

The book of Numbers spans the period from the beginning of the second year in the wilderness until the 40th year, so the 38 years of wandering inflicted upon the nation for their waywardness, but more of that at a later date, God willing. It has more biographical information than the previous Book of Leviticus which covered the giving of the Law through the tribe of Levi and for that reason bears that name in the English version. In the Hebrew it is just the fourth Book of Moses, but sometimes called "In the wilderness". In the Septuagint it is called "arithmoi".

It has the organising of the nation by tribe, the rebellion of the spies, the rebellion of Korah, the deaths of Miriam and Aaron, the Brazen Serpent, and also the betrayal by Balaam and finishes with the journey to the border of the Land itself. Its characters are referenced in The New Testament many times, but it is cited the least of all five Books of Moses, just twice.

Apart from the tribe of Levi, all the nation of Israel was numbered each in its tribe. They totalled 603, 550 All that we're able to go for to war. Both older and younger males and all the females were not included in this census, so this gives us a total population of between two and three million members of the nation of Israel at this time, in addition to the mixed multitude of gentiles who had accompanied the people out of Egypt because of their religious affinity with God's people.

For each of the 12 tribes a man of renown a Prince of the tribes of their fathers, one head for each house. The meaning of their names is interesting.

My God is Rock. spreader of light.

Peace of God. My Rock destroyers.

Enchanter. People of liberty.

Given of God. Small.

God of his father. Strong.

God of hearing. People of splendour.

My reward is God. The rock delivers.

Father of judgement. War like.

Brother of help. People of destroyers.

Accident of God. Muddler.

God is gatherer. known of God.

Brother of wrong. Having eyes.

These names illustrate how every aspect of the lives of the Israelites was influenced by their association with the God of the Bible. Their children received names which reflected the spirituality of the parents, and this is a fitting example of bringing every thought into subjection. Whenever they spoke to their children with these biblical names it would have given them cause to ponder and reflect open how individuals can live up to the aspirations and high ideals of those who have begotten them.

In the book of Exodus 32:28, 3000 were smitten. In Exodus 32: 35 cited in 1 Corinthians 10:8, 23,000 perished. Originally the nation of Israel was even larger who did that first tragic year even before this numbering many had been taken out of the way. From the biggest tribe, Judah, which had 74,600 to the smallest tribe, Manasseh, which had 32,200 the hosts of Israel were counted in their battalions. A veritable army send forth to war at the commandment of God, who would be able to stand before such a host?

Levi was not numbered with the host at this time as they had other work to do, particularly concerning the Tabernacle of testimony which they were to encamp around whenever the nation pitched their tents.

Moses and Aaron, brothers together, assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month in the second year after

they will come out of the land of Egypt. The pedigrees after their families, by the House of their fathers were declared. The nation was polled. This was done some 3,500 years ago, well before other human civilizations organise themselves so minutely. They were polled not so that each might cast a vote in some democracy, no, the people did not rule here. Rather they were polled so that each might be counted with the expectation that they would make a contribution to the defence of the nation and the strength of the congregation. Synergy: the whole stronger than the sum of the parts. If only they had remembered the divine organisation and put their trust in God's arrangements then the subsequent disasters, of which the book of Numbers speaks, would not have taken place.

This was indeed a Cherubic host, God manifest in a multitude, Yahweh Ts'vaoth. They began well, the children of Israel did all that the Lord commanded Moses. However, how were the mighty to fall?