

Numbers 1:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

Analysis

The total numbered 603,550 men of war, demonstrating God's multiplication of Abraham's descendants from one man to a mighty nation in approximately 430 years. This number fulfills God's promise to make Abraham's seed 'as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore' (Genesis 22:17). The precision of the count shows God knows each individual in His covenant people. The number represents fighting men only; including women, children, and Levites, the total population likely exceeded two million. This multitude emerging from seventy persons who entered Egypt (Genesis 46:27) demonstrates God's covenant faithfulness and power. Reformed theology sees this multiplication as evidence of God's sovereignty in building His people—'the LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude' (Deuteronomy 1:10). This foreshadows the church's growth from twelve apostles to believers from every nation.

Historical Context

This census total appears three times in Scripture (Exodus 38:26; Numbers 1:46; 2:32), emphasizing its historical accuracy. Comparing this to the 603,550 counted at the beginning of the wilderness period (Numbers 1) with the 601,730 counted near its end (Numbers 26:51) shows remarkable stability despite a generation's death. Scholars debate the historicity of such large numbers given the Sinai's limited resources, with proposals ranging from reading 'eleph' as 'clan' rather than 'thousand' to understanding the numbers as tribal census records. However, the

text emphasizes miraculous provision (manna, water from rocks) making natural sustenance arguments moot. Ancient Near Eastern military records (Egyptian, Assyrian) sometimes use large round numbers, but Israel's precise figures suggest actual counting. The number's consistency across multiple texts indicates careful record-keeping. Extra-biblical ancient census records confirm the practice's antiquity.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this large number demonstrate God's faithfulness to His covenant promises to the patriarchs?
2. What does the precision of this count teach about God's individual knowledge and care for each member of His people?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיוּ	כָּל	הַפְּקֻדִים	שֵׁשׁ	מֵאֹת	אַלְפֵי
H1961	H3605	H6485	H8337	H3967	H505
Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand					

וּשְׁלֹשָׁה	אַלְפֵי	וְחֲמִישֵׁהָ	מֵאֹת	וְחֲמִשִּׁים:
H7969	H505	H2568	H3967	H2572
and three	thousand	and five	hundred	and fifty

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 12:37 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.

Exodus 38:26 (Parallel theme): A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men.

Numbers 26:51 (Parallel theme): These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

Numbers 2:32 (Parallel theme): These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.