

Numbers 1:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Analysis

Reuben's census, despite losing the birthright through sin (Genesis 35:22; 49:3-4), demonstrates both divine justice and mercy. The tribe lost preeminence but not inclusion in Israel, showing that while sin has consequences, God's covenant faithfulness preserves His people. The genealogical record 'by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers' emphasizes that covenant identity passes through families, anticipating the principle that believers and their children are in covenant with God.

Historical Context

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, forfeited the birthright to Joseph's sons due to defiling his father's bed. Though numbered here as Israel's 'eldest son,' the tribe never regained preeminence, settling east of the Jordan and later falling into apostasy.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Reuben's loss of birthright yet continued inclusion in Israel illustrate both the seriousness of sin and the persistence of grace?
2. What does this teach us about God's covenant faithfulness to His people despite their failures?

Interlinear Text

וְהִיא	מִבְּנֵי	רְאוּבֵן	בְּכֹר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	תּוֹלְדֹתָם
H1961	And the children	of Reuben	eldest son	Israel's	by their generations
	H1121	H7205	H1060	H3478	H8435
לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם	לְבֵית	אֲבוֹתָם	בְּמִסְפָּר		
after their families	by the house	of their fathers	according to the number		
H4940	H1004	H1	H4557		
שְׁמוֹת	לְגִלְגָּלֹתָם	כָּל	זָכָר	מִבְּנֵי	עֶשְׂרִים
of the names	by their polls	H3605	every male	And the children	from twenty
H8034	H1538		H2145	H1121	H6242
שָׁנָה	וְעַלֶּה	כָּל	יָצָא	צָבָא:	
years	and upward	H3605	all that were able to go forth	to war	
H8141	H4605		H3318	H6635	

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