

N NUMBERS
Fire by Night

As we read Numbers we see that the journey was filled with tests and challenges. And we realize that these could be met successfully only by an obedience that grows out of a vital, living faith..”

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The Septuagint (Greek Version of Hebrew Scripture) translators gave it the title Numbers because of the prominence of the census figures in the book. This tradition was followed by the Latin Vulgate (Latin Edition of Hebrew Scripture) and English versions.

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- Numbers begins with a chronological notice indicating that the numbering of the people took place just a year and one month after the Exodus from Egypt. Just one month had passed since the completion of the tabernacle (verse 1)

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Here is where we see the first indication that the great mob of people who swarmed out of Egypt are now to be treated as a responsible nation.

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KEY PEOPLE

- **Moses** *The deliverer, lawgiver, and leader of the Jews during the Exodus.*
- **Aaron** *The brother of Moses, appointed as Israel's high priest.*
- **Joshua** *One of two spies who urged Israel to trust God, destined to succeed Moses as leader of the Israelites.*
- **Caleb** *The second faithful spy, with Joshua the only individual to survive the wilderness wanderings.*
- **Balaam** *A pagan prophet who unsuccessfully tried to curse God's people.*

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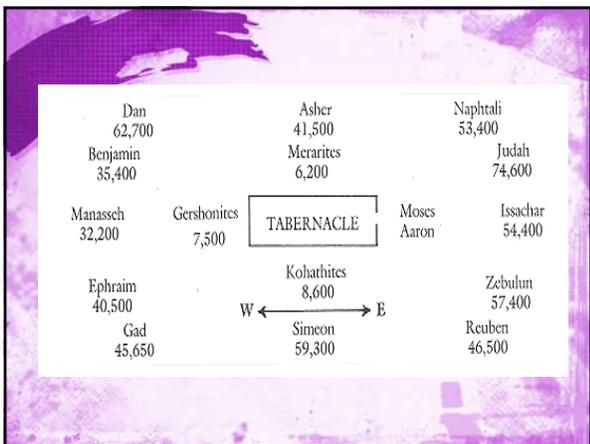
KEY EVENTS

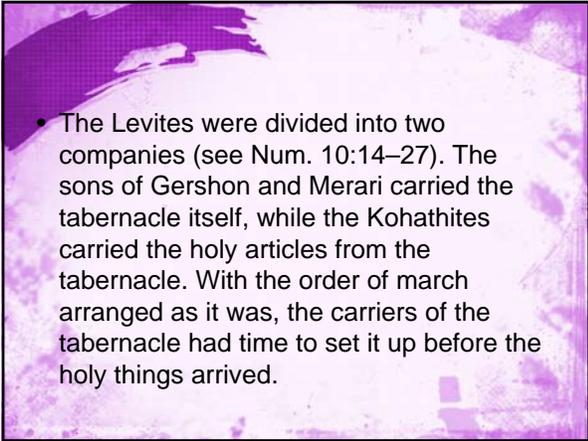
- **The first census (Num. 1).** *The number of men of military age leaving Egypt is established. "Numbers" takes its English name from two censuses.*
- **Twelve spies enter Canaan (Num. 13).** *They establish the fruitfulness of the Promised Land, and also the military might of its inhabitants.*
- **The people rebel (Num. 14).** *The fearful Israelites refuse to attack Canaan, and are condemned to wander in the wilderness.*
- **Balaam tries to curse Israel (Num. 22–24).** *God turns the pagan seer's curses into blessings.*
- **The second census (Num. 26).** *The first generation has died, but a new generation just as numerous takes its place, and will inherit Canaan.*

THE CENSUS

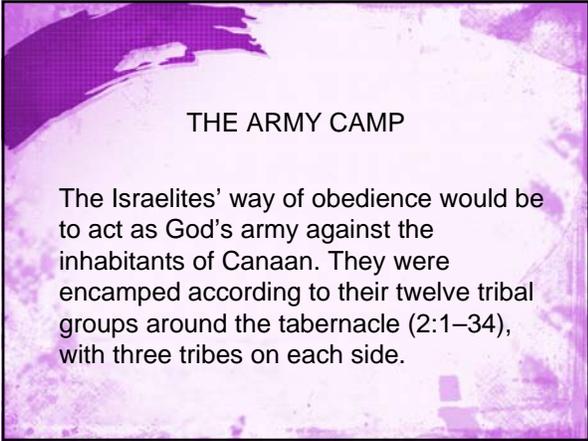
The army of God was counted and positioned around the tabernacle for military purposes (1:1–4).
 Israel had 603,550 men over twenty years of age (1:46).
 Including women and children, the figure would rise to an estimated 2 million.

- The census was clearly designed to count those who were to go out to war (1:3, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 45).



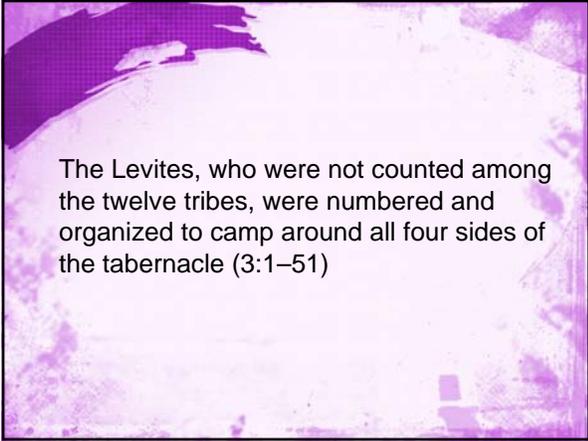


• The Levites were divided into two companies (see Num. 10:14–27). The sons of Gershon and Merari carried the tabernacle itself, while the Kohathites carried the holy articles from the tabernacle. With the order of march arranged as it was, the carriers of the tabernacle had time to set it up before the holy things arrived.



THE ARMY CAMP

The Israelites' way of obedience would be to act as God's army against the inhabitants of Canaan. They were encamped according to their twelve tribal groups around the tabernacle (2:1–34), with three tribes on each side.



The Levites, who were not counted among the twelve tribes, were numbered and organized to camp around all four sides of the tabernacle (3:1–51)

• The main reason for doing so was to protect the lay person from death due to inadvertently profaning the tabernacle (3:10). The Hebrew word translated “ordained” (3:3) literally means “to fill one’s hand.” Aaron’s sons were entrusted with the authority and responsibility to officiate at the sacrificial altar.

• The Levites are not to be included in the regular census, for God has especially adopted them and made them supervisors over the Tabernacle. All male Levites one month old and older are to be counted. They are to begin serving at the Tabernacle at age 30 and must retire at age 50. (Num. 1:47–54; 3:1–17, 38–51; 8:5–26)

Twenty was old enough to fight. But a man had to be 30 to serve in the tabernacle. Everyone is to be involved in the struggle. But maturity is called for when it comes to spiritual leadership. **(4:3)**.

The rest of the Levites, that is, all the remaining descendants of the tribe of Levi, were appointed to serve the priests (who were descendants of Aaron, a Levite). Thus, all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

Levites Appointed for Service

If the Book of Numbers is a type of the Church in the Wilderness, the Levites are a type of Leadership in the Church.

- Numbers 3, and 4 details the assignments that God gave to the Levites

Why did God Choose the Levites

- After the Children of Israel had left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, God called Moses up to Mount Sinai to receive the ten commandments and the pattern of the Tabernacle from God. Whilst Moses was away, a critical problem of idolatry came among the children of Israel, who remained down on the Plain. The tribe of Levi showed itself to be definitely on the Lord's side at that time (Exodus 32:25-28)

- As a result of their taking sides with the Lord, the tribe of Levi (the Levites) was selected to take care of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (Exodus 32:26-29).

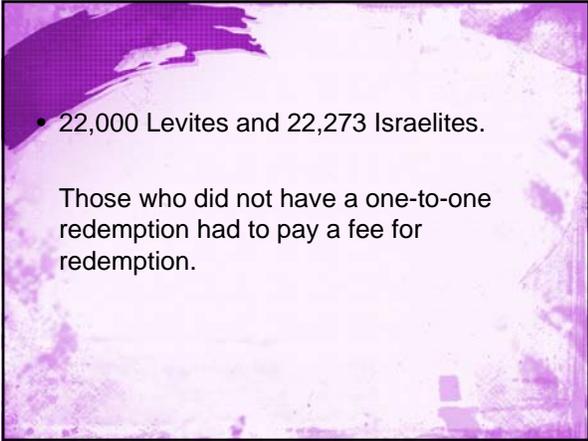
- Chosen by God for service of the sanctuary. 1Ch 15:2; Nu 3:6.
- Were consecrated. Nu 8:6,14.
- Taken instead of the first-born of Israel. Nu 3:12,13,40-45; 8:16-18.



- Every Israelite Male over one month old and older had to be redeemed by a Levite one-to-one

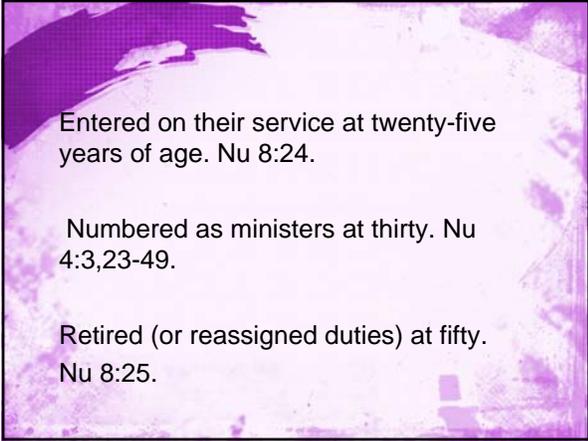
7500 Gershonites (v. 22)
8300 Kohathites (v.28)
6200 Merarites (v.34)

22,000 Levites (v.39)



- 22,000 Levites and 22,273 Israelites.

Those who did not have a one-to-one redemption had to pay a fee for redemption.



Entered on their service at twenty-five years of age. Nu 8:24.

Numbered as ministers at thirty. Nu 4:3,23-49.

Retired (or reassigned duties) at fifty. Nu 8:25.

- Ceremonies at consecration of
 - a. Cleansing and purifying. Nu 8:7.
 - b. Making a sin-offering for. Nu 8:8,12.
 - c. Elders of Israel laying their hands on them. Nu 8:9,10.
 - d. Presenting them to God as an offering for the people. Nu 8:11,15.
 - e. Setting before the priest and presenting them as their offering to God. Nu 8:13.

- Services of
 - a. Ministering to the Lord. De 10:8.
 - b. Ministering to priests. Nu 3:6,7; 18:2.
 - c. Ministering to the people. 2Ch 35:3.
 - d. Keeping the charge of the sanctuary. Nu 18:3; 1Ch 23:32.
 - e. Keeping sacred instruments and vessels. Nu 3:8; 1Ch 9:28,29.
 - f. Keeping sacred oil, flour, &c. 1Ch 9:29,30.

- g. Keeping sacred treasures. 1Ch 26:20.
- h. Taking charge of the tithes, offerings, &c. 2Ch 31:11-19; Ne 12:44.
- i. Doing the service of tabernacle. Nu 8:19,22.
- j. Taking down, putting up, and carrying the tabernacle, &c. Nu 1:50,51; 4:5-33.
- k. Preparing the sacrifices for the priests. 1Ch 23:31; 2Ch 35:11.
- l. Preparing the show bread. 1Ch 9:31,32; 23:29.

- m. Purifying the holy things. 1Ch 23:28.
- n. Regulating weights and measures. 1Ch 23:29.
- o. Teaching the people. 2Ch 17:8,9; 30:22; 35:3; Ne 8:7.
- p. Blessing the people. De 10:8.
- q. Keeping the gates of the temple. 1Ch 9:17-26; 23:5; 2Ch 35:15; Ne 12:25.
- r. Conducting the sacred music. 1Ch 23:5-30; 2Ch 5:12,13; Ne 12:24,27-43.
