

A PERSONAL
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

NUMBERS

SHARON CRAVENS

I'm not quite sure how this study is going to unfold; I'm just going to do the best I can. I am excited because this journal will complete the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.

I liked the summary from the introduction to the book in the NIV Commentary: "The book of Numbers appears to be a bifid of unequal parts. The two censuses (chs. 1-4, 26) are key to understanding the structure of the book. The first census (chs. 1-4) concerns the first generation of the Exodus community; the second census (ch. 26) focuses on the experiences of the second generation, the people to whom this book is primarily directed. The former were prepared for triumph but ended in disaster. The latter had an opportunity for greatness—if only they would learn from the failures of their fathers and mothers the absolute necessity for faithfulness to the Lord despite all obstacles."

Numbers 1:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,
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;
Numbers 1:3 From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

The book opens with the LORD commanding Moses to take a census of all the males in the congregation that were 20 years and older that were fit for fighting on behalf of the people. Aaron was to assist Moses and number them by their "armies," or companies (from the Hebrew). I would assume this to mean by tribes since that is how it is detailed in the following verses.

Note that this census was taken on the first day of the second month in the second year after they had come out of Egypt, and they are in the Sinai desert. By the time we get to the end of the book, we will note that the recorded events encompassed a little over 38 years.

Numbers 1:4 And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.
Numbers 1:5 And these *are* the names of the men that shall stand with you: of *the tribe of* Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur.
Numbers 1:6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.
Numbers 1:7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab.
Numbers 1:8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar.
Numbers 1:9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon.
Numbers 1:10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.
Numbers 1:11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni.
Numbers 1:12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.
Numbers 1:13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran.
Numbers 1:14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel.
Numbers 1:15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan.

Numbers 1:16 These *were* the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.

In this section of verses the heads or recognized leaders of each tribe are identified.

Numbers 1:17 ¶ And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by *their* names:

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.

Numbers 1:19 As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.

It sounds like the identified leaders assisted Moses and Aaron in calling the congregation together by tribe and listing the names and ancestry of each man 20 years and older to determine how many there were.

Numbers 1:20 And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Numbers 1:21 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Reuben, *were* forty and six thousand and five hundred.

The tribe of Reuben, son of Leah and Jacob's oldest son, numbered 46,500.

Numbers 1:22 Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Numbers 1:23 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Simeon, *were* fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.

The tribe of Simeon, son of Leah, numbered 59,300.

Numbers 1:24 Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Numbers 1:25 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Gad, *were* forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty.

The tribe of Gad, son of Zilpah, Leah's maid, numbered 45,650.

Numbers 1:26 Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Numbers 1:27 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Judah,

were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred.

The tribe of Judah, son of Leah, numbered 74,600.

Numbers 1:28 Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
Numbers 1:29 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Issachar, *were* fifty and four thousand and four hundred.

The tribe of Issachar, son of Leah, numbered 54,400.

Numbers 1:30 Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
Numbers 1:31 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Zebulun, *were* fifty and seven thousand and four hundred.

The tribe of Zebulun, son of Leah, numbered 57,400.

Numbers 1:32 Of the children of Joseph, *namely*, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
Numbers 1:33 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Ephraim, *were* forty thousand and five hundred.

The tribe of Joseph's son Ephraim numbered 40,500; Joseph's mother was Rachel.

Numbers 1:34 Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
Numbers 1:35 Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Manasseh, *were* thirty and two thousand and two hundred.

The tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh numbered 32,200.

I am reminded that Joseph was to be given a double portion as declared by his father Jacob when he declared that Ephraim and Manasseh were to be reckoned his sons.

Genesis 48:3–5 “And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.”

Numbers 1:36 Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their

families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; **Numbers 1:37** Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Benjamin, *were* thirty and five thousand and four hundred.

The tribe of Benjamin, son of Rachel, numbered 35,400.

Numbers 1:38 Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; **Numbers 1:39** Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Dan, *were* threescore and two thousand and seven hundred.

The tribe of Dan, son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid, numbered 62,700.

Numbers 1:40 Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; **Numbers 1:41** Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Asher, *were* forty and one thousand and five hundred.

The tribe of Asher, son of Zilpah, Leah's maid, numbered 41,500.

Numbers 1:42 Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; **Numbers 1:43** Those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Naphtali, *were* fifty and three thousand and four hundred.

The tribe of Naphtali, son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid, numbered 53,400.

Numbers 1:44 ¶ These *are* those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, *being* twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers.

Numbers 1:45 So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel;

Numbers 1:46 Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

When the census was completed, they had recorded a total of 603,550 men that were 20 years and older. Once again, the NIV Commentary provides further information: "This large number of men conscripted for the army suggests a population for the entire community in excess (perhaps considerably in excess) of two million people."

My how the nation had grown since first going to Egypt—70 in number.

Genesis 46:27 "And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls:

all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten."

Numbers 1:47 ¶ But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them.

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

Numbers 1:49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel:

Numbers 1:50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

Numbers 1:51 And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

It is noted that the tribe of Levi were not numbered because the LORD had told Moses that this tribe was to be set apart to serve Him by taking care of the tabernacle and all its associated furnishings. They were to take it down and put it up as necessary as the LORD led them through the wilderness. Only the Levites were to touch these items. If anyone else attempted to help them in any way, they were to be put to death.

Jesus is emphasizing the fact that as the recognized place of His presence, only those who had been set apart were allowed to serve Him in the holy place. We that have accepted God's gift of salvation are allowed to approach the LORD with boldness and confidence because of the fact that we are made righteous by the blood of Jesus.

*Ephesians 3:9–12 "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: **In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.**"*

*2 Corinthians 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**"*

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Numbers 1:52 And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.

Numbers 1:53 But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

It is noted that the tabernacle was positioned in the center of the camp. The tribes were to encamp around the tabernacle as designated by their "own

standard," or flag. The Levites were to be positioned surrounding the tabernacle, to provide a distinct separation between it and the people.

Numbers 1:54 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

This verse declares that the children of Israel obeyed all that the LORD commanded—something we should all strive to do. If only they had continued to do so.