

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 1: 4-18

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Numbers Chapter 1 and today we will read verses 4 to 18.

God instructed Moses and Aaron to take a census of the entire congregation of Israel, counting all the males twenty years old and above who were able to go out to war, so that they could be organized into military divisions. "Israel" was the new name that God gave to Jacob after he wrestled with God. The name means "prince of God," because Jacob had prevailed in his struggle with both men and God. Jacob's twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel.

When famine struck the Promised Land, Jacob brought his whole family to Egypt, where Joseph had become the governor. In Egypt, Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his own sons, giving them the right to inherit property in the Promised Land. In this way, through his two sons, Joseph received a double portion of Jacob's inheritance. From that time on, the nation of Israel consisted of thirteen tribes.

In the incident of the golden calf recorded in Exodus 32, the tribe of Levi stood with Moses and took up the sword against the Israelites who had sinned and refused to repent. As a result, the tribe of Levi was set apart to serve God. God is a God of order. Therefore, in the matter of numbering the people and organizing them into an army, God instructed Moses that everything was to be carried out in an orderly manner.

Verse 4: "Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur."

God instructed Moses to select one man from each tribe to serve as the head of that tribe. With the assistance of these tribal leaders, the army of each tribe was then to be numbered. In the church today, God likewise desires that the church be organized as an army to defend His testimony in the last days. Christ is the Head of the church, ruling and reigning within it. Christ is also the High Priest of the church, bringing every believer before God the Father. Therefore, when the church is to be organized as an army, leaders must first be appointed to serve as elders, helping God shepherd His church.

In the following verses, from verse 5 through verse 15, we see that God selected one man from each tribe to serve as its leader. This was entirely according to God's sovereign authority. God knows His people, and He personally called each leader by name and appointed him. Even the experienced Moses was not allowed to recommend candidates for these positions. Much less could anyone nominate himself because he desired the office of tribal leader or gather supporters and promote his own candidate. God is the source of all authority. In the matter of appointing leaders, God left no room for human preference or maneuvering. Rather, God Himself directly designated those whom He had chosen.

Verse 5-9: “from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph; from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun; from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.”

Among the Israelites, many people shared the same names. Therefore, in this passage, the names of their fathers are specifically mentioned as well to avoid confusion. At the same time, this demonstrates that God values family heritage and spiritual legacy. It serves as a reminder to fathers that if they desire their sons to become worthy and capable men, they themselves must first be good examples. A godly example speaks louder than words. For simplicity, we will not repeatedly mention the names of their fathers. The leader of the tribe of Reuben was Elizur; the leader of the tribe of Simeon was Shelumiel; the leader of the tribe of Judah

was Nahshon; the leader of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel; and the leader of the tribe of Zebulun was Eliab.

If we compare this with Genesis 29:31–30:24, we see that Leah, Jacob's first wife, bore him six sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Although Jacob favored Rachel, Leah was the wife whom God had prepared for Jacob, and she bore him six sons. When God appointed the tribal leaders, He began with the sons of Leah and listed them one by one according to their birth order. Once again, we see that God is a God of order, and that this order proceeds from His sovereign arrangement.

However, Levi is absent from this record. Levi was born after Simeon and before Judah. Yet the entire tribe of Levi had been set apart for the service of God and therefore was not included among those being counted and organized into the army. God had a special arrangement for the tribe of Levi.

The same principle applies today. Those who are willing to set themselves apart for the service of God are especially remembered by Him. Thus, in appointing the tribal leaders, God instructed Moses first to establish leaders from the five tribes descended from Leah's sons: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

Verse 10-11: “from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi; from the tribe of Joseph, that is, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.”

Rachel was the wife whom Jacob loved. In fact, from the very beginning, Jacob served his father-in-law Laban for seven years because of his love for Rachel. However, on the day of the wedding feast, Jacob was deceived by Laban, who substituted Leah for Rachel. Remarkably, Laban's deceit was used by God, resulting in Leah becoming Jacob's wife.

In this matter, we should not simply judge it in terms of right and wrong. Rather, we should see God's forbearance. God allowed Jacob's favoritism and used it as a means to work in Jacob's life. Jacob truly suffered much because of his love for

Rachel. First, he had to serve Laban for another seven years before Rachel became his second wife.

According to the record in Genesis, Rachel was a woman of great beauty but also one with a proud and self-willed character. God used the matter of childbearing to discipline her. Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son and also his finest son. Yet after giving birth to Joseph, Rachel was still not satisfied. She named him Joseph, which means "may he add" or "increase," expressing her desire to have another son. God answered Rachel's prayer and allowed her to bear another son, Benjamin, who was Jacob's twelfth son. However, Rachel paid for it with her life, for she died in childbirth while giving birth to Benjamin.

In God's ordained will, Leah was Jacob's wife; and in God's permissive will, Rachel also became Jacob's wife. Here we see God's forbearance and wisdom. Because of Jacob's favoritism, God allowed him to have the one he loved. Yet through this process, both Jacob and Rachel were refined and perfected through suffering. Joseph, the son whom Jacob and Rachel dearly loved, also endured tremendous suffering. Yet God preserved him, raised him up to become the governor of Egypt, and used him as the one who saved Jacob's entire family.

Joseph became Jacob's most outstanding son and received a double portion of Jacob's inheritance. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adopted by Jacob and regarded as his own sons, thus becoming two tribes of Israel. Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn son, while Ephraim was the younger son. However, as recorded in Genesis 48:17–20, when Jacob was about to bless Joseph's two sons, Joseph carefully positioned Manasseh at Jacob's right hand and Ephraim at his left, intending for Manasseh to receive the blessing of Jacob's right hand.

But Jacob deliberately crossed his hands and placed his right hand upon Ephraim's head. Although Joseph quickly protested, saying, "Not so, my father," Jacob replied with full confidence, "I know, my son, I know." At this point, Jacob had become truly spiritual and mature. He had already foreseen that Ephraim would become a great people. Indeed, Ephraim later became the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel.

When the tribal leaders were appointed, verses 9 and 10 continue by recording the leaders of the three tribes descended from Rachel. The leader of the tribe of Ephraim was Elishama, the leader of the tribe of Manasseh was Gamaliel, and the leader of the tribe of Benjamin was Abidan.

Verse 12-15: “from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli; from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael; from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi; from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.”

The remaining four tribes—Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher—were descended from the maidservants of Rachel and Leah.

According to Genesis 30:1–13, after Leah had borne four sons to Jacob, Rachel became jealous of Leah. Rachel therefore gave her maidservant to Jacob, and through her were born Dan and Naphtali. When Leah saw this, she followed Rachel's example and gave her own maidservant to Jacob as a concubine, and through her were born Gad and Asher.

During that period, Jacob found himself caught between his wives and concubines, becoming, in many ways, a pitiful man. During the day he tended sheep in the wilderness, laboring under the heat and fatigue. At night, when he returned home, even where he would sleep was determined by the arrangements of his wives. It was precisely through these family experiences that Jacob, whose natural disposition was to grasp and strive for advantage, was gradually transformed into Israel, the prince of God.

The four sons born to the two maidservants also became four tribes of Israel. The leader of the tribe of Dan was Ahiezer, the leader of the tribe of Asher was Pagiel, the leader of the tribe of Gad was Eliasaph, and the leader of the tribe of Naphtali was Ahira.

We can see that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. Although the birth of these four sons resulted from the jealousy and

rivalry between the two wives, God, in His sovereign authority, made them into four tribes of Israel. Furthermore, in Israel's later history, these tribes produced notable figures, including judges, prophets, and other great leaders.

This also reminds us to learn to view things from God's perspective. Within our limited understanding and within the short span of our lives, many situations may seem unfair to us. Yet history is in God's hands. The things that God permits ultimately find their proper place in the course of His sovereign plan.

This realization helps us entrust all things into God's gracious hands and place our hope in Him—especially those matters that we do not understand and that seem illogical to us. In the end, we often discover that our own perspective was too narrow, while God had a far better purpose all along.

Verse 16: “These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.”

God instructed Moses to appoint twelve tribal leaders from among the twelve tribes of Israel. Each of these leaders had been foreordained by God. They were to serve not only as the heads of their respective tribes, but also as commanders within the army of Israel. Moses was faithful in all of God's household, and therefore he carried out God's command exactly as he had been instructed. He appointed the leaders of the twelve tribes, excluding the tribe of Levi.

Verse 17-18: “Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many.”

After Moses had appointed the leaders of the twelve tribes according to God's command, on the first day of the second month in the second year, Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the twelve tribes assembled the entire congregation of Israel.

The men who were twenty years old and above were required to declare their genealogy. According to their families and clans, they were registered one by one by name, and the number of the men was counted. These men were to be organized into the army of Israel. When God counted the army, He was concerned not merely with a number, but with the name, family, and clan represented by each number.

This also reminds those of us who serve in the church that we should not focus only on statistics. Rather, we should pay attention to each individual whom we serve: What is his name? What is his family background? What is his heritage? How has he grown up? What kind of environment has shaped him? When we look in this way, we realize that every person who comes into the church has been carefully chosen by God. Each one is to be nurtured within the church so that his life may grow, his experiences may be enriched, and ultimately he may become a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray together: Dear Heavenly Father, we truly thank You. Because of Your love for us, You gave Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to come into the world and accomplish redemption, so that through faith we might become Your children. You have also gathered us together to form the church. Within the church, we learn to serve one another and to live a life of mutual love among the saints. Your purpose is that the church would ultimately become the army of Christ, defending God's testimony in the last days. For every saint in the church, we offer You our thanksgiving and worship. Each one has been carefully chosen by You, allowing us to serve together and bear witness for You on this earth. Bless the church to which I belong. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!