

The numbering of the twelve tribes after the wandering in the wilderness before they were to enter into the promised land contains the demographic realignments in those tribes and the static element of no growth after those 38 years.

Tribe	New sum	Previous	Difference
Reuben	43,730	46,500	-2,770
Simeon	22,200	59,300	-37,100
Gad	40,500	45,650	-5,150
Judah	76,500	74,600	1,900
Issachar	64,300	54,400	9,000
Zebulun	60,500	57,400	3,000
Manasseh	52,700	32,300	20,500
Ephraim	32,500	40,500	-8,000
Benjamin	45,600	35,400	10,200
Dan	64,400	62,700	1,700
Asher	53,400	41,500	11,900
Naphtali	45,400	53,400	-8,000

The tribe of Levi is not included in the numbering. The elders who outlived Joshua would therefore have mostly come from that priestly tribe. They were not included in the army or host of the nation.

Statistically a third of the tribes had a strong increase, Issachar, Manasseh, Benjamin and Asher. These are from the Northern Eastern and mostly Western camps with none from the Southern camp.

Also, a third have large declines. Simeon who rebelled over the Midianites, Gad, Ephraim and Naphtali. That's two from the Southern camp, one from the Western camp and one from the Northern camp.

The compass point arrangements demonstrate the coincidental way that the catastrophe of Midian arose. As Simeon was one of the southern camp tribes they were closest to the approach of the Midianites when they emerged from their wilderness lands. If they had been located elsewhere perhaps it would have been another of the tribes who fell under their influence. Temptation can seem random but God over rules all these issues, as the Bible states. The issue of their future inheritance was also impacted, it should be remembered that as a smaller tribe, indeed the smallest, they were not given distinct lands, but their portion was inside the vast territory of Judah who were rewarded for the faithfulness of Caleb. Actions have consequences. The land was to be divided according to the number of the names. It was to be an equitable split.

Looking at the totals for each camp we can see that the population changes are uneven for each.

Northern camp

Naphtali, Dan, Asher

Plus 5,600

New total 163,200

Western Camp

Manasseh, Ephraim, Benjamin

Plus 22,700

New total 130,800

Southern camp

Simeon, Reuben, Gad

Minus 45,020

New total 106,430

Eastern camp

Zebulun, Judah, Issachar

Plus 14,000

New total 201,300

Is it a coincidence that Simeon being on the south was further from the direction of the conquest which mainly went either north towards Hermon, east towards Gilead, or west to the coast? The smallest troop corps was on the south side of the host.

Every aspect of the Bible stands up, even in maths and statistics!

There is also a genealogy of Moses family. His mother Jochebed was the actual daughter of Levi, so must have been born when he was already old, therefore like David was, a child of old age. Levi lived for 137 years and was born in Canaan not Egypt so she would have been in her 70s when Moses was born in the land of the Pharaohs. (430 break down Isaac 60, Jacob ~80, Levi ~135, Jochebed ~75, Moses 80) Although she married her blood nephew, she could have been much younger than he was, even by many decades but on average they would have been about the same age. This is possible to compute by looking at number of generations and their ages at death and possible ages when they sired their sons to fit the chronology. This is not definite but shows that it was within the bounds of what was physically possible to ensure that the narrative is believable and should be trusted. God knows what He is doing!

In the listing of the tribes, various additional information is given. The loss of 250 men from Reuben is mentioned. The children of Korah died not, Nemuel did not die with his

disobedient brothers, Dathan and Abiram. However, those who were in the rebellion paid the price for their rejection of the divine standards.

The loss of Judah's sons, Er and Onan, are also mentioned. They died hundreds of years before. They are included in the list to demonstrate that, the biggest tribe was established despite the difficulty of the previous circumstance, no matter is beyond the control of the Almighty. Natural rules and projections do not prevent whatever plans God has for the future. He can manipulate events to bring about the desired outcome.

In the tribe of Manasseh, the daughters of Zelophehad are named. None of these are included in the numbering as they are female, however they are significant as they were granted the exception to become inheritors in their own right lacking any brothers who as males would normally inherit their father's possessions. This legal status was a facture in requiring the still unmarried Mary, great with child, to journey south from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as a female inheritor to pay her taxes to the Romans, Luke 2v5

Asher's daughter Sarah (otherwise called Serah Gen 46v17) was the only female of that generation listed amongst those who left Caanan to sojourn in Egypt as the early Hebrews did under the patriarchy of Jacob. She produced none of the families of the twelve tribes like her five brothers did; Jimna, Jesul, Beriah, Heber and Malchiel.

The host totalled 601,730 men of military service age, from twenty years and upward. This is a slight reduction from 603,550 listed at the beginning of the departure from Egypt, see 1v46. After these 38 years of wandering in the wilderness the upwards trajectory of population growth returned when the children of Israel entered the promised land. Some tribes increased significantly, others decreased significantly, it was not an even progression. All was in God's hands but the entire listing of so many with the exception of the two spies Joshua and Caleb, perished in the wilderness.

"But was whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they would not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?" Hebrews 3v17,18. These had been condemned to die in Sinai – *"They shall surely die in the wilderness"*. The phrase, surely die, was not used in Numbers 14v28,29 but its meaning is seen by the fulfilment. They did not all instantly die, but being under the sentence of death, they lived out their condemned lives until their carcasses fell in the wilderness. This expression is similar to that seen in Genesis 2v17 where God warned Adam in the garden. This was also a legal statement of condemnation to be realised over time, not the threat of an immediate violent exercising of the death sentence as soon as the transgression took place.

A difference is drawn between the 23,000 males from the tribe of Levi and the other tribes. No inheritance was given to these spiritual warriors who were not part of the military numbering and therefore were not excluded en masse, like the twelve tribes, from entering into the land of Israel. It would be from these thousands that the elders who outlived Joshua would be found, Joshua 24v31.