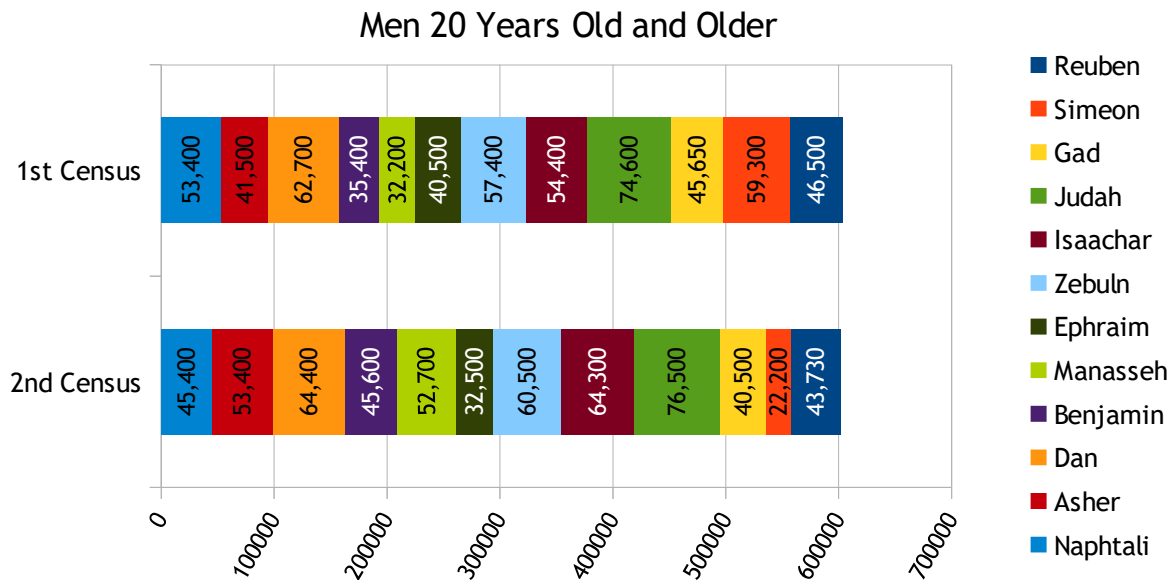


## Numbers - Tribal Censuses and Leaders

There were two censuses taken in the book of Numbers of those who were 20 years old and older. This census is mentioned by way of the specific total in Exodus 38:26 and a rounded off number of “about six hundred thousand men on foot” in Exodus 12:37. The first census is found in chapter 1 (603,550)



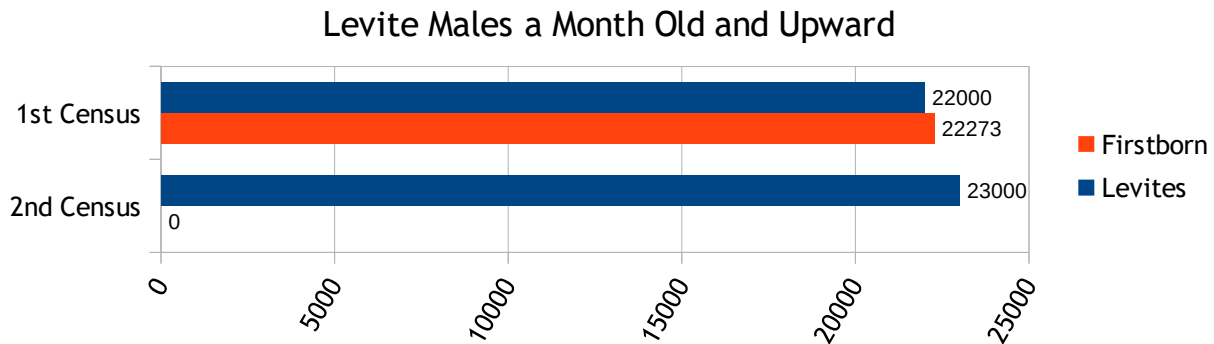
and the second in chapter 26 (601,730), after the death of the generation who refused to enter the land initially and the resulting 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Men of Age	1 <sup>st</sup> Census Exo 38 – Num 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> Census Num 26	Difference
Reuben	46,500	43,730	-2,770
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100
Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100
Joseph: Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000
Joseph: Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>603,550</b>	<b>601,730</b>	<b>-1,820</b>

## Numbers - Tribal Censuses and Leaders

The Levites were numbered separately in chapters 3 and 26 as they were dedicated to the Lord. The reason being they were dedicated to the Lord.

**Exodus 3:13 NASB** Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"



In chapter 3, we also find the number of firstborns among the other tribes who were to be redeemed for the Levites. The number of the firstborn in excess of the Levites in the first census that had to be redeemed beyond the number of the Levites was 273. Their valuation is given at the end of chapter 3. The ongoing redemption of the firstborns among men and cattle is outlined in chapter 18.

Levitical Families	1 <sup>st</sup> Census Num 3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Census Num 26	Difference
Gershon	7,500		
Kohath	8,600		
Merari	6,200		
<i>Totals</i>	22,300	23,000	700

The total amount given in Numbers 3:39 (22,000) and the actual total of the families (22,300) are not equal. There are a couple explanations. Many commentators<sup>1</sup> agree that the 300 were the firstborn of the Levites who were not available to redeem the firstborn from the rest of the tribes. Some speculate that it came as a result of a scribal error with regard to the Hebrew letters used for numbers while calculating the totals for either the Gershonites or the Kohathites.<sup>2</sup> The Pulpit Commentary<sup>3</sup> asks this question:

There is nothing to be said against this explanation [the 300 being the firstborn], except that no trace of it appears in a narrative otherwise very full and minute. The first-born of the Levites *may* have been just 300 (although the number is singularly small), and they *may* have been considered ineligible for the purpose of redeeming other first-born; but if so, why did not the sacred writer say so, instead of silently

<sup>1</sup> (Barnes; MacDonald and Farstad; Walvoord and Zuck; Gill; Henry; Wesley)

<sup>2</sup> (Clarke; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; Keil and Delitzsch; *NET Notes*; Wiersbe; Torrey; Barker and Burdick; *ESV Study Bible*; Doty)

<sup>3</sup> (Spence and Exell, M.A.) [] added. (Keil and Delitzsch) have a similar conclusion.

## Numbers - Tribal Censuses and Leaders

reducing the total of "all that were numbered of the Levites"?

I don't think we can know for sure which is the correct explanation. The idea of the 300 being the firstborn makes sense from the context of the rest of the chapter. Although the question of why it isn't mentioned specifically is a puzzling one. Gill<sup>4</sup> notes that the Talmud identifies the 300 as being the firstborn, so that needs to be considered in favor of that possibility.

Finally, Henry<sup>5</sup> also adds this observation, "But that which is especially observable here is that the tribe of Levi was by much the least of all the tribes. Note, God's part in the world is too often the smallest part. His chosen are comparatively a little flock."

## Tribal Leaders

Below are the leaders that were appointed at the time of the first census to lead the tribes when they went out to war or whenever they moved from one place to the next in the first column and those appointed to lead the people as they apportioned the land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of the Jordan River after promising to cross over with the rest to help them take possession of the land.

		1 <sup>st</sup> Census — Numbers 2 & 3	Apportioning the Land — Numbers 34
Leader & High Priest		Moses, son of Levi Aaron, son of Levi	Joshua, son of Nun Eleazer, son of Aaron
East	Judah	Nahshon, son of Amminadab	Caleb, son of Jephunneh
	Issachar	Nethanel, son of Zuar	Paltiel, son of Azzan
	Zebulun	Eliab, son of Helon	Elizaphan, son of Parnach
South	Reuben	Elizur, son of Shedur	~
	Simeon	Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai	Samuel, son of Ammihud
	Gad	Eliasaph, son of Deuel	~
West	Joseph: Ephraim	Elishama, son of Ammihud	Kemuel, son of Shiphtan
	Joseph: Manasseh	Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur	Hanniel, son of Ephod
	Benjamin	Abidan, son of Gideoni	Elidad, son of Chislon
North	Dan	Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai	Bukki, son of Jogli
	Asher	Pagiel, son of Ochran	Ahiah, son of Shelomi
	Naphtali	Ahira, son of Enan	Pedahel, son of Ammihud
Levi	Chief of Sanctuary & Priests	Eleazer, son of Aaron	~
	Gershon	Eliasaph, son of Lael	~
	Kohath	Elizaphan, son of Uzziel	~
	Merari	Zuriel, son of Abihail	~

4 (Gill) on Numbers 3:39.

5 (Henry) on Numbers 3:39.

## Numbers - Tribal Censuses and Leaders

The leaders of the Levite families and tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh who were given land on the eastern side of the Jordan River are not listed in the second census or in the listing of the leaders in Numbers 34 as these are only those leaders who were to be involved in the division of the land once they cross over and have taken possession of it.

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