

## Numbers Chapters 1-3

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### Introduction:

1. In the book of Genesis, the seed of Israel was in the loins of their father Abraham; a promise waiting to be fulfilled.
  2. In the book of Exodus we see them in the brick kilns of Egypt.
  3. In Leviticus they were gathered around the Tabernacle of God, being called to holiness.
  4. Here in Numbers we find them in the wilderness – about to be tested.
- Numbers is a continuation of the narrative of Exodus, Leviticus is somewhat of a parenthetical break in the story which now continues with Numbers.
  - Numbers is the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the Pentateuch, written by Moses around 1,500 BC.
  - The title of the book is derived from the two numberings of the nation, once at the beginning of their wilderness wanderings, and again 40 years later when entering into the promise land.
  - In the Torah this book is called “In The Wilderness” because of where it takes place. It is also known as “The Book of Murmurings” for reasons that will become apparent.
  - As much as this is a book of the law, a book that derives its name from the census or numbering, it is a book of history – a chronology of events, a divine story time.
  - Theme: The tragedy of unbelief. Yet this book portrays Jehovah as patient and tender hearted, we will see His unwearied care for His murmuring and rebellious people.
  - The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should have taken less than 40 days, instead it took them 40 years. This delay was caused by their unbelief.
  - The people were afraid to enter the promised land because of the bad reports by most of the spies. Because of their sin of unbelief they were doomed to wander around until that entire generation had died off.
  - Comparing the numbering or census of the people at the beginning with the end, there is a drop in their numbers during the 40 years of wandering.
  - They start off with 603,550 males 20 and above, excluding the Levites, and end up with 601,730, a drop of 1,820 men. Zero or negative population growth over 40 years speaks to the harshness of that time and the difficulties that they endured because of their sin.
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## Numbers Chapter 1

V: 1 The Lord speaks to Moses in the “wilderness” – “in the Tabernacle...”

- Often times we feel like we’re in that desolate place and it’s when we’re in the Tabernacle, God’s house that the Lord speaks to us.
- One of the most effective ways to study the Bible is to consistently, faithfully come to church and to work our way through the scriptures together, chapter by chapter, book by book – consistently taking in the word of God along with the rest of the family.
- Here the Lord speaks to Moses on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year since they left Egypt – which is a time stamp.

**Exodus 40:17** “And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.”

- So Leviticus ends up being a parenthetical break of about 30 days.

V: 2-3 Moses and Aaron are commanded to take a census of all the men, 20 years old and older, who are able to go to war.

- There are different possibilities as to why God would command them to take a census:
  1. One such possible reason is **Validation**: God had promised Abraham, to make his seed like the stars of heaven, to make them a mighty nation. Here they stand somewhere around 3 million people, the living proof that God keeps His word.
  2. Another is to **prepare** the children of Israel for war, which they will enter into as they begin to take the promise land at God’s command.

V: 3 “... *all that are able to go forth to war* **in** *Israel*...” Referring to the promised land as “Israel” (**Leviticus 27:34** referring to the children “of” Israel.) A subtle but important distinction.

V: 4-19 All the tribes are listed, and the leaders or “princes” of each tribe.

V: 20-46 Each tribe, by household, every male from 20 yrs. and up, able to go to war.

|    |          |        |     |          |               |
|----|----------|--------|-----|----------|---------------|
| 1. | Reuben   | 46,500 | 7.  | Ephraim  | 40,500        |
| 2. | Simeon   | 59,300 | 8.  | Manasseh | 32,200        |
| 3. | Gad      | 45,650 | 9.  | Benjamin | 35,400        |
| 4. | Judah    | 74,600 | 10. | Dan      | 62,700        |
| 5. | Issachar | 54,400 | 11. | Asher    | 41,500        |
| 6. | Zebulun  | 57,400 | 12. | Naphtali | <u>53,400</u> |

V: 46 Grand total of 603,550

V: 47-54 The Levites were not to be counted among the children of Israel. They would later be numbered, just with the rest of the nation because they belong to the Lord.

- The Levites are appointed over the Tabernacle and all that pertains to it, setting it up, taking it down, transporting it – and camping around it – a buffer to or from the rest of the people.
- Those that served the Lord had the privilege of camping closest to the Lord. In the Tabernacle, in the Holy Place, in the Holy of Holies dwelt the glory of God, the “chabod” of God.
- They got to experience first hand the glory of God’s presence, the reality of God in their midst – so too today for those who seek after God and serve Him.
- Actively serving the Lord draws us closer to His presence.
- The other tribes were to encamp as tribal units, each by their standard, and identifying flag.
- An important observation, something we shouldn’t miss is that God has His people numbered and accounted for, and gathered around Himself.

**Exodus 29:45** “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.”

- We should never forget what we learned in Exodus, that God wants to have fellowship with us, and He longs for us to be in His presence more even than we long to be in His!

**Isaiah 40:11** “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

- Every thing was now in place, every one knew their job, they knew their place, and position, and what to do when the pillar of cloud moved and the trumpets sounded.
  - There is peace in knowing these things, what’s expected, what will happen.
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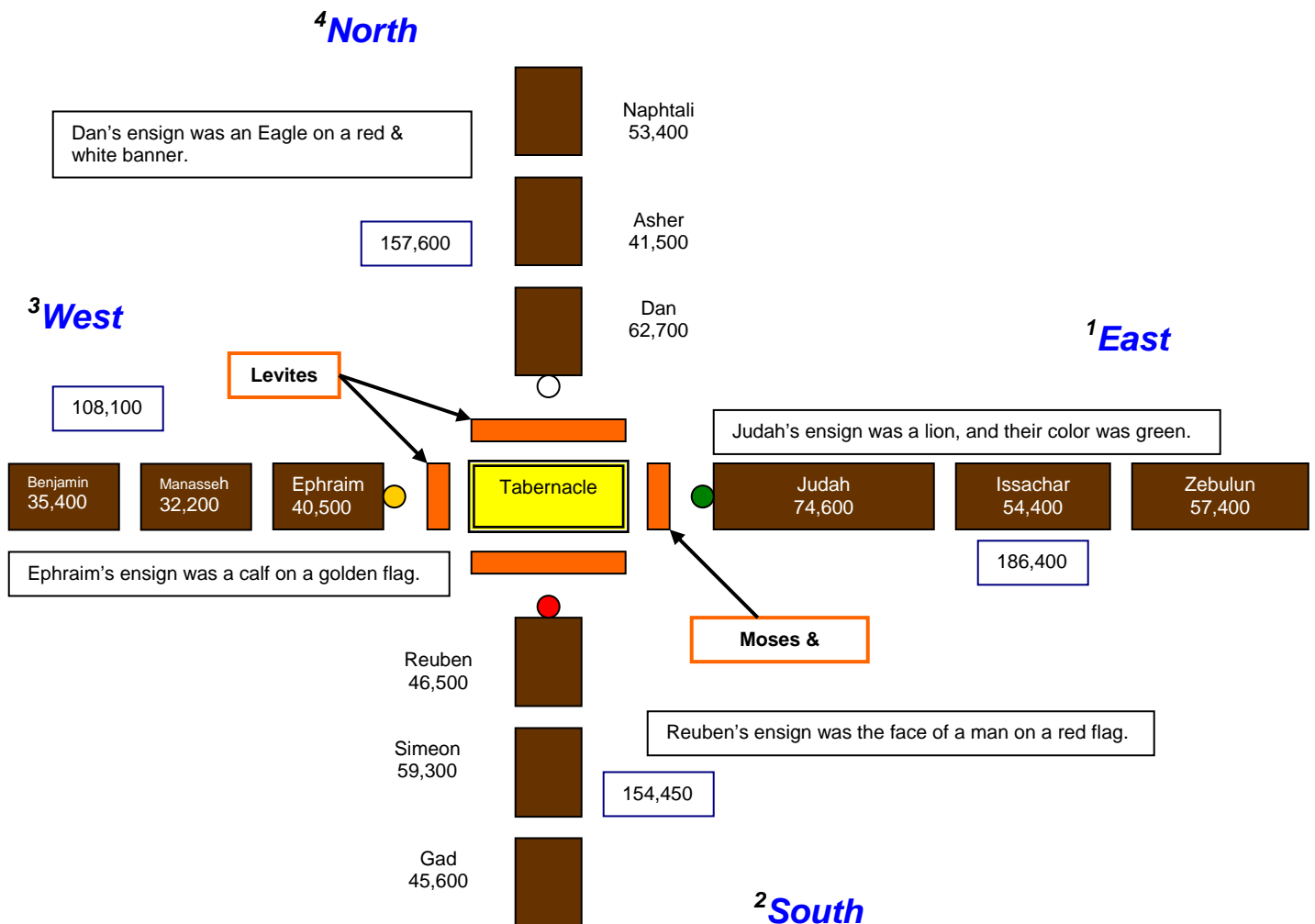
## Numbers Chapter 2

V: 1 The Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron detailing the layout of the camp.

V: 2 Each tribe will camp as a group, under their own standard or flag.

- The Tabernacle was the center of the camp, and the center of their existence.
- As they camped facing the tabernacle from the different directions, they would rise up every morning and see the pillar of cloud by day – the presence of God in their midst. As they would retire for the evening, again they would see the pillar of fire by night – the constant reminder of being in the presence of God.

V: 3-32



V: 33-34 Levites were not numbered along with the Children of Israel / the army.

- They were obedient to what the Lord commanded.

### Numbers Chapter 3

V: 1-4 Aaron listed first, Moses' descendants are not listed or recognized.

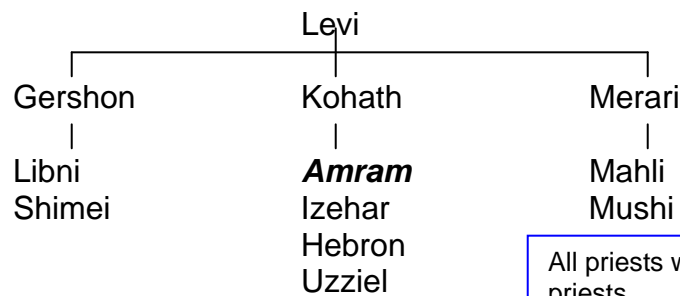
- Nadab & Abihu, killed; Eleazar & Ithamar carry on in their stead.

V: 5-13 The tribe of Levi set apart for God's use instead of all the firstborn of Israel.

**Exodus 32:26** "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the LORD's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."

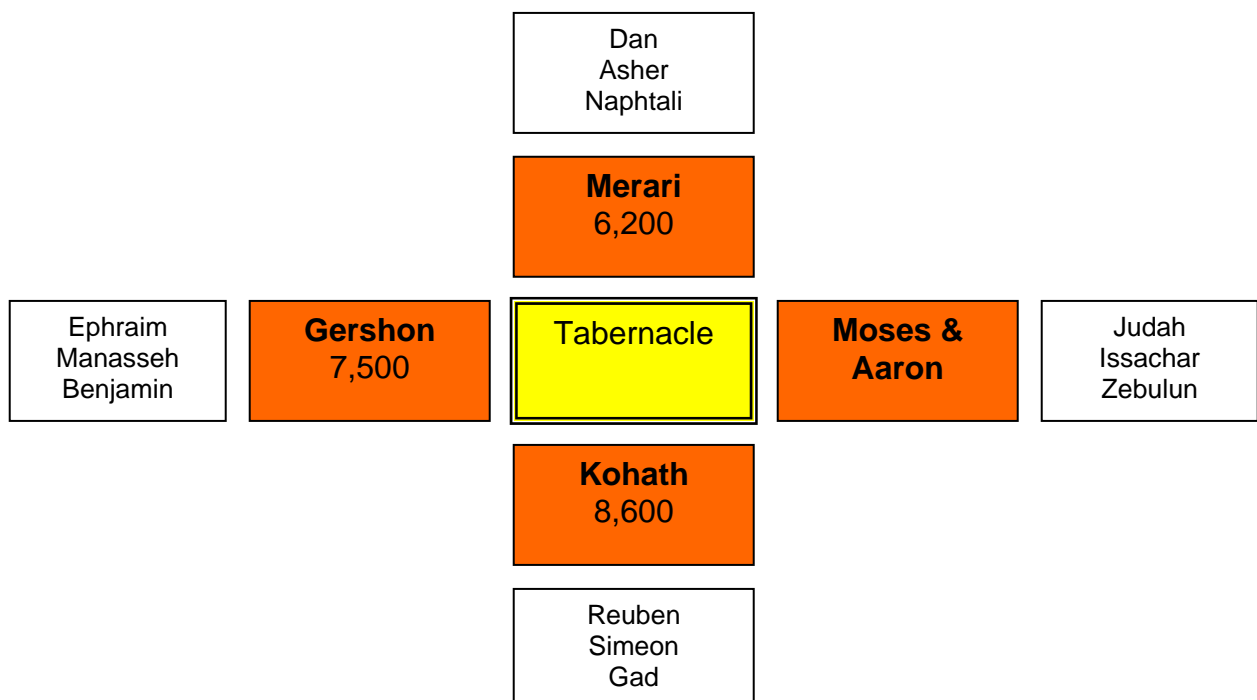
- The firstborn not only belonged to God through the right of creation, but also because He spared them in Egypt.

V: 14-20 Number the children of Levi.



All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

V: 21-38 Their respective numbers, position, and ministry.



V: 38 “... *the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.*”

**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.”

V: 39 The grand total of 22,000 males, one month and older from the tribe of Levi.

V: 40-43 Number all the firstborn of the males, one month and older of Israel.

- 22,273 - a net difference of 273 first born males.

V: 44-51 Since it was a trade, the 273 first born need to be redeemed @ 5 shekels apiece.

- 1,365 shekels to the priests.
- God never says “close enough” – He is exact because He is righteous.
- Herein is a reminder of how we are redeemed:

**1 Peter 1:18-19** “<sup>18</sup>forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; <sup>19</sup>But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

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The cross formation literally points ahead to the cross.

**Acts 2:23** “Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified.”

**Jeremiah 31:31** “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:”

Imagery in Heaven:

**Ezekiel 1:10** “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.”

**Revelation 4:6-8** “<sup>6</sup>And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. <sup>7</sup>And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup>And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

## Gospels:

**Matthew:** Written to the Jews, presenting Jesus as the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah. Presenting Jesus as a Jew, the King of the Jews, His lineage goes back to King David.

**Mark:** Written to the Romans, presenting Jesus as a suffering servant, symbolized by an **ox**, a beast of burden. No one care about the lineage of a slave so there is none.

**Luke:** Written to the Greeks, presenting Jesus in His humanity, the Son of Man, symbolized by a **man**. His lineage goes all the way back to Adam, the first man.

**John:** Written to the church as a whole, presenting Jesus as God the creator, soaring to the heights, to the heavens in His deity, symbolized by an **eagle**. His lineage is described as being before time throughout eternity.

- What or who are the Gospels about – they are about, around, all around Jesus!

**Hebrews 1:3** “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

- If we were on a hillside overlooking the children of Israel encamped around the Tabernacle, we would see the cross.
- Knowing that the children of Israel, like us are not worthy of the least of God's blessings I often wonder at His patience, His forbearance, and His great love.
- What does the Father see from Heaven? The same thing, the cross – a reminder of what was to come, the sacrifice. In a way that explains His patience.
- If we accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God sees us through the completed work on the cross, through the blood of Jesus