

Numbers 26:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph after their families.

Analysis

These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred—Ephraim's population of 32,500 represented a stunning 20% decline from the first census (40,500 in Numbers 1:33). Yet this diminishment didn't forfeit their preeminence; they still received choice land and produced Israel's next leader. God's election transcends demographics.

The closing phrase **These are the sons of Joseph after their families** (אֶלֶה בָנָיו) brackets the Joseph tribes' census (begun in v. 28), emphasizing their unity despite different trajectories. Combined, they totaled 85,200—powerful but not dominant like Judah. This balance foreshadows Israel's eventual split: Judah's royal line versus Joseph/Ephraim's numerical strength. The census's meticulous record-keeping would later enable land division by lot (26:52-56), ensuring each family received their divinely appointed נִשְׁלָה (inheritance).

Historical Context

Ephraim's decline puzzles commentators—perhaps plague, warfare casualties, or divine judgment for specific sins during the 38-year wandering. Despite reduction, their central geographic position (between Manasseh and Benjamin) and Shiloh's

tabernacle in their territory maintained their influence. Later, Ephraim's pride over their perceived importance became a prophetic target (Isaiah 28:1-4, Hosea 5:3-5).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Ephraim's numerical decline yet continued significance demonstrate that God's calling and gifts are irrevocable (Romans 11:29)?
2. What does the bracketing phrase 'sons of Joseph' teach about maintaining family/tribal unity despite experiencing different outcomes?
3. How might Ephraim's later pride despite earlier decline warn against short-term memory in evaluating God's patience and favor?

Interlinear Text

אֶלְהָה	לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֶם:	בָּנִי	אֶפְרַיִם
H428	These are the families	H1121	of Ephraim
H4940		H669	
לְפָקֵדְךָ מִ	אֶלְגָּם	וְשָׁלָשׁ יָמִים	יָמִם שָׁ
according to those that were numbered		and two	and thirty thousand and five
H6485		H8147	H505
		H7970	H2568
אֶלְהָה מֵאׁוֹת	בָּנִי יְסוּדָה	לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֶם:	
hundred	These are the sons of Joseph	These are the families	
H3967	H428	H1121	H4940
		H3130	