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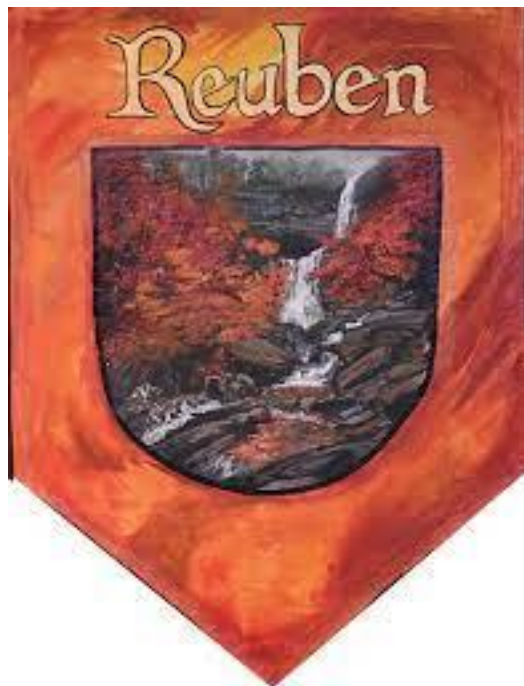
The Tribe of Reuben

26: 5-11

The tribe of Reuben DIG: What does the Second Census tell us about Reuben's historical roots? Why did the tribe of Reuben decline from the First Census? Why would the wilderness generation want to know they had common historical roots from their parents, but a completely separate identity from them?

REFLECT: What meaningful group are you a member of? How does being a part of that group help to support you and make you grow spiritually? How does being a part of it enable you to help others? What can you do to make sure that the positive parts of your past are accentuated in your relationship with God?

The reason for Reuben's numerical decrease was the challenge of the Aaronic priesthood by Dathan and Abiram.



1. The First Census in the past found the tribe of Reuben being numbered at 46,500

(to see link click [Ak - Numbering the Tribes](#)). When **Jacob** was giving **his blessings** to **his sons** (see the commentary on [Genesis Ld - The Blessing and Cursing of Jacob's Sons](#)), **Reuben**, the eldest, naturally took **his** place closest to **his father** on the side of the bed. **Jacob** looked up to **him** and said: **You are my firstborn**, literally, *my chosen one*, **the first sign of my strength, superior in vigor and power (49:3)**. The firstborn is often called **the first sign of his father's strength** in the Scriptures (**Deuteronomy 21:7; Psalm 78:51**). **He** was supposed to be the leader of **the twelve tribes of Jacob**. Always wanting **his father's** favor, yet realizing **he** had forfeited **his** right to it, **Reuben** was a pathetic person and **son**. Originally, **he** had a claim to the natural birthright of **the firstborn son**, which meant a double portion of the inheritance, the claim to the priesthood, and the leadership of the nation. Unfortunately, **Reuben** did not live up to **his** promise, or **his father's** hopes (see [Genesis Le - Reuben, You are My Firstborn, Turbulent as the Waters, You Will No Longer Excel](#)).

In the **near historical future**, **Reuben** would be as **turbulent**, or as **unstable as water**. The Hebrew word for **unstable** is *pahaz*. It is from the root that describes the lawless mob of **Judges 9:4** and the defiant prophets of **Zephaniah 3:4**. It suggests wildness as much as weakness. It is this aspect of **water**, so quickly becoming an undisciplined torrent, as pictured in **Proverbs 17:14**, which is the point of the comparison.⁵⁷³ **He** was passionate, but lacked self-control. Unfortunately, **Reuben** turned out to be weak and lustful.



2. The Second Census in the present: The census results begin with **Reuben**, the firstborn of Isra'el, but when he defiled his father's marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph so he could not be listed in the genealogical record in accordance with his birthright. Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a Ruler came from him; however, the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph. The four clans of Reuben (Hebrew: meaning *I see a son*) were: of Hanoch, the Hanochite clan; through Pallu, the Palluite clan; through Hezron, the Hetzronite clan; and of Carmi, the Carmite clan. These were four the clans of Reuben, who numbered 43,730, a decrease of 2,770 from the **First Census** (see [Ai - The First Census: The Old Generation of Rebellion](#)) or six percent (**Numbers 26:5-10** and **First Chronicles 5:1-10**). The reason for this decrease was the challenge of the Aaronic priesthood by **Dathan** and **Abiram** below. The territorial inheritance of the tribe of **Reuben** is found in **Joshua 13:15-23, 20:8, 22:25**. The western border of the **Reubenite** territory is the Jordan River as seen in this map.

This listing of **the clans of Reuben** becomes an occasion to remind the reader of those who played a part in the rebellion of **Korah** (see [Cn - Korah's Rebellion](#)). The son of Pallu

was Eliab; and the sons of Eliab were Nemu'el, Dathan and Abiram (see [Cq - The Rebellion of Dathan and Abiram](#)). Then **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** deviates and reminds us of the sin of Dathan and Abiram. These were the same Dathan and Abiram, men of reputation in the community, who rebelled against Moshe and Aaron in Korah's followers, when they rebelled against ADONAI; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, whose followers died when fire consumed 250 men. Some names of unbelievers and rascals are to be forgotten. They are to be treated as though they never existed. But others acted so shamefully that their names are to be preserved as a warning sign (26:8-10) to others not to be like them.⁵⁷⁴ In **Isaiah 11:10** the root of Jesse stands as a banner for the nations to seek. But like **Sodom and Gomorrah**, or **Nadab and Abihu**, **Dathan and Abiram** serve as historical bywords for how **Ha'Shem** deals with revolutionaries.

However, the sons of Korah did not die (26:11). It is important that we know that the sons of Korah survived their father's folly. Evidently, they had nothing to do with their father's foolishness. They went on to father some impressive offspring. They survived as the family of the **Korahites** (26:58) and occupied an important place in the service of the Temple under David and Solomon by becoming the **Korahite** singers in the Temple (**First Chronicles 6:31-38**) and they were responsible for writing several of our psalms (**Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, and 87-88**). So by the grace of ADONAI, the sons of Korah did not perish in this judgment. And according to **First Chronicles 6:27-28**, the prophet **Samuel** actually descended from **Korah**. How ironic that **Samuel** actually did enter the functions of the priesthood. The very desire that had been the undoing of his forbearer was given to Samuel.⁵⁷⁵

Opposed to the **First Census**, the **Second Census** is more interested in the clans and families rather than the founders of the clans (who were long dead), for families are the basis of society (see the commentary on [Ephesians Bu - The Necessary Foundation](#)). The list of **Jacob's sons** in **Genesis 46:6-26** forms the basis of this clan list, with the names of the sons transformed into names of the clans. In the list of the clans in **Deuteronomy** (see the commentary on [Deuteronomy Fy - This is the Blessing](#)), **Moses** starts, of course, with **Reuben**, saying: **Let [the clan of] Reuben live and not die, though his people become few (33:6)**. Why did he say that? When **Jacob** prophesied about **Rueben**, he did not show him in a favorable light because of the great sin he had committed, and lost the blessing attached to the firstborn. Throughout the history of this tribe, they showed instability because of their refusal to fight (**Judges 5:16**). They also showed a lack of restraint, being the first to request a place to settle in the Promised Land (**Numbers 32**). Not only that, the tribe of Reuben showed a lack of faith by erecting a

pagan place of worship (**Joshua 22**). No leaders of **Isra'el** ever came from this **tribe**, and as time went on, it became smaller and smaller. This would make it appear that **the tribe**, at the time of **Moses's blessing**, was in danger of extinction. But this was the past.

3. The Messianic Kingdom in the future: The lists of names and numbers are the tangible signs of **God's** blessing, **God's** faithfulness to past covenants, and the surety of **God's** future promises (see **Ae - Stars of Heaven, Grains of Sand, and the Promises of God**). In the **far eschatological future**, the **tribe of Reuben** will be included in the **144,000** during the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Revelation Cr - Then I Heard the Number of Those Who Were Sealed, 144,000 from all the Tribes of Isra'el**), and the allocation of land during the Messianic Kingdom (**Ezeki'el 48:6-7**). During the Eternal State (see **Revelation Fq - The Eternal State**), **Reuben's** name will also be etched into one of the great **pearls** that will serve as **gates** to the **New Jerusalem** (see **Revelation Fu - A Great High Wall with Twelve Gates**). We will remember **him** for all eternity. Like **Reuben**, our sins can have a long range, tragic consequences. Sin takes us further than we want to go, and costs us more than we want to pay. However, like **Reuben**, all of our sins will be forgotten when we enter the future Messianic Kingdom and Eternal State.

On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Isra'el (21:12). Those who believe in "Replacement Theology," (who believe that all of **ADONAI's** promises to **Isra'el** have been forfeited by **her** and given to the Church) have a tough time with this verse. For all eternity **the twelve tribes of Isra'el** will be remembered. **The LORD** has not replaced **Isra'el** with the Church. These **gates** will be an eternal reminder that it was through the faith of **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, with **the twelve sons of Isra'el** that the Gentiles first entered into the great family and **City of God**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** great love and mercy! Thank **You** for **Your** great love that never replaces **Isra'el** as **Your firstborn (Exodus 4:22)**. Though **Isra'el** sinned many times, when **they** came back to **You** in repentance, **You** always forgave and rescued them. **Remember these things, Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant. I formed you, you are My servant. Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me! I have blotted out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you (Isaiah 44:21-21)**. Thank **You** also that when the fathers sinned and died, as did **Rueben's** descendants in the rebellion of **Korah**, **the sons did not die (Numbers 26:11)**. **The soul that sins, he will die. The son will not bear the iniquity of the father with him, nor will the father bear the iniquity of the son with him (Ezeki'el 18:20a-b)**. You judge each person's own heart. **For man looks at the***

outward appearance, but ADONAI looks into the heart (First Samuel 16:7).

Sometimes life is very unfair and people can be selfish and mean. When that happens your people have a choice to make. They can complain and try to get even or they can pray to you our Almighty loving Heavenly **Father** and ask you to work in the situation to **Your** honor. Leading so many rebellious people was a hard job. When **Korah** rebelled **Moses and Aaron** did not respond quickly out of anger, but they spoke to **You, LORD**, and listened to You. As we put tough times into your hands, we can be confident that you care and will always be there to help. Sometimes your timing is not our timing, but your ways are best and are always done with omniscient wisdom and great love.

The trials of this earth will soon be over, so let us remember to live for all eternity and for our Promised Land of heaven (**John 14:1-3**). **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** May we keep our hearts focused on eternity in heaven and the great joy that those who love **You** will have with **You**, their Heaven **Father**, in **Your** holy home of heaven. **I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying: Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God. He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).** We love you and look forward to praising you forever! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen