

Numbers 26:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take the sum of the people, from twenty years old and upward; as the LORD commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt.

Analysis

מִן עָשָׂרִים שָׁנָה (יְמֻלָּה)—the census counts military-age men capable of warfare, the same criterion used in Numbers 1:3. The phrase **as the LORD commanded Moses** emphasizes divine initiative: God orders the census for His purposes.

The reference to **the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt** is ironic—this new generation never experienced Egyptian bondage firsthand. Yet they inherit the identity and calling of the Exodus generation. The census serves multiple purposes: military preparation for conquest (Joshua's campaigns), tribal organization for land distribution (Numbers 26:52-56), and theological testimony to God's covenant faithfulness despite a generation's unbelief.

Historical Context

The first census (Numbers 1) counted 603,550 fighting men; the second census (Numbers 26:51) counted 601,730—a slight decrease reflecting divine judgment on the wilderness generation. The twenty-year threshold marked the age of military conscription and legal accountability in ancient Israel. This census would determine land allotment proportions in Canaan.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does inheriting spiritual identity from previous generations ('which went forth out of Egypt') shape your understanding of covenant community?
2. What does it mean that God counts and knows His people individually, even as they number in the hundreds of thousands?
3. In what ways does God prepare His people practically (military census) for the spiritual battles they must fight?

Interlinear Text

וּבְנֵי	עֶשֶׂר יָמִ	עַמְּךָ	שָׁנָה	וּמִעְלָה
and the children	Take the sum of the people from twenty	years	and upward	
H1121	H6242	H8141	H4605	
פָּאֵשֶׁר	אַתָּה	יְהִי	אַתָּה	מֹשֶׁה
H834	H6680	H3068	H853	H4872
commanded	as the LORD	Moses	and the children	of Israel
			H1121	H3478
מִצְרָיִם:	מִן־צָהָרָיִם	מִן־צָהָרָיִם:	מִן־צָהָרָיִם:	מִן־צָהָרָיִם:
which went forth	out of the land	of Egypt		
H3318	H776	H4714		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:1 (References Lord): And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

