



# Let Us Fall Now into the Hand of the LORD

## The Numbering of the People

2 - Joab's Subversion



## 2 - Joab's Subversion

- David's Command
- Joab's Response
- Joab's Return

Core: True faith perseveres.

Why: TBD

The last class developed possible answers to many of our questions.

*More Questions*

But it also created more questions.

- 1 - Why was God angry with Israel because of the census?
- 2 - Why did David repent *after* Joab returned?

So David commanded Joab.

Listen carefully.

# The Command

Consider what was included.

And what wasn't.



2 Samuel 24:2 → “all the tribes of Israel” which would include Levi!  
“from Dan to Beersheba” emphasized a second time!

Compare:

Exodus 38:25 → “of the congregation”

Numbers 1:2 → “of all the congregation”

Numbers 26:2 → “of all the congregation”

“the congregation” did not include Levites! Numbers 16:9

And so the Levites were either not counted at all...

...or were counted separately.

But this census was different!

And, notice that there is nothing said about **a military census!**

The people were numbered from 20 and up because of **the temple**—not war.



And thus, since the census was all about the temple, notice what changed:

I Chronicles 23:24-27 - “These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever: And also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above.”

Previously they had been numbered from 30 to 50. Numbers 4:47

Nevertheless, Joab **spurned** these instructions.



In Joab's response, one can hear an echo of David's command.

Yet the response was full of deceit.

*The Response*

1 Chronicles 27:23 - "But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens."

David was looking to see the fulfillment of the promises.

But Joab claimed that they were already fulfilled.

1 Chronicles 21:3 - "And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?"

"The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be"

Deuteronomy 1:11

the stars of the heavens

The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be

Deuteronomy 1:10-11 - “The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)”

Did not Moses say that the promise had already been fulfilled?

And now they only needed to be multiplied by *one hundred!*

So they were still growing!

The census was simply a **waste of time!**

- Because the promise had already been fulfilled centuries prior.
- And all of the people were already David's servants—they were loyal!

But it was worse than a waste of time—it was ***a sin!***

And yet these words are surprising to hear from Joab.

Was he really concerned about the fulfillment of the promises?

Or the census bringing sin upon Israel?

*Deceit*

Something is strange about his response.

And in fact, there are *a number* of strange things:

1 - As already noted, Scripture allowed for the taking of a census.

2 - Since when had Joab cared about spiritual things?

Or even given sound spiritual advice?

Consider each instance of advice that he gave to David:

2 Samuel 3:24-25 → “why is it that thou hast sent him away?”

Joab then killed Abner.

And as a result, his family was cursed. v. 29

2 Samuel 12:27-28 → “lest I take the city”

He cared for no one but himself.



Consider each instance of advice that he gave to David:

2 Samuel 14:1-3 → “Joab put the words in her mouth”  
Which ultimately enabled Absalom’s rebellion.

2 Samuel 19:5-7 → “Thou hast shamed this day...thy servants”  
“Thou lovest thine enemies”  
cp. Matthew 5:44 !!!!!  
So much for Joab’s spiritual advice!

Joab’s advice was consistently **politically expedient**.

But it was never **spiritual**.

3 - “Are they not all my lord’s servants?” is a load of garbage and Joab knew it.

David had just recovered from **Absalom’s rebellion**.

2 Samuel 15:6 - “And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

2 Samuel 15:13 - “And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.”

Thus David had to flee until Absalom was killed.

After Absalom's rebellion, there was *another revolt*:

2 Samuel 20:1-2 - "And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem."

Contextually, this was the *event that immediately preceded the census!*

But there was **another rebellion** brewing.

And this exposes **Joab's treason** more than anything else.

1 Kings 1:5-7 - "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. And he conferred with **Joab the son of Zeruah**, and with Abiathar the priest: **and they following Adonijah helped him.**"

“Are they not all my Lord’s servants?” indeed!

This was *the most unsettled* time of David’s reign.

With his political acumen, Joab could see why the census wasn't a good idea:

- In the volatile climate it could incite rebellion.
- Collecting unpopular taxes could be dangerous. 1 Kings 12:18
- And most importantly, Joab was planning his own rebellion!

No wonder why he didn't want to leave for 10 months!

4 - Finally, what could Joab say to dissuade righteous David from his spiritual task?

He could attempt to persuade him that *somehow* it was wrong.

Because hadn't David been told that he wasn't to build the temple?

And yet David, having been **commanded** to number the people by God...  
...saw right through **Joab's nonsense**.





So Joab departed.

His route was as follows:

- 1 - Crossed over Jordan
- 2 - Began at Aroer (Reuben)



- 3 - Went on to Jazer (Gad, but a Levitical city)

# Numbering the People

- 4 - Passed over to Gilead (Manasseh)
- 5 - Went to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites (ESV)
- 6 - Traveled to Dan (Dan)
- 7 - Came to Sidon, Tyre, and the cities of the Gentiles (Asher)
- 8 - Went to Beersheba (Judah)
- 9 - Returned to Jerusalem

The record doesn't specify how the census was taken.

Perhaps the men met the captains at these towns.



When Joab returned, David acknowledged his guilt.

# The Return

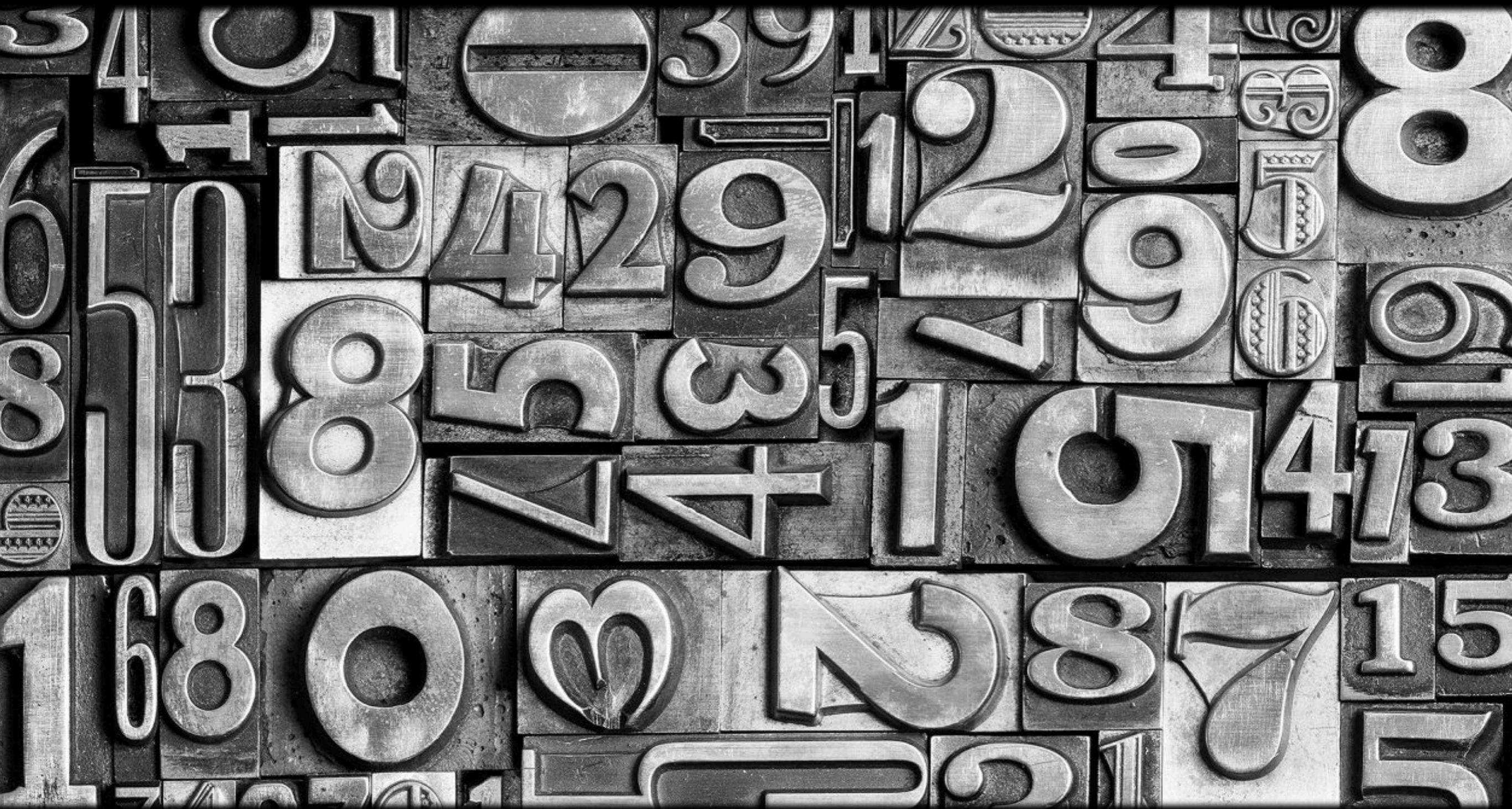
2 Samuel 24:9-10 → “and David’s heart smote him”

It would appear as though David felt no guilt until Joab returned.

But **nothing had happened**—no Nathan had come and no one had died.

What was it about Joab's report that struck David?

The problem wasn't the numbers. Samuel gives approximately 1.3 million.



*The Numbers*

And Chronicles gives approximately 1.6 million.

Which is huge for Israel.

Consider the results of the other censuses:

Exodus 38:26 → 603,550 men

Numbers 1:46 → 603,550 who could go to war

Numbers 26:51 → 601,730 who could go to war

Judges 20:2 → 400,000 footmen (besides Benjamin)

1 Samuel 11:8 → 330,000 men

1 Samuel 15:4 → 210,000 men

This was over **twice the number** when Moses said the people were like the stars!



But something still wasn't right.

The Chronicles record is straightforward.

I Chronicles 21:5-6 - “And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.”

# The Problem

But Exodus had been clear: *Everyone* was to pay the half shekel.

But Joab had **skipped two tribes!**—thousands of people!

And note how carefully the Chronicler explained the problem:

1 Chronicles 21:6-7 - “But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.”

What thing? The very thing the record had just described!

In fact, this is stated again later in the record:

I Chronicles 27:23-24 - “But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David.”

But the Hebrew reads quite differently.

“Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel”

I Chronicles 27:24 - “יֹאָב בֶּן-זְרוּיָה הֵחֵל לְמְנוֹת וְלֹא כָּלָה וַיְהִי בַזֹּאת”  
”קִצֵּף עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל”

Which translates to: “Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number and he did not finish. And it came to pass, because of this, wrath came against Israel.”

1 Chronicles 27:24 ESV - “Joab the son of Zeruiah began to count, but did not finish. Yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered in the chronicles of King David.”

1 Chronicles 27:24 NASB - “Joab the son of Zeruiah had begun to count them, but did not finish; and because of this, wrath came upon Israel, and the number was not included in the account of the chronicles of King David.”

1 Chronicles 27:24 NET - “Joab son of Zeruiah started to count the men but did not finish. God was angry with Israel because of this, so the number was not recorded in the scroll called The Annals of King David.”

So what caused David such consternation when he looked at Joab's results?

*Realization*

Consider how the previous censuses were taken.



Numbers 1:20-21 → “numbered of...the tribe of Reuben...”  
Numbers 1:22-23 → “numbered of...the tribe of Simeon...”

Numbers 26:7 → “These are the families of the Reubenites”  
Numbers 26:14 → “These are the families of the Simeonites”

They were numbered by tribe!

As David looked down the list, he saw that there were only *11 tribes*.

And he knew that *the plague was coming*.

So, as any responsible leader would, he fell on his knees.

But what was Joab thinking?



*Hopping Over Tribes*

Didn't he know that David would be upset when he saw two tribes missing?

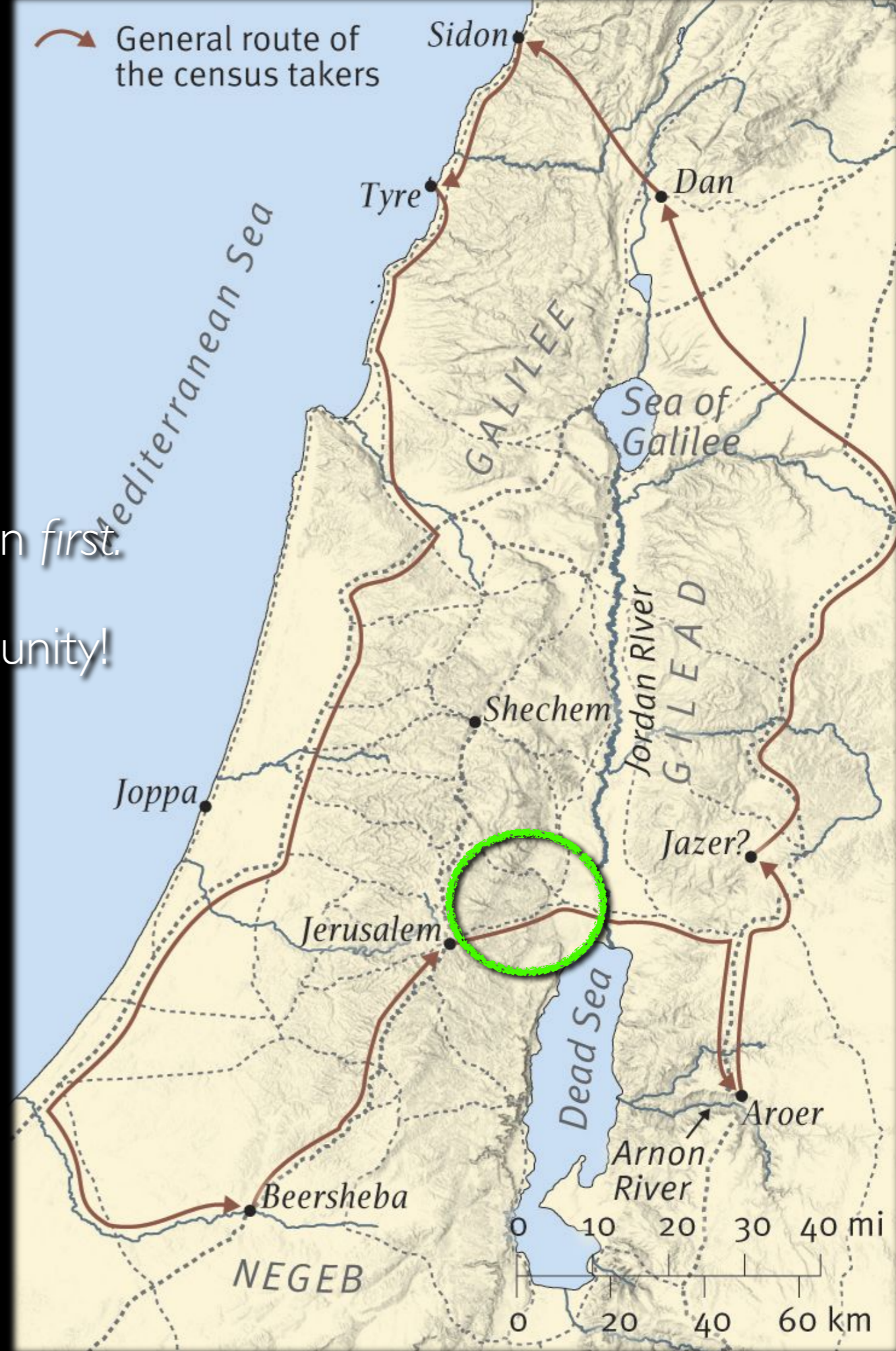
Joab could bring out some fairly good excuses.

Levi hadn't been included in previous censuses.

Although it's odd that he specifically went to a Levitical city.

But what about Benjamin?

Joab's route took him through Benjamin first.  
And the end gave him another opportunity!  
So this was a purposeful omission.



Remember the reason for Joab's omission:

David's word was abominable to him. Why?

Because he had his own rebellion planned!

In that light, it's helpful to consider some of Benjamin's background.

Benjamin was Saul's tribe.

2 Samuel 3:19 → led seven years of rebellion against David and appeared to support Absalom's rebellion  
cp. 2 Samuel 16:5 and 2 Samuel 19:16-17

2 Samuel 20:1 → led another rebellion after Absalom's

Benjamin was volatile and had the ability to lead a rebellion!



And perhaps that's what their future held in store:

1 Kings 1:7-9 - "And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him. But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by Enrogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants."

Enrogel = the border of the Benjamites! cp. Joshua 15:7 and Joshua 18:16

Perhaps Joab skipped Benjamin, knowing that their hearts were not with the king.  
Or, perhaps it was Joab's own belligerence that caused him to skip them.  
Perhaps it was **both**.

Regardless, Joab's omission highlights a major problem:

The people's hearts were **not with their king**.

If asked to pay a tax, some of them likely wouldn't.

And so God caused David to number the people.

# *An Adversary*

That's how He was an adversary to *Israel*.

Just as He had tested them in the past, He was testing them here.

Exodus 15:24-25 → “there he proved them”

Exodus 16:4 → “that I may prove them”

Deuteronomy 8:2 → “these forty years...to prove thee”

The census would reveal Israel's true loyalties.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about all of this is the half shekel.



# *The Half Shekel*



It was worth virtually nothing.

Leviticus 5:15 → “if a soul commit a trespass”

they would bring a ram along with multiple shekels

Leviticus 23:3-8 → those who vowed to God paid up to 50 shekels!

Numbers 3:47 → the firstborn were redeemed with 5 shekels

Jews today have attempted to value it in modern currency.

Chabad.org = ~\$4.25 USD

Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel = ~\$6 USD

This is essentially the amount of **a drink at Starbucks!**

And people **wouldn't pay it!**





# Conclusion

It has become more apparent why God was angry with Israel.

The people, and their military commanders, were unfaithful.



Nevertheless, despite the treacherous state of the nation...

David went forward with this plan to number the people.

Because true faith **perseveres**.