

EXPRESSED BY THEIR NAMES

NUMBERS 1:1-17

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~ *Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God* arrives back in the Old Testament Book of Numbers. In this first report, we will attempt to lay a proper foundation for Moses' fourth book of the Bible. We could call this the math book of Holy Writ. It is called "Arithmoi" in the Septuagint, which means, "arithmetic." The theme, however, can be summed up as "pilgrim's progress" - to take the name from the Christian allegory of John Bunyan. We're going to walk, wander, work, war, witness and worship with the children of God in this book. This is a handbook, chart and compass given to us directly by God! This obscure and shamefully neglected book is a road map in the wilderness of this world; and is highly relevant and practical for our lives today when taught properly, correctly and completely. The lessons that the children of Israel had to learn are the same lessons you and I have to learn in this world. This is the way the Lord intended life to be for you and me....

Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope ~

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come ~

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth ~

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ~

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John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil ~

The book of Numbers gets its name from the census given in chapter one and in chapter twenty-six. A careful comparison of the two numberings will reveal a tragic wilderness experience for the children of Israel. Here, in chapter one verse forty-six, the Bible tells us the number of the fighting men. Chapter twenty-six verse fifty-one tells us that the children of Israel had not exactly been fruitful and multiplied; in fact, their number had gone down, and they were losing population rather than gaining them on the wilderness march. Their march soon slowed to a walk - and then staggered to a wander - as they advanced not one inch. By the time we get to the twentieth chapter, they're at Kadesh again, but they refused to go into the land to possess it. Well, they had already been here forty years ago. See, they're going nowhere! They are literally on a merry-go-round because they get off where they got on. This journey should have taken eleven days, but their unbelief led them astray. The children of Israel are stuck out there in the dessert because they simply refused to believe the Lord God! There is no other reason for their wandering except for unbelief.

Our safari hasn't moved anywhere from when we struck camp in Leviticus. The tabernacle is all set up and functional - and we are awaiting the leading of the Shekinah Glory of the Lord before we can pack up and move in this book. While we wait, let's briefly review where we have come from: Genesis has given us the creation and the fall; Exodus was the great book of redemption where we found the children of Israel in the brick kiln ovens of slavery in Egypt; they came out of Egypt before Exodus closed as they were delivered out of slavery – but - ONLY by the hand of the merciful and loving God. Leviticus was the book of worship and fellowship as God spoke directly to them concerning the tabernacle.

Here in Numbers, we need to ascertain how many people came out of Egypt in order to make this a worthwhile study; after all, this is a book that deals with numbers. In round figures, we have six hundred thousand

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fighting men. That is the calculation of a great Egyptologist, archeologist and teacher, Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle; Dr. Kyle was also the editor of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia and one-time editor of National Geographic Magazine. If he were writing this report, you would be bored to tears, as if you aren't already; but you would get a whole lot more information from the doc.

So, we have six hundred thousand fighting men that were able to go to war and Dr. Kyle adds about four hundred thousand women to that for a rounded one million. Two hundred thousand senior citizens would be added and about eight hundred thousand children. The mixed multitude was numbered at about one hundred thousand; total calculation: two point one million people left out of the slavery of Egypt. That does not include the tribe of Levi, though, because they were not numbered. I would say nearly three million, but we have no hard data that could ever supply an accurate number. I do believe an attempt at the calculus is important or the numbers would not have been recorded. I also think these are the best figures that we have to work with: two to three million is a reasonable conclusion.

We can only take a distant glimpse into this book in these reports, as Numbers is truly a difficult book to learn and painfully slow to come to understand. This study will take a great deal of time and effort. I assure you it will be as dry as Leviticus was. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to instill the truths found here in our hearts and minds. The children of Israel were not some rag-tag groups sloughing their way through the desert; no nation has ever moved like this nor with the order and purpose Israel did at the beginning of their history.

The first ten chapters cover the order of the camp. It is certainly impressive to me to see how the Lord insists on order in the camp. Paul said, "... let everything be done decently and in order." Everything that God does – He wants order to it, friends – you can just write that down. God has this universe arranged in an orderly fashion or we would have a lot of things bumping into each other. God is a God of power and a God of order; and God is a Person, too – a Person Who just happens to be a Genius! When a

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man makes the statement that there is no God, that man is either insincere or he is insane. Those who insist they are sane are simply insincere – I know they cannot mean what they say....

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

~ God spoke to Moses in the wilderness, but it was also in the tabernacle. It's important to fully grasp that the tabernacle is in the wilderness. Of course, the church is in the world; and I quoted a verse in this report where Jesus prayed that God takes us not out of the world. The church in the world today is the workmanship and poem of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works....

2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls;

3 From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

~ The Lord commanded a census be made for the purpose of building an army. Naturally, an army is for warfare! When the children of Israel were slaves down in Egypt, God fought for them; they were never asked to fight. Now, we see them in the wilderness, and they are being instructed to prepare to stand against their enemies. They had very real enemies just as you and I have enemies in the world. God saves us by His marvelous grace; but there is some very real sin in this world, too. Let's not be naive. For the first time in their history, the children of Israel learn about warfare. They're going to learn all about a world in which some very bad things happen. Modern dissention is caused by the liberal that believes peace is imminent in the world. Of course, this world knows nothing about peace - and their argument is fundamentally flawed; yet, they stick to it like glue. My point is: we're going to have to fight spiritually - whether we like it or not....

4 And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.

5 And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: of the tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur.

6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar.

9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon.

10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni.

12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran.

14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan.

16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.

17 And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names:

~ The book of Numbers promises painful reading compared to the awesome stories in Genesis and tremendous truths from Luke. You can watch paint dry, and you'll get more entertainment than you will from

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reading these reports through Numbers, I absolutely promise you that. Only the sincerest of the sincere will stay with me through here. What seems like fifty-four verses of unimportant detail must have been very important to the Lord. I admit it's dry, but it can be thrilling if we know what we are looking at and what God is telling us in it.

God is only interested in the individual, my beloved. We are talking about redeemed souls – not rugged and isolated individualism. God is interested in YOU. Here, Moses and Aaron are to take one assistant from each tribe to do the counting. What this reveals is that every single name named in the Bible is important to God. All of the names in chapter one have a specific meaning; and if you get the Hebrew to English translation for those names, you will discover a tremendously deep spiritual message. All of the pedigrees are laid out and there is an immediate and direct value in that which we will examine in our next report.

Rueben, you'll remember, was the eldest son of Israel - but he was set aside in Genesis chapter forty-five. God said Rueben was 'as unstable as water.' That's not good. Elizur means 'my God is the rock!' and Shedeur means 'the Almighty is a fire!' Elizur may have belonged to an unstable tribe, but he knew that if you got up on the Rock, the instability became stability. Do you feel unstable today? You can turn to Christ our Rock for stability in your life today ~

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