

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

**Numbers 1 : 19-46**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 1. Today we read from verse 19 to verse 46.

Jehovah God spoke to Moses in the tabernacle of meeting, instructing him to number the Israelite males according to their families, their fathers' houses, and their names—those twenty years old and above who were able to go to war—and to organize them into an army. When the Israelites journeyed forward through the wilderness, they had to organize the strong men who were able to fight into an army in order to protect God's testimony. The church today is the same. The church has been called by God to journey forward through the wilderness of this world. Those in the church who are spiritually strong must also be organized as good soldiers of Christ so that they may properly uphold the testimony of Jesus Christ on earth.

Moses and Aaron followed God's command and first selected the leader of each tribe from among the twelve tribes of Israel. Yesterday we already said that these twelve tribes did not include the tribe of Levi, because Levi was the tribe that served God, and God had a special arrangement for it. Joseph was the first son Rachel bore to Jacob. When the land of Canaan suffered famine, Joseph became Pharaoh's prime minister in Egypt and also became the deliverer of the entire household of Israel. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adopted by Jacob as his own sons and became two tribes of Israel.

Therefore, when the tribe of Levi was called and set apart by God to serve Him, Israel still had twelve tribes apart from the tribe of Levi. Among these twelve tribes, their leaders were first chosen by God and then appointed through Moses and Aaron. Afterward, Moses, Aaron, and these twelve leaders assembled the whole

congregation on the first day of the second month in the second year after the Exodus.

**Verse 19: “As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.”**

Here we see that Jehovah God took the initiative. Moses was God’s faithful servant and the leader of the Israelites. He was faithful in all the house of Israel. Whatever God commanded, Moses did accordingly, and he began to number the people in the Wilderness of Sinai. Here we see one characteristic of a spiritual leader: faithfulness to God. Whatever God commands, the leader does accordingly, without adding his own opinions or making his own plans, but faithfully carrying out God’s plan.

Being a leader in the church is completely different from being a leader in the world. The world takes public opinion as its guide, and a leader must gain the approval of the people in order to be considered competent. But Christ is the Head of the church. Only those who understand Christ’s will and completely obey Christ can properly represent Christ and carry out God’s plan in the church.

The record from verses 20 through 43 then lists, in order, the number of males in each tribe according to their families, their fathers’ houses, and their names. The method of recording is exactly the same each time. God seems to repeat it again and again without tiring: the males who were twenty years old and above and able to go to war were to be numbered and recorded.

This tells us—and reminds us again and again—that it is already an exceedingly great grace for us to receive salvation and return to God’s house. Yet on the basis of this grace, through our daily spiritual eating and drinking, we must grow and mature until we reach the age of twenty spiritually; that is, until we possess a certain measure of spiritual life and are able to go out to fight for God. This means not being entangled with the affairs of this world, but being able to give everything solely for God’s will and for the preservation of the church’s testimony. God truly

desires every person who has received grace and salvation to be organized into an army and become a good soldier of Christ.

**Verses 20-25: “Now the children of Reuben, Israel’s oldest son, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred. From the children of Simeon, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, of those who were numbered, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred. From the children of Gad, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.”**

The record here follows the order in which Jacob’s sons were born. Reuben was the firstborn and was originally Israel’s eldest son. In the tribe of Reuben, 46,500 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Simeon, 59,300 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Gad, 45,650 males were organized into the army. We said earlier that Jacob’s first wife, Leah, bore him six sons. According to their order of birth, the first three were Reuben, Simeon, and Levi.

During the incident of the golden calf in Exodus, the tribe of Levi stood with Moses and dealt with those among the Israelites who worshiped idols, committed sexual immorality, and refused to repent. Because of their absolute loyalty to God, they were set apart by God to become the tribe that served Him. The tribe of Levi could not be numbered and organized into the army because they had a more important responsibility. Levi’s position was therefore taken by the tribe of Gad.

According to Genesis 30:9-11, Gad was the first son whom Leah's maid Zilpah bore to Jacob. After Gad took the place of the tribe of Levi, the three tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad became one group. The importance of this arrangement will become clear in chapter 2, where the camping positions of the twelve tribes are described. We will see that these three tribes camped together and jointly guarded the south side of the tabernacle.

Although this arrangement was made by God's sovereign authority, God still greatly respected the relationships people had established during the process of growing up. It is the same as we learn to serve in the church today. The saints who help us, support us, teach us, and nurture us will naturally establish closer relationships with us. These saints should also become our fellow soldiers who coordinate with us as we fight for the Lord.

**Verses 26-31: "From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred. From the children of Issachar, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred. From the children of Zebulun, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred."**

Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were the fourth through sixth sons whom Leah bore to Jacob, and these three tribes also became one group. In the tribe of Judah, 74,600 males were numbered and organized into the army. Judging from the numbers alone, the tribe of Judah was the most prosperous tribe and had the greatest number of males counted. This also fulfilled Jacob's prophecy concerning Judah.

Genesis 49:8-9 s: “Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?” In the tribe of Issachar, 54,400 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Zebulun, 57,400 males were numbered and organized into the army.

**Verses 32-37: “From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred. From the children of Manasseh, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred. From the children of Benjamin, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.”**

Joseph and Benjamin were the two sons Rachel bore to Jacob. In Jacob’s mind, Joseph replaced Reuben and became his firstborn. The double portion of land inherited by the firstborn was therefore received by Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus, Rachel’s descendants constituted three tribes of Israel: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. These three tribes naturally became one group. Here we see once again that when people are organized by God into an army, in addition to God’s sovereign authority, their backgrounds, the process of their growth, and the close relationships they have established with one another are all valued by God. In battle, a person must be able to trust completely the fellow soldiers beside him. Therefore, the three tribes formed from Rachel’s descendants were naturally organized together.

In the tribe of Ephraim, 40,500 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Manasseh, 32,200 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Benjamin, 35,400 males were numbered and organized into the army. When we see these numbers, our first reaction is that the population of these three tribes seems comparatively small. This is because Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were much younger than the ancestors of the other nine tribes—almost a generation younger—so naturally their numbers were somewhat smaller.

**Verses 38-43: “From the children of Dan, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred. From the children of Asher, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.**

Dan, Asher, and Naphtali also became one group. Dan and Naphtali were the sons whom Rachel’s maid Bilhah bore to Jacob, while Asher was the son whom Leah’s maid Zilpah bore to Jacob. Therefore, all three tribes in this group came from sons born to Jacob through the maids. In the tribe of Dan, 62,700 males were numbered and organized into the army. Among the twelve tribes, Dan’s population was second only to that of the tribe of Judah. In the tribe of Asher, 41,500 males were numbered and organized into the army. In the tribe of Naphtali, a total of 53,400 males were numbered and organized into the army.

**Verses 44-46: “These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father’s house. So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers’ houses, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel—all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.”**

These three verses form the conclusion to the numbering and military organization of the twelve tribes. Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the twelve tribes counted the people one by one. After counting all the males in the twelve tribes who were twenty years old and above and able to go to war, the total was 603,550. This was a very large number, so the process of counting must have taken a considerable amount of time. Because this was a very serious matter, they counted the people individually by name.

When the congregation of Israel was to journey forward through the wilderness, God first instructed Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the twelve tribes to number the males and organize them into an army. Only in this way could they protect God's testimony. The army alone numbered 603,550. Based on this figure, we can estimate the total population of Israel. Generally speaking, the number of women would have been somewhat greater than the number of men, and the average lifespan at that time was probably less than fifty years. Therefore, we may estimate that the total number of Israelites was between two and three million.

For such a vast group of people, merely surviving in a wilderness without any natural resources was not easy. Had it not been for God's special grace—giving them manna every day and causing water to flow from the rock to supply their daily needs—how could the Israelites possibly have made their way through the wilderness?

From a spiritual perspective, the church today is in the wilderness of the world, bearing God's testimony and answering God's call to move forward according to His will. In the same way, without the supply of God's grace, it would not be easy for the church to pass through the wilderness of the world. In those days, God instructed Moses to organize Israel into an army. In the same way, God today is raising up good soldiers of Christ in the church to uphold His testimony.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. As we read how Moses, according to God's will, organized into an army the Israelite males who were twenty years old and above and able to go to war, we see that they were arranged into four groups in an orderly way, according to the birth order of the tribes and the sources from which

they came. We truly see that God is a God of order. On the one hand, according to His authority, God gathers people together and organizes them into an army. On the other hand, in the process of organizing them, God also values the course of our growth, the background of our birth, and the close relationships established during these processes.

As we look again at the church where we are, God likewise calls and gathers all kinds of people together to become the church. In the church, we read God's word together, experience God's rich spiritual supply together, grow together in life, and learn to serve and coordinate together in order to uphold God's testimony in the place where the church is located. Help us treasure the church where we are and treasure every saint in the church. Each one has been personally chosen by God and placed beside us, so that together we may be organized as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Bless the church where I am. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.