

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 26

In this chapter an order is given to number the people of Israel a second time, (^{<0401>}Numbers 26:1-4) and the account begins with Reuben, the firstborn, and the families that sprung from him, and the number of them, (^{<0405>}Numbers 26:5-7) and Dathan and Abiram being of this tribe, the affair of them and Korah is afresh related, (^{<0408>}Numbers 26:8-11), then the tribe of Simeon, its families and number, (^{<0412>}Numbers 26:12-14), next the tribe of Gad, and their families and number, (^{<0415>}Numbers 26:15-18), after that the tribe of Judah, its families and number, (^{<0419>}Numbers 26:19-22) then follows the tribe of Issachar, its families and number, (^{<0423>}Numbers 26:23-25), next to that the tribe of Zebulun, its families and number, (^{<0426>}Numbers 26:26,27) then the sons of Joseph, and first Manasseh, his families and number, (^{<0433>}Numbers 26:28-34) and then the tribe of Ephraim, its families and number, (^{<0435>}Numbers 26:35-37), after that the tribe of Benjamin, its families and number, (^{<0438>}Numbers 26:38-41) next the tribe of Dan, its families and number, (^{<0442>}Numbers 26:42,43) and which is followed by the tribe of Asher, its families and number, (^{<0444>}Numbers 26:44-47), and the muster is closed with the tribe of Naphtali, its families and number, (^{<0448>}Numbers 26:48-50), and the sum total of all the numbers is given, (^{<0451>}Numbers 26:51) and then follows another order to divide the land of Canaan by lot, when conquered, to the several tribes, according to their names and number, (^{<0452>}Numbers 26:52-56) and an account is given of the number of the Levites and their families, their number being taken not with the other tribes, but by themselves, and which is summed up, (^{<0457>}Numbers 26:57-62) and the chapter is concluded with observing, that it appeared upon this numbering of the people, that there were but two persons living of those that were first numbered among the children of Israel, (^{<0463>}Numbers 26:63-65).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass after the plague*, etc.] Related in the preceding chapter; how long after is not certain, perhaps before the war with Midian, exhorted to in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, and of which an account is given, (^{<0401>}Numbers 31:1-54):

that the Lord spake unto Moses; out of the tabernacle, or out of the cloud:

and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest; the Lord had been used to speak to Moses and to Aaron; but now Aaron being dead, and Eleazar his son succeeding him in the priesthood, is joined with Moses, and the order here given is directed to them both:

saying: as follows.

Ver. 2. *Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel*, etc.]

Excepting the Levites, who were to be numbered by themselves, and at a different age; this sum was to be taken, that it might appear that all of the old generation that came out of Egypt, of the age at which this sum was taken, were now dead, excepting two, as the Lord had threatened; and partly that as they were now about to enter the land of Canaan, it might be divided to them according to their number; as well as to show the faithfulness of God to his word and promise, that he would multiply and make them fruitful, notwithstanding all their provoking sins and transgressions:

from twenty years old and upwards, throughout their father's house; all of that age in every tribe, house, and family:

all that are able to go to war in Israel; for which they must prepare, being about to enter the land of Canaan, and dispossess and drive out the inhabitants of it.

Ver. 3. *And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them*, etc.] With the children of Israel, with the heads of them, their chief and principal, to assist in taking the number of the people; as when they were numbered thirty years ago, when a prince out of each tribe was taken to be with Aaron and Moses in doing that business; but those princes were now all dead, and another race succeeded, who were now employed in this service; so the Targum of Jonathan says, they spoke with the rulers, and ordered them to number them:

in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, [near] Jericho: or of Jericho, as the same Targum, on the other side of Jordan to that on which Jericho stood; for as yet the children of Israel had not passed that river, nor entered into the land of Canaan, in which Jericho was, but they were now opposite it; (see Gill on “^{Q201}Numbers 22:1”):

saying; as follows.

Ver. 4. [*Take the sum of the people*], *from twenty years old and upward*, etc.] At the same age at which the sum was taken before, (⁰⁰⁰⁸Numbers 1:3) so that there could not be one that was more than sixty years of age, of all those that went into the land of Canaan, except Joshua and Caleb, and besides some few in the tribe of Levi, which did not come into either of these musters:

and the Lord commanded Moses, and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt; as Moses had a command to number the people before, so he had now. The sin of David was, that he numbered the people when he had no command for it; Moses, when he brought the people out of Egypt, had them committed to him by number; and now being about to die, he delivers them up as it were by number again, as Jarchi observes.

Ver. 5. *Reuben, the eldest son of Israel*, etc.] the number of his tribe is taken first on that account; there were four families that descended from him, the Hanochite, Palluite, Hesronite, and Carmite, and the number of men from twenty years old and upwards, fit for war, were 43,730; so that, since the last numbering, this tribe was decreased 2770; which may in part be accounted for by the families of Dathan and Abiram being cut off for their rebellion, who were this tribe, and whose affair is briefly related in the following verses, and it may be to point out this unto us.

Ver. 8. *And the sons of Pallu*, etc.] Or son, the plural for the singular, Pallu having but one son, whose name was Eliab, the father of Dathan and Abiram; (⁰⁰¹⁹Numbers 26:9).

Ver. 9. *And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram*, etc.] Of Nemuel we nowhere else read either he died without children, or he and his family perished with his brethren, being concerned with them in the conspiracy; or the family of the Palluite was in his line; one of the same name may be observed in the tribe of Simeon:

this is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation; either before their rebellion, for their power and authority, being heads of their fathers' houses; or for their parts and abilities, being men of great wisdom and sense; or for their zeal, activity, and usefulness; or after it, and became famous, or rather infamous, on account of it, (see ⁰⁰¹²Numbers 16:2)

who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the Lord; who joined with Korah and his company, and quarrelled with Moses and Aaron about the priesthood; with Moses for putting Aaron into it, and with Aaron for accepting it, and officiating in it; and so with the Lord himself, by whose orders he was invested with it.

Ver. 10. *And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up*, etc.] Not only Dathan and Abiram, but their wives and children, their houses and tents, and all their goods, (see ^{<04162>}Numbers 16:32,33) together with Korah; the words being thus rendered, and standing in such close connection with the preceding, some have concluded from hence that Korah was swallowed up with them in the earth; whereas he seems rather to have been at that time with the two hundred and fifty men that had censers at the door of the tabernacle, and was consumed by fire with them, (see ^{<04165>}Numbers 16:16-19,40) and, indeed, it is suggested here, for the phrase may be rendered, “and the things of Korah” ^{f416}; what appertained unto him, his men, tents, goods, and substance, which agrees with (^{<04162>}Numbers 16:32) or, “and as for Korah” ^{f417}; with respect to him: “when that company died”: he was at the head of, he died also, the same death they died, by fire, as follows:

what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; which was the number his company consisted of, who took censers, and offered incense, and were consumed by fire, (^{<04162>}Numbers 16:2,17,35), and with whom, in all probability, he perished:

and they became a sign, were made an example of, to deter others from the like practices, and particularly usurping any part of the priest’s office: some connect the words with the following, and take the sense to be, that this was the sign or miracle, that when they perished, Korah’s sons died not, but were preserved; which sense is countenanced by the Vulgate Latin, but the other sense is best.

Ver. 11. *Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not*.] Neither of the pestilence, nor by fire, nor by the swallowing up of the earth; they not being in the counsel of their father, but followed the doctrine of Moses the prophet, as the Targum of Jonathan; they either disliked their father’s scheme, or, if they engaged with him in it, they repented and departed from him, and were not present when the judgments of God came upon him and his company; there were several of his posterity who were singers in the times of David, and to whom many of the psalms were sent to be sung.

Ver. 12-14. *The sons of Simeon, after their families,* etc.] This tribe was next numbered, not only because Simeon was next to Reuben by birth, but because his tribe was under the standard of Reuben; two of his sons are a little differently named here than they are in (⁽⁰⁴³⁰⁾Genesis 46:10), there the eldest is called Jemuel, here Nemuel; there the youngest but one is named Zohar, here Zerah; and one of them is here omitted, namely Ohad, perhaps because he died without children, and so no family sprang from him; wherefore the families of Simeon were but five, and the number of them were 22,200; by which it appears there was a very great decrease in this tribe since the last muster, even 37,100 which in some measure is to be accounted for by the great number of this tribe supposed to have died of the plague, on account of fornication and idolatry, made mention of in the preceding chapter; a prince in this tribe having set a bad example, it is probable he was followed in it by many of it, for which great numbers were cut off. Jarchi, from Tanchuma, says, that all the 24,000 that died of the plague was of the tribe of Simeon; and so says the Samaritan Chronicle ^{f418}; but that is not likely.

Ver. 15-18. *The children of Gad, after their families tribe was numbered next to Simeon,* etc.] because it lay encamped with that under the standard of Reuben. There is a little variation in the names of two or three of his sons, from those by which they are called (⁽⁰⁴⁵⁶⁾Genesis 46:16), instead of Ziphion, here Zephon; and for Haggai, here Haggi; and what is much wider, for Ezbon, here Ozni. Seven families sprang from Gad, whose number now was 40,500; they were diminished since their last numbering 5150; it is probable this tribe, being a warlike tribe, suffered very much in their attempt to enter the land of Canaan contrary to the will of God, and were repulsed and defeated by the Amalekites, (⁽⁰⁴⁶⁰⁾Numbers 16:40-45).

Ver. 19-22. *And the sons of Judah were Er and Onan,* etc.] And besides these he had Shelah, Pharez, and Zerah, from whom families sprang, but none from the two first: for

Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan; where they were born; and that because of their sins, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, see ⁽⁰¹⁸⁰⁷⁾Genesis 38:7-10 so that there were but three families sprang from Judah, the Shelanites, Pharzites, and Zarhites; only the family of the Pharzites was divided into two families, the Hesronites and the Hamulites, so called from two sons of Pharez; the number of these families amounted to 76,500, so that there was an increase of 1900 since the last muster, which answers to

Jacob's blessing, that he should be a praise among his brethren, (⁽⁰⁴⁰⁸⁾Genesis 49:8).

Ver. 23-25. *Of the sons of Issachar, after their families,* etc.] This tribe was numbered next to Judah, because it was under his standard. Two of his sons are a little differently named than they are (⁽⁰⁴¹³⁾Genesis 46:13) instead of Phuvah one is called Pua, and instead of Job another is called here Jashub; this tribe consisted of four families, and the number of warlike men in it was 64,300; their increase since the last numbering of them is 9900.

Ver. 26, 27. *Of the sons of Zebulun, after their families,* etc.] This is numbered next to Issachar, because it was encamped under the standard of Judah; it consisted of three families, whose numbers were 60,500, so that this tribe was increased 3100.

Ver. 28-34. *The sons of Joseph, after their families, were Manasseh and Ephraim.*] Manasseh is here mentioned first, though Ephraim was preferred to him by Jacob, and the standard belonged to him; not because he was the firstborn, but because he had now the greater increase, though he had but one son, Machir, of whom was the family of the Machirites, and a grandson, whose name was Gilead, from whom was the family of the Gileadites, and who had six sons; of whom were the families of the Jeezerite, Halekite, Asrielite, Shechemite, Shemidaite, and Hephherite. Hephher, of whom was the last, had a son named Zelophehad, but he had no son, only five daughters, whose names are given; the number of men in this tribe, of twenty years old and upwards, fit for war, was 52,700, so that the increase was 20,500, a large increase indeed!

Ver. 35-37. *These are the sons of Ephraim, after their families,* etc.] Which were but three, the Shuthalhite, the Bachrite, and the Tahanite, only from the former sprung another family, called the Eranite; the number of the whole was 32,500; there was a decrease in this tribe of 8000.

Ver. 38-41. *The sons of Benjamin, after their families,* etc.] This tribe was numbered next to Ephraim, being under his standard. Five of the sons of Benjamin are omitted, perhaps because they died without issue, and so no families sprang from them; the names of the five sons mentioned vary a little from the names of them in (⁽⁰⁴²¹⁾Genesis 46:21) instead of Ehi, it is here Ahiram; and instead of Huphim and Muphim, it is here Shupham and Hupham; from these last five were the families of the Belaite, Ashbelite, Ahiramite, Shuphamite, and Huphamite; and from the eldest of them

sprang two other families, the Ardite and Naamite, from Ard and Naaman, two sons of Bela; the number of men in these families was 45,600, so that here was an increase of 10,200.

Ver. 42,43. *These are the sons of Dan, after their families,* etc.] Though he had but one son, the plural being put for the singular; or by sons are meant his posterity; his son's name was Shuham, and by transposition Hushim, in (⁰⁴⁶³Genesis 46:23) from him was the family of the Shulamite; and yet, though but one, consisted of 64,400 men; there was an increase of 1700 in this tribe.

Ver. 44-47. *Of the children of Asher, after their families,* etc.] This tribe was numbered next to Dan, because it was under his standard; one of his sons is omitted, very probably dying childless, and so had no family; from the rest sprang the families of the Iimnite, Jesuite, and Benite; and, from the latter, two others, the Heberite and Malchielite; and it is remarked that Asher had a daughter named Serah, and who also is particularly mentioned as a sister of Asher's sons in (⁰⁴⁶⁷Genesis 46:17) no doubt but she was a remarkable woman, either for religion, or for wisdom and prudence, or some amiable virtue or grace or another, that she is so particularly taken notice of: according to Maimonides ^{f419} she was an heiress; for though Asher had many sons, this was his wife's daughter by another man, who had no sons, and the inheritance was his daughter's, and therefore is so particularly mentioned; she inheriting as the daughters of Zelophehad did: the number of persons in this tribe was 53,400, the increase was 11,900.

Ver. 48-50. *Of the sons of Naphtali, after their families,* etc.] This tribe, which is the last of them, was numbered next to Asher, because it was with that under the standard of Dan; it had four families in it, the Jahzeelite, Gunite, Jezerite, and Shillemite, and its number was 45,400, being less by 8000 than it was when first numbered.

Ver. 51. *These were the numbered of the children of Israel,* etc.] The twelve tribes, consisting of so many families, as above named; and the sum total of persons in them of twenty years old and upwards, and fit for war, was

six hundred and one thousand and seven hundred and thirty; so that though all those that were numbered thirty years ago were now dead, excepting Joshua and Caleb, yet there wanted but 1820 of that number; so mindful was the Lord of his promise, and so faithful to keep it,

notwithstanding the provocations of these people, to increase and multiply them, that they had pretty near the number to go into the land of Canaan which they had when they came out of Egypt.

Ver. 52. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] After the sum of the people of Israel had been taken:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 53. *Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance*, etc.] That were numbered, and to none else:

according to the number of their names; and for this end was the number of them now taken, that the land might be equally divided among them; women and minors, or such as were under twenty years of age, had no share in it; and even only those who were at that age at this time; so Jarchi says, it was not divided to any that were less than twenty years of age, even though they came to be full twenty before the division of the land; for they were seven years subduing it, and seven years dividing it, yet none took any part of it but these 601,730: nay, he says, if a man had six children they took but their father's part only.

Ver. 54. *To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance*, etc.] To a tribe more numerous, and consisting of more and larger families, a greater part of the land was to be given to them to possess; and to a smaller tribe, and of the fewer families and persons in them, a lesser share of it: this direction is given to Moses, but is not designed for him personally, for he never entered the land, but died before Israel went into it; but for the chief ruler that would be then in being, namely, Joshua, his successor:

to everyone shall his inheritance be given, according to those that were numbered of him; that is, to every tribe, and so to every family in it, according to the number of men in it, that were of the above age when the sum of them was taken: because it is in the original text, "to a man according to those numbered of him", etc.^{f420}; hence the Jewish writers^{f421} gather, that the land was distributed not to women, but to men only.

Ver. 55. *Notwithstanding, the land shall be divided by lot*, etc.] That the division might appear to be according to the determination and will of God, and not left to the judgment and discretion of the chief magistrate, though bound by the above rule:

according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit; that is, according as to whatsoever name of a tribe such a part or portion of the land comes up by lot, that shall their inheritance be: Jarchi says, the names of the twelve tribes were written on twelve scrolls of parchment, and twelve borders or limits of land on twelve others, and they were mixed together in an urn, and the prince put his hand into it and took two scrolls; a scroll came up with the name of a tribe, and a scroll with a border or limit expressed on it; and the lot, he says, was by the Holy Ghost, for Eleazar, at the same time, was clothed with Urim and Thummim ^{f422}; so that the people were certain that the disposition and division of the land was of God; but there were but nine tribes and a half, among whom the land of Canaan was divided, two tribes and a half settled on the other side Jordan, namely, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

Ver. 56. *According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided*, etc.] It was by the determination of the lot that the land was divided by inheritance, and that was by the Lord, according to (²¹⁶³Proverbs 16:33)

between many and few; it was so ordered of the Lord by the lot, that the many should have a larger share, and the few a lesser.

Ver. 57-62. *And these are they that were numbered of the Levites, after their families*, etc.] And they were numbered not with the rest of the tribes of Israel, but by themselves, as they were at the first numbering of the tribes; the three principal families of which were, the Gershonite, the Kohathite, and Merarite, so called from the three sons of Levi; but all their sons are not mentioned, of the sons of Gershon only Libni, from whom was the family of the Libnites; not Shimei, because, as Aben Ezra conjectures, either he had no sons, or, if he had, they died without any, and so there was no family from them; and of the sons of Kohath no mention is made of Uzziel, nor of Izhar, but in the Korhites, only of the Hebronite family from Hebron; and of Amram, whose wife Jochebed is spoken of as a daughter of Levi, whom Levi's wife, as Jarchi rightly supplies it, bore to him in Egypt, and which Jochebed was the mother of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam; and it is observed that Aaron had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, the two first of which died for offering strange fire to the Lord, and the two last were now living: from Merari, another son of Levi, sprang two families, the Mahlite, and the Mushite; and the whole number of the Levites at this time taken was 23,000 males of a month old and upward; so that here was an increase of 1,000 males since the former numbering of

them: the reason why they were not numbered with the other tribes was, because they had no part of the land of Israel divided to them, and had no inheritance in it.

Ver. 63. *These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest,* etc.] That is, these were the Levites, their families, and the number of males in them, which was taken by Moses and Eleazar, who might be only concerned in numbering the Levites, of which tribe they were: and

who also numbered the children of Israel; all the tribes of them, with the assistance of their princes:

in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho; as they were commanded by the Lord.

Ver. 64. *But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered.* etc.] About thirty eight years before this time: this, as Aben Ezra observes, respects the numbering of the Israelites, not of the Levites; for there were some of the tribe of Levi numbered then who were living, as Eleazar, and very probably Ithamar, and perhaps some few more, though it may be Eleazar, being now a numberer, was not reckoned among the numbered:

when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai; (see ^{<0401>}Numbers 1:1-54) for as there were none of the tribe of Levi among the spies, there might be but few of them among the murmurers.

Ver. 65. *For the Lord had said of them, they shall surely die in the wilderness,* etc.] This was threatened them, (^{<0402>}Numbers 14:32) and now it was fulfilled:

and there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun; the only two of the spies that brought a good report of the land of Canaan; all the rest of them, and those that murmured on the ill report of theirs, were now dead.