

Dear ...

The article on the Old Testament numbers that you enclosed seems very reasonable to me. As the author points out, the transmission of numbers is always difficult. In early records many numbers may have been written in abbreviated form, and when they came to be spelled out it may sometimes have been difficult to know exactly what they were. The suggestion that there may have been confusion at times between '*eleph*' and '*alluph*' sounds quite reasonable, though the suggestion that '*alluph*' is a specific term for the professional fully-armed soldier is new to me.

It used to be said that the author of Chronicles deliberately magnified the figures in order to make the history sound more imposing than the way it was told in Kings. Yet this theory is easily shown to be completely wrong, since sometimes the numbers in Chronicles are smaller rather than larger.

I was greatly interested a few years ago in the book by Thiele called *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, and particularly in the introduction by a liberal scholar at the University of Chicago who stated that the chronological numbers in the history of Judah and Israel had always seemed to him the most difficult matter in Old Testament study and utterly impossible to reconcile, but that Thiele had satisfactorily solved the problem. While I am not sure that every one of Thiele's interpretations is necessarily correct, it is impressive to see that in almost every case he has given a reasonable explanation for fitting the numbers together exactly as they stand.

The Lord has allowed minor errors to occur in the transmission of both the Old and New Testaments, but none of them affect any matter of Christian doctrine or Christian life. I believe that He did this purposely so that we would not be tempted to try to squeeze too much out of a few words, but would compare Scripture with Scripture and learn the definite ideas that He desires us to know.