

Numbers 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred.

Analysis

The specific number (46,500) demonstrates God's exhaustive knowledge of His people and the precise fulfillment of His promise to Abraham that his descendants would be numerous. Each number represented a real person known individually to God, anticipating Jesus's teaching that God knows the number of hairs on each head (Matthew 10:30). The census combined both God's corporate care for His people and His particular providence over individuals.

Historical Context

These 46,500 men of military age (20 and above) represented Reuben's contribution to Israel's fighting force. The tribe's size, though substantial, was middling among the tribes, reflecting neither dominance nor insignificance in Israel's military structure.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's knowledge of the exact number of Israelites encourage your faith in His particular care for you as an individual?
2. What does the census's combination of corporate and individual counting teach us about the balance between church and personal faith?

Interlinear Text

פְּקָדֵיהֶם	לְמִטֵּה	רְאוּבֵן	שֵׁשׁ
Those that were numbered	of them even of the tribe	of Reuben	and six
H6485	H4294	H7205	H8337
וְאַרְבָּעֵים	אֶלֶף	וְחָמֵשׁ	מֵאוֹת:
were forty	thousand	and five	hundred
H705	H505	H2568	H3967

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 26:7 (Parallel theme): These are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty.