. Also, the messiah was to come through his loins! Issachar and Zebulun pitched next to him. But all three tribes are identified together by the same flag, the flag of the camp of Judah! Rabbis think that their flag emblem is lion.

Numbers 2:9.

9The total of the numbered men of the camp of Judah: 186,400, by their armies. They shall set out first.

Note again! The three tribes are identified by the name, camp of Judah. Lion of Judah was a fierce warrior, and they would be always in the forefront! They covered the east side because they had many enemies from the east side!

Now we can understand the camps of the other tribes!

Reuben, Simeon, Gad camped on the south, and they were identified as camp of Reuben with the flag of Reuben! According to the Rabbis, their flag emblem was a human face. (Num 2:10-15)

Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were to camp on the west side of the tabernacle, and their colony was called camp of Ephraim with the flag of Ephraim. They had the lowest number, but it was no problem because no enemy could come behind them through the dessert. (Num. 2:18-24). The Rabbis think flag emblem seems to be an ox or calf.

On the north side was the flag and camp of Dan, followed by Asher, and Naphthali. Dan camp had the second largest camp, 157,600. (Num. 2:25-31). Again, the Rabbis think the flag emblem is the eagle.

When Ezekiel, and Revelation describes the cherubim, they bring out these four images, lion, a human face, ox, and the eagle.

When the Israelites set out and March forward, the Judah camp from east lead first, followed by camp of Reuben from south, and then followed by camp of Ephraim from east, and finally followed by camp of Dan! What order and harmony! What a majestic picture! What a great army of God! No wonder all the enemies of Israel were so afraid of them!

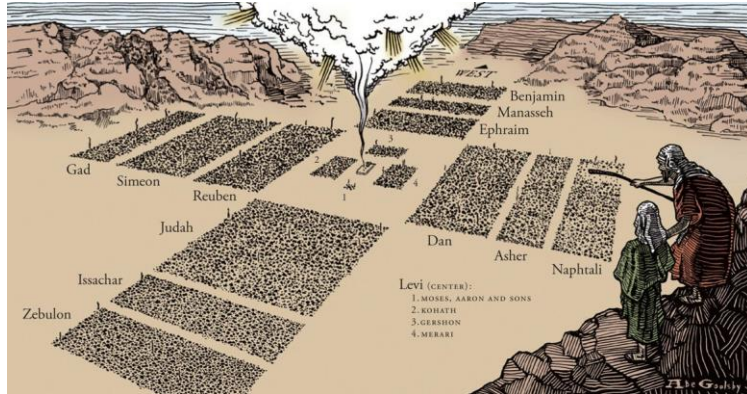
What about the Levites?

Numbers 2:17.

17 Then the tent of meeting shall set out with the camp of the Levites during the camps; just as they camp, so they shall set out, every man in his place by their flags.

Levites were to camp around the tabernacle (Numbers 1:50), more like a buffer between God's tabernacle, and other tribes!

Look at the picture of this arrangement:



more like a cross!

Just imagine, God's pillar of cloud and fire giving them light, warmth, and protection in the night, and in that shadow of the cross image, the Israelites were reaping God's blessings, tranquility, and peace! The shape of the cross symbolizes obedience, servant hood, absolute surrender, and of course the salvation of God!

Is the book of numbers still boring to you? If you only dive deep into this book, you will see the hand of God and understand His depth of love, protection, and wisdom! Today, I just scratched the surface of the richness in this book. We will learn so much from this book in the future!

Conclusion:

1. Our God is a God of order and harmony. We must also run everything with order, decency, and in a timely fashion!
2. Physical strength mattered! Only 20 years and above males were chosen to go to war! Strength mattered a lot in those days. That is why it was a male dominated society. But nowadays, technology brings equal strength to both!
3. God's grace and protection through the shadow of the cross!
4. God fed 2 million plus people in the dessert! Why not take care of your family?
5. Access to God only through the High Priest, Jesus as Levites were to the Israelites.

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