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census in Numbers. We noticed that David had a census for the purpose of further aggrandisement for himself, glory for himself, and God punished him for it. A census has a definite purpose, and in this case the purpose is made very clear. In Num. 1:3 he says that they are to take the sum of the people from 20 years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel. And then as he tells about each tribe he says, These were the number that were from the age of 20 and upward all that were able to go to war. In other words this was a military census. This was a census for preparation for warding off enemies during this wilderness journey.

Now in vs. 49 we find that not all the Children of Israel were numbered in this census. Vs. 49 says, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the Children of Israel. Now if you take vs. 49 here by itself, if you take this verse alone and try to build your whole understanding upon it, you will soon decide that Moses sinned in the next Chapter. Because in the next chapter he did number-- or in the third chapter rather -- he did number the Levites. But here he is commanded, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi ~~neither~~ neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel. And the reason for this is that the Levites were not to go to war. There was another particular purpose for which God had destined them. And so the purpose of this census in Num. 1 was to determine what the resources were for the defense of the nation. But in 1:49 we read the Levites are not to be numbered, and we read the same thing in chapter 2:33. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel as the Lord commanded Moses. Then in chapter 3:15 we read, That God said to Moses, Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers by their families, every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. So that the Levites were not to be numbered for war, but they were to be numbered for a different purpose. And this purpose here was to be a substitute for the first-born. And so the Levites were numbered here for this particular purpose, and we find that the number of them is given and its relation to the accomplishment of this particular purpose, and in vs. 38 -- vs. 40 rather, we read, The Lord said unto Moses, Number all the first-born