

Numbers 1:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Of the children of Joseph, namely, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

Analysis

Ephraim's census at 40,500 made it smaller than Manasseh's 32,200 (verse 35) at this time, yet Jacob's prophecy elevated Ephraim above his older brother (Genesis 48:19-20). This reversal of natural order—the younger superseding the elder—appears repeatedly in Scripture (Jacob over Esau, Joseph over his brothers, David over his brothers, Christ over Adam) to demonstrate that God's electing grace follows His sovereign choice rather than natural privilege or human expectation.

Historical Context

Ephraim would become the most prominent northern tribe, so much so that 'Ephraim' became synonymous with the northern kingdom of Israel after the division. Joshua came from Ephraim, as did Jeroboam, the first northern king.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the pattern of the younger superseding the elder throughout Scripture demonstrate God's sovereign election?
2. What does Ephraim's eventual prominence despite initial smaller numbers teach us about God's timing and purposes?

Interlinear Text

מִבְּנֵי	יוֹסֵף	מִבְּנֵי	אֶפְרַיִם	תּוֹלְדֹתָם	
Of the children	of Joseph	Of the children	of Ephraim	by their generations	
H1121	H3130	H1121	H669	H8435	
לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם	לְבֵית	אֲבוֹתָם	בְּמִסְפָּר	ר	
after their families	by the house	of their fathers	according to the number		
H4940	H1004	H1	H4557		
שְׁמֵם	מִבְּנֵי	עֶשְׂרִים	שָׁנָה	וְעַלְיוֹ	כָּל
of the names	Of the children	from twenty	years	and upward	H3605
H8034	H1121	H6242	H8141	H4605	
יָצְאוּ	לָלָחֶם				
all that were able to go forth	to war				
H3318	H6635				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 33:17 (Parallel theme): His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.