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

Numbers 26: 57-65

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 26. Today, we are reading verses 57 through 65.

Moses counted the men of the twelve tribes on the plains of Moab so that, after the Israelites entered the good land, the land could be distributed as an inheritance according to the casting of lots and the size of each tribe's population. We see that after thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, the new generation of Israelites had all eaten the same manna and drunk the same living water. Some tribes were blessed and multiplied greatly, while others suffered losses and experienced sharp population declines. Yet the total population of the twelve tribes remained approximately the same. God is rich in grace and generously supplies His people. Whether the people received blessings or suffered losses depended on whether they were willing to obey God's will and follow His leading.

The counting of the men of the twelve tribes was for the purpose of distributing the inheritance. The tribe of Levi was a tribe separated unto God to serve Him. They had no earthly inheritance because the LORD was their inheritance. At the first census, God commanded Moses to count the Levites, not to organize them into an army, but to assign their service in the tabernacle. Likewise, the second census of the Levites was not for the purpose of distributing an inheritance, but was still for the purpose of serving God.

Verse 57: "And these are those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites."

Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. These three sons developed into the three clans of the tribe of Levi. Numbers chapter 4 records how these three

clans divided the responsibilities of serving in the tabernacle. The Gershonites were responsible for all the soft furnishings, such as the curtains, coverings, screens, and hangings. The Kohathites were responsible for all the most holy objects, such as the Ark of the Covenant, the golden altar of incense, the golden lampstand, the table of the showbread, and the bronze altar. The Merarites were responsible for all the structural components, such as the boards, pillars, bars, and sockets. When the Israelites camped, the descendants of Levi were responsible for guarding the tabernacle. When they journeyed, the descendants of Levi were responsible for carrying all the objects belonging to the tabernacle. Through the service of the descendants of Levi, it was manifested that God was among the Israelites and that, whether they were encamped or journeying, God protected His people.

Verse 58: "These are the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, and the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begot Amram."

This verse tells us that under the three major clans, there were also several prominent families. We need to compare the record here with the record in Numbers chapter 3. Let us begin with the clan of Gershon. Numbers 3:21 records two major families: the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites. After thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, the family of the Shimites had declined, so only the family of the Libnites is recorded in this verse.

Next, let us look at the clan of Kohath. In Numbers 3:27, we see that at the first census, there were four major families under the clan of Kohath: the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites. After thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, the family of the Uzzielites had declined and therefore was no longer recorded. The family of the Hebronites still remained and was recorded. The family of the Izharites had also declined, but was replaced by the family of Korah, the son of Izhar, becoming the family of the Korathites. Because several people greatly used by God had arisen from the family of Amram, that family was no longer listed under the tribe of Levi. The following verses will explain another special family.

Under the clan of Merari, at the first census, Numbers 3:33 tells us that there were two major families: the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites. After thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, both families still remained. They are the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites listed here.

The thirty-eight years of wilderness life were a tremendous test for every family. Among the twelve tribes that were counted, God clearly declared that the men who had been numbered would all die in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Some tribes that valued the next generation would do their utmost to cooperate with God and raise up a healthy new generation, resulting in explosive growth, as in the case of the tribe of Manasseh. Other tribes did not submit to what God had ordained. Instead, they rose up to struggle for power and personal gain or indulged their fleshly desires, and consequently suffered tremendous losses. For example, the three tribes in the camp of Reuben lost God's blessing.

By comparison, the changes within the tribe of Levi were much smaller than those among the other twelve tribes. Apart from the decline of the family of the Shimites, the other families were able to maintain their positions. Although Korah arose from the family of Izhar and led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, the sons of Korah did not participate. Therefore, the family of Korah was preserved. Later, this family even produced Samuel, a man greatly used by God who changed the course of his generation. The preservation of Korah's name testified to God's tremendous mercy and grace. In addition, the family of Amram produced several great figures whose names were recorded in the history of Israel. During the wilderness wandering, life was difficult, yet the tribe of Levi continued to guard the tabernacle and serve within it. These services, which might have seemed merely routine, preserved the entire tribe of Levi.

Dear brothers and sisters, having regular service in the church, whether spiritual or practical, can preserve us in living before God. It also encourages us to attend worship every week and maintain good relationships with the saints. Satan is like a roaring lion, walking through the wilderness, seeking out and devouring those saints who are isolated from the others. Therefore, we should all find something we can do to serve in the church life. Such service should become our protection.

Verse 59: "The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam."

The family of Amram within the clan of Kohath was a particularly important family, and therefore it is recorded separately. Amram's wife was named Jochebed. Jochebed was perhaps the greatest mother in the history of Israel. Therefore, the Holy Spirit specifically recorded her name here. The name Jochebed means "The LORD is glory." Jochebed not only had a beautiful name, but she was also a godly and courageous woman.

She was a woman of the tribe of Levi. Although she was born in Egypt, her heart longed for the glory of God. She bore Amram three children: Miriam, Aaron, and Moses. Miriam was a prophetess, Aaron was the high priest, and Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, established the tabernacle, and received the law. He became a figure in Israel's history comparable to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For a mother to devote all her efforts to raising even one outstanding child is already difficult and a great blessing. Yet all three of Jochebed's children became great figures in the history of Israel. They could be called three outstanding members of one family. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to call her the greatest mother in the history of Israel.

In the way Jochebed raised Moses, we can see what made this mother so special. Moses was born in a dark age, when all newborn Israelite boys were to be put to death. Jochebed was both courageous and resourceful, enabling Moses to become the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. With the help of her eldest daughter Miriam, Jochebed also became Moses' nurse and cared for the infant Moses for six years. These brief six years of early childhood education enabled Moses to know the God of Israel and identify himself with the Israelites who were enslaved.

Hebrews 11:24-25 describes Moses in this way: "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." In Moses, we see that six years of early childhood education were more powerful than

over twenty years of education in the royal palace. They made Moses willing to suffer together with the Israelites rather than enjoy the wealth and power of Egypt. Jochebed was truly a great mother.

The family of Amram produced a great leader: Moses. In God's wise design, leadership is not hereditary. Therefore, Joshua succeeded Moses, not Moses' son. Originally, God chose the Israelites to become a kingdom of priests, meaning that every person would be a priest, just like the New Testament saints. However, the Israelites failed in the incident of worshiping the golden calf. The responsibility of serving God then fell upon the tribe of Levi, while the priesthood was entrusted to Aaron's family within the tribe of Levi. All the male descendants of Aaron's family were to become priests.

Verses 60-61: "To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And Nadab and Abihu died when they offered profane fire before the LORD."

Aaron had four sons. Aaron was anointed and became the first high priest. His four sons—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar—all became priests, assisting Aaron in offering sacrifices to God. After the ordination ceremony of the high priest, Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire from heaven because they offered profane fire before the LORD. When the genealogy of the priests is recorded here, this incident is specifically mentioned once again to emphasize that serving God as a priest is a holy and solemn matter that must never be taken lightly.

The fire used to burn incense before God had to be taken from the altar; profane fire could not be used. What is profane fire? It represents human wisdom, ability, preferences, enthusiasm, and so forth. Anything that originates from ourselves is profane fire. The fire on the altar typifies Christ as the Lamb who became the sin offering, being consumed on the altar to satisfy the requirements of God's holiness, righteousness, and glory. Only by taking fire from the altar to burn incense before God can all our prayers, praises, and worship be pleasing to God.

Our consecration and the fulfillment of our ministry must all be based on the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ, nothing we offer

can be pleasing to God. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire, and Eleazar succeeded Aaron as the high priest. Eleazar's son Phinehas was then given a covenant of peace by God, and the descendants of Phinehas were to hold the office of high priest throughout their generations.

Verse 62: "Now those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and above; for they were not numbered among the other children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the children of Israel."

The Levites were not included among the twelve tribes. Among the twelve tribes, only males twenty years old and above who were able to go to war were counted. The Levites, however, were counted from one month old and above, once it was determined that they could survive. This was because the Levites served God in place of all the firstborn of the Israelites. For the Levites, life was more important than ability.

The total number of males counted among the Levites was 23,000, which was 1,000 more than at the first census. The Levites were not counted among the other Israelites because the men counted among the twelve tribes were all to receive an inheritance in the good land. The Levites were counted not for the purpose of receiving an inheritance, but for serving God and assigning the responsibilities of service. The Levites had no earthly inheritance; God was their inheritance. The inheritance of the Levites was heavenly, more glorious and more abundant than an earthly inheritance, and it would never change. Jesus exhorts us in Matthew 6:20, "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Verse 63: "These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho."

This is the concluding statement of the second census of the Israelite men. Moses and Eleazar the priest counted the Israelites on the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River. They had already completed their journey through the wilderness. Across the Jordan River lay the city of Jericho, the first city the Israelites would attack after entering the good land. Moses and Eleazar the priest counted the men here in preparation for the battles and the distribution of the inheritance after entering the good land.

Verses 64-65: "But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. For the LORD had said of them, 'They shall surely die in the wilderness.' So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."

The men counted here were all from the new generation of Israelites among the twelve tribes. All the men who had been counted by Moses and Aaron in the first census in the Wilderness of Sinai had died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb. Although the good land of Canaan was the inheritance God had promised to the Israelites, the Israelites still needed to have faith in order to enter the good land and possess it as their inheritance.

The first generation of Israelite men who had been counted listened to the bad report brought back by the ten spies. They lost their faith, seeing themselves as grasshoppers and the inhabitants of Canaan as giants. They dared not enter the good land and instead wanted to turn back to Egypt. Therefore, God declared that they would all die in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb. These were the two spies among the twelve who brought back a good report. Their faith was remembered by God. Therefore, they were able to enter the good land together with the new generation of Israelites and receive the inheritance God had promised.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is actually the same with the New Testament saints. God has already promised us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Nevertheless, we must still receive these blessings through faith in order to obtain what God has promised. If our eyes are focused only on worldly pleasures and blessings in this present life, we will be like the first generation of Israelites, lacking the faith to receive heavenly blessings. God will not force people to receive His blessings. Instead, He will raise up another group of blessed people who will inherit His blessings through faith.

We have all been saved by grace, and we have also entered the wilderness. Do we still miss our life in Egypt? Do we still think about the leeks, cucumbers, fish, and meat of Egypt? The heavenly good land of Canaan is right before us. Do we have the faith to enter the good land and possess it as our inheritance? If our minds, emotions, and wills have not yet been freed from the bondage of this world, we cannot follow Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, into glory. Jesus told His disciples that they were in the world but not of the world. Today, Jesus also asks you: Do you belong to this world? May God have mercy on us.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for granting us the wisdom that leads to salvation, allowing us all to receive salvation through Your grace. Through baptism, we have already declared our separation from this world. Pharaoh's pursuing army has already been submerged in the water. We are now journeying through the wilderness, and the heavenly good land of Canaan is right before us. Lord, grant us faith and also a willing heart of obedience, so that we may pursue the heavenly blessings. Help us to live each day on earth as though we were in heaven. Preserve the church where I am, so that it too may walk on the heavenly path. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.