

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 1:32-35, 47-54**  
**“Favoritism”**

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**Numbers 1:32-35, 47-54**

**Verse 32-35**

*From the sons of Joseph: From the descendants of Ephraim: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Ephraim was 40,500. From the descendants of Manasseh: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Manasseh was 32,200.*

- In Genesis 48:11-20, Jacob, Joseph's father, adopts Joseph's sons as his own children. See verse 16, "May they be called by my name." Thus Ephraim and Manasseh become tribes of Israel in their own right and Joseph receives a "double portion" as if he were Jacob's firstborn.
- At the time of their blessing, Ephraim, who was the younger son of Joseph, received the greater blessing from his grandfather Jacob. Ephraim was blessed as if he was the first born.

**Verse 47-54**

*The families of the tribe of Levi, however, were not counted along with the others. YHWH had said to Moses: "You must not count the tribe of Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites. Instead, appoint the Levities to be in charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony -- over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it. Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levities are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levities shall do it.*

***Anyone else who goes near it shall be put to death. The Israelites are to set up their tents by divisions, each man in his own camp under his own standard. The Levites, however, are to set up their tents around the tabernacle of the Testimony so that wrath will not fall on the Israelite community. The Levites are to be responsible for the care of the tabernacle of the Testimony." The Israelites did all this just as YHWH commanded Moses.***

- While the tribe of Joseph received a double portion, the tribe of Levi was not counted at all. They were to be exempt from military service. Therefore, there was no reason to count them.
- The entire tribe of Levi was to devote itself to caring for the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was where Israel came to meet with God. Within its walls was the Ark of the Covenant. As the place of meeting with God, the Tabernacle was to be regarded with high favor and treated with great respect. Only the men of Levi's tribe were to touch it. They were to carry it, take it down and set it up, keep it in proper order.
- When the camp was set up, the Levites were to encircle the Tabernacle with the tents in which they dwelt with their families. Thus, they made a barrier around the Tabernacle which served to warn the other Israelites that they were approaching the tent of God. The ring of Levitical tents would keep Israel safe from not respecting the tabernacle.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Favoritism*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)