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The First Census:
The Old Generation of Rebellion
1: 1-54



After making **the covenant** (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Dd – The Mosaic Covenant**) and giving **the Torah** at **Mount Sinai** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bi – The Stipulations of the Covenant**), **ADONAI** instructed **Moshe** to **take a census of** all **the tribes** of **Isra'el** by **clans and families. Their** encampment and order of march was likened to a military formation and operation. Up to this point in the Torah the metaphor of a husband and wife has been used to describe that relationship between **YHVH** and **His people**. But now, the picture changes to an army. **Isra'el** is the army of **Ha'Shem**! **He** is **the Commander-in-Chief** who speaks from the midst of **His** "command post," **the Tabernacle**. To take the Promised Land, there needed to be a war a holy war (see **Deuteronomy Ag – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). But **Isra'el** was not able to fight this war on **her** own. **The Divine Presence** dwelled in **their** midst to give command, direction, and encouragement to the people of **Isra'el**.[11]

As such, **they** would only count **the men** deemed fit for military service, **those** who were **twenty years old** or older **on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Exodus. One man from each tribe** was to assist **Moses**. After careful research of **clan** and **family** records, **the** qualified **males**

were listed by **their** respective **tribes**. However, **the Levites** were not counted, for **they** were exempt from military service in the sense of bearing arms. This is implied in the fact that **they** were set apart for the service of **the Tabernacle and all its furnishings.** Only **they** could erect and dismantle **it**; any others who touched **it** would die. Moreover, **the Levites** pitched **their tents** adjacent to **the Tabernacle,** and the other **tribes** in the outer perimeter.[12] Thus, by using these **numbers**, **the Holy One** was demonstrating the miracle of **Isra'el's** survival that **He** had accomplished.

One more critical point needs to be made here. The war that **Isra'el** was to fight was not just a physical war where people would die and blood would be shed. On the contrary, it was primarily a spiritual battle. **Isra'el** was commissioned by **God** to make **His** name known throughout the earth. **He** gave **them** a piece of property in which to carry our these "operations." There were strong spiritual forces set in opposition against **Isra'el** – the gods of the Canaanites. Therefore, the **God** of this universe, **the Commander of ADONAI's army (Joshua 5:14)** decided to pitch **His** tent in the midst of **Isra'el** and direct the battle **Himself**. **Isra'el** needed **Him** to war against the powers and principalities, which were demons and idols of the Canaanites.

Things have changed very little since **the Israelites** went against the gods of the Canaanites. Believers everywhere are commanded to **put on the full armor of God, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-12).** Moreover, just as ancient **Isra'el** needed to have **the camp of the Sh'khinah** among **them**, so do we. But how can **the Divine Presence** rest in our midst today? We find the answer to this in the rest of **Ephesians 6** (see the commentary on **Ephesians Ca – The Spiritual Battle**). When we, as individuals, and as a community of believers, continually wear **the armor** which **God** gave us, we are allowing **Him** to dwell through us. Having this kind of uniform, we can rest assured that **His Presence** will be with us in each and every battle into which **He** leads us.[13]