

Numbers 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were forty and six thousand and five hundred.

Analysis

Reuben's census total (46,500) made it one of the mid-sized tribes, neither largest nor smallest. This middle position reflected the tribe's loss of firstborn status without complete loss of blessing. The pattern teaches that sin brings real consequences (loss of preeminence) while God's covenant mercies continue (continued inclusion and blessing). This balance characterizes God's dealings with His people throughout redemptive history.

Historical Context

Reuben's numbers remained relatively stable throughout the wilderness period, declining only slightly to 43,730 by the second census (Numbers 26:7). This stability contrasted with dramatic fluctuations in some tribes, suggesting neither exceptional blessing nor severe judgment.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Reuben's maintained but not preeminent status illustrate the real but not total consequences of sin for God's people?
2. What does this teach us about expecting both discipline and mercy when we fail God?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶבֶן	וְאֶלְעָד	וְשָׁשׁ	וְאֶרְבָּעָה	וְאֶלְף
And his host	and those that were numbered	and six	thereof were forty	thousand
H6635	H6485	H8337	H705	H505
וְמֵאֵת	וְתָמֵם	וְשָׁ	וְאֶ	וְאֶ
and five	hundred			
H2568	H3967			

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