

Numbers 3:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names.

Analysis

God commands Moses: 'Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward.' Every firstborn belonged to God due to Passover deliverance when God spared Israel's firstborn while judging Egypt's (Ex 13:2). The one-month minimum age reflects ancient Near Eastern practice where infant mortality was high. God's claim on the firstborn demonstrates that redemption creates ownership - those saved belong to their Savior. Christ, as God's firstborn (Col 1:15, 18), redeems us to be God's possession, a 'peculiar people' (Titus 2:14, 1 Pet 2:9). We're 'not our own' but 'bought with a price' (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Historical Context

This census counted 22,273 firstborn males (v.43), fewer than expected given Israel's total population. Various explanations include: only firstborn since the Exodus counted, firstborn who inherited their fathers, or natural demographic variations. The Levites (22,000) substituted for most firstborn, with the extra 273 requiring five-shekel redemption payment each (v.46-51). This redemption money supported the sanctuary. The principle continued as every Jewish firstborn required redemption (pidyon haben), practiced even today in observant Jewish families.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Do you live as one who's been redeemed - recognizing you belong to God, not yourself?
2. How does understanding you were 'bought with a price' affect your daily choices and priorities?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	אֵל	מֹשֶׁה	פָּקֹד	כָּל	בְּכוֹר
said	And the LORD	H413	unto Moses	Number	H3605	all the firstborn
H559	H3068		H4872	H6485		H1060
זָכָר	מִבְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	מִבְּנֵי	חֵדֶשׁ	וּמִעֲלֶיהָ	
of the males	of the children	of Israel	of the children	from a month	and upward	
H2145	H1121	H3478	H1121	H2320	H4605	
וְשָׂא	אֵת	מִסְפַּר	שְׁמֵתָם:			
and take	H853	the number	of their names			
H5375		H4557	H8034			

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 3:15 (Parallel theme): Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them.