

## David's Census of Israel (c. 973 BC)

## 2 Samuel 24

1 Again Yahweh was angry with Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go count Israel and Judah."  
 2 The king said to Joab, the commander of the army who was with him: "Please go about through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people that I may know the number of the people."  
 3 Then Joab said to the king, "May Yahweh your God increase the people a hundred times what they are as the eyes of my lord the king are seeing.  
 But my lord the king, why does he desire this thing?"  
 4 But the word of the king prevailed over Joab and over the commanders of the army, so Joab and the commanders of the army went out from before the king to count the people of Israel.  
 5 They crossed over the Jordan and camped at Aroer to the south of the city, which was in the middle of the wadi of Gad, and up to Jazer.  
 6 Then they went to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi. They came to Dan Jaan and around to Sidon  
 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to the Negev of Judah at Beersheba.  
 8 They went about through all the land, and they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.  
 9 Then Joab gave the number of the counting of the people to the king. Israel was eight hundred thousand valiant warriors wielding the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand.  
 10 The heart of David struck him after he had counted the people, and David said to Yahweh, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done! So then, O Yahweh, please forgive the guilt of your servant because I have acted very foolishly."  
 11 When David got up in the morning, the word of Yahweh came to Gad the prophet, the seer of David, saying,  
 12 "Go and speak to David, 'Thus says Yahweh, three things I am laying on you; choose for yourself one of them and I will do it to you.'"  
 13 Then Gad came to David, and he told him and said to him,  
 "Shall seven years of famine in the land come to you?  
 Or three months of your fleeing from your enemies while he is pursuing you?  
 Or should there be three days of pestilence in your land?  
 Now consider and decide what I must return to the one who sent me a word."  
 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am greatly distressed. Please let us fall into the hand of Yahweh,

## 1 Chronicles 21

21:1 Then Satan stood against Israel and urged David to count Israel.  
 2 So David said to Joab and to the commanders of the nation, "Go, count Israel from Beersheba to Dan and bring a report to me that I might know their number."  
 3 But Joab said, "May Yahweh add to the people a hundred times what they are!  
 Are they not, O my lord the king, all of them the king's servants? Why does my lord seek this? Why would he bring guilt to Israel?" [cf. [Exod 30:12](#)]  
 4 But the word of the king prevailed over Joab.  
 Then he went about through all Israel and came to Jerusalem.  
 5 And Joab gave the number of the enrollment of the people to David. And it happened that all Israel was one million one hundred thousand men drawing a sword, and in Judah were four hundred and seventy thousand men drawing a sword.  
 6 But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the word of the king was repulsive to Joab.  
 7 But this word was displeasing in the eyes of God, and he struck Israel.  
 8 Then David said to God, "I have sinned severely in that I have done this thing. But now, please forgive the sin of your servant, for I have been very foolish."  
 9 Then Yahweh spoke to Gad the seer of David, saying,  
 10 "Go, you must speak to David, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh: "Three choices I offer to you. Choose one of them for yourself that I will do to you.'"  
 11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says Yahweh: 'Choose for yourself:  
 12 whether three years of famine or three months of devastation by your enemies while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or three days of the sword of Yahweh, with disease in the land and the angel of Yahweh destroying throughout all the territory in Israel.' So now, see what word I should return to my sender."  
 13 Then David said to Gad, "I am very troubled. Let me into the hand of Yahweh,

because he *is* great in his compassion;  
but into the hand of man don't let me fall."

15 Then Yahweh sent a plague into Israel from the morning until the agreed time, and from the people from Dan to Beersheba, seventy thousand men died.

16 When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, Yahweh regretted about the evil, and he said to the angel who brought destruction among the people, "Enough, now relax your hand."

Now the angel of Yahweh *was* at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 David spoke to Yahweh when he saw the angel destroying among the people,

and he said,

"Look, I have sinned and I have done wrong, but these sheep, what did they do? Please let your hand be against me and against the house of my father."

18 Then Gad came to David on that same day and said to him, "Go up and erect an altar to Yahweh at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

19 So David went up according to the word of Gad, as Yahweh had commanded.

20 Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming over to him, so Araunah went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

21 Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"

David said,

"To buy from you the threshing floor, to build an altar to Yahweh

who brought a halt to the plague on the people."

22 Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer what *is* good in his eyes.

Look, here *are* the cattle for the burnt offering and the threshing sledge and the yokes of the oxen for the firewood.

23 All of this Araunah hereby gives to the king."

Then Araunah said to the king, "May Yahweh your God respond favorably for you."

24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will certainly buy it from you for a price; I don't want to offer to Yahweh my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

So David bought the threshing floor

and the cattle for fifty shekels of silver.

25 David built an altar to Yahweh there, and he offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

for his compassion is very great,  
but do not let me fall into the hand of a man."

14 So Yahweh sent a pestilence through Israel,

and seventy thousand men from Israel fell.

15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, and as *he was about* to destroy it,

Yahweh saw and was grieved on account of the calamity.

Then he said to the angel, the destroyer,

"*It is enough*; slacken your hand."

And the angel of Yahweh was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of Yahweh standing between earth and heaven, with his sword drawn in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 Then David said to God,

"Was it not I *who* gave a command to count the people?

Now I *am* he who has sinned, and I have certainly done wickedness, but these sheep, what have they done?

O Yahweh, my God, please let your hand be against me and against the house of my father,

but against your people, *let there be* no plague."

18 Now the angel of Yahweh had spoken to Gad to say to David that David should go up *and* erect an altar for Yahweh.

19 So David went up at the word of Gad

that he had spoken in the name of Yahweh.

20 Now Ornan was threshing wheat, and Ornan turned and saw the angel, and his four sons with him hid themselves.

21 Then David came to Ornan,

and Ornan looked and saw David.

And he went out from the threshing floor, and they bowed down to David, faces to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, "Please give me the place,

the threshing floor, that I might build an altar on it to Yahweh; at full price please give it to me,

that the plague against the people might be stopped."

23 And Ornan said to David, "Take *it* to yourself;

let my lord the king do what *is* good in his eyes.

See, I give the cattle for the burnt offerings and threshing sledges for the wood

and wheat for the grain offering—I give *it* all."

24 But King David said to Ornan, "No, for I will certainly buy *it* at full value; indeed, I will not take what is yours for Yahweh and offer burnt offerings for nothing."

25 So David gave to Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place.

26 Then David built an altar there to Yahweh, and he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and he called to Yahweh.

<p>Then Yahweh responded to <i>his</i> prayer for the land</p> <p>and brought the plague to a halt from upon Israel.</p>	<p>And he answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering.</p> <p>27 Then Yahweh commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath.</p> <p>28 At that time, when David saw that Yahweh answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.</p> <p>29 Now the tabernacle of Yahweh that Moses had made in the desert and the altar of burnt offering <i>were</i> at that time at the high place of Gibeon.</p> <p>30 But David was not able to go before it to seek God, for he was afraid on account of the sword of the angel of Yahweh.</p>
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## David Makes Preparations for the Construction of the Temple (c. 972 – c. 969t BC)

1 Chronicles 22

### Materials Needed for the Construction of the Temple

- 1 Then David said, “This will be the house of Yahweh God, and this altar of burnt offering for Israel.”
- 2 And David commanded to assemble the resident aliens who *were* in the land of Israel and appointed stone craftsmen to cut dressed stones to build the house of God.
- 3 And David provided much iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for the seams, and abundant copper *that* could not be weighed,
- 4 and cedar timbers without number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought abundant cedars to David.
- 5 Then David said, “Solomon my son *is* a boy and inexperienced, and the house built for Yahweh *must be* exceedingly great in fame and splendor throughout every land. I will make preparations for him.” So David provided abundant *materials* before he died.

### David’s Private Charge to Solomon

- 6 Then he called to Solomon his son and commanded him to build a house for Yahweh, the God of Israel.
- 7 And David said to Solomon his son, “I myself had in my heart to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God,
- 8 but it happened *that* the word of Yahweh *came* over me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have made much war; you shall not build a house for my name because you have shed much blood upon the ground before me.
- 9 Behold, a son shall be born to you; he himself will be a man of rest, and I will give rest to him from all his enemies all around, for his name will be Solomon, and peace and quietness I will give to Israel in his days.
- 10 He himself will build a house for my name, and he himself will be to me a son, and I *will be* to him as a father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.’
- 11 Now, my son, Yahweh will be with you, that you may succeed and build the house of Yahweh your God as he has spoken concerning you.
- 12 Only may Yahweh give to you understanding and insight that he might give you charge over Israel and the keeping of the law of Yahweh your God.
- 13 Then you will prosper if you take care to do the statutes and judgments which Yahweh commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and be courageous; fear not and do not be dismayed.
- 14 Now see, with great effort I have made provision for the house of Yahweh: 100,000 talents of gold, 1,000,000 talents of silver, and bronze and iron *that* cannot be weighed, for there is an abundance. Also timber and stone I have provided, but to these you should add.
- 15 And with you *there is* an abundance of craftsmen: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and everyone skilled in every *kind of* craftsmanship
- 16 with gold, silver, bronze, and iron without number. Arise and work! Yahweh will be with you!”

### David’s Charge to the Leaders of Israel

- 17 And David commanded all the commanders of Israel to help Solomon his son, *saying*,
- 18 “Is not Yahweh your God with you? And has he *not* given you rest all around? For he has put in my hand the inhabitants of the land, and the land is subdued before Yahweh and before his people.
- 19 Now set your heart and mind to seek Yahweh your Go, and arise and build the sanctuary of Yahweh God, that the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and the holy vessels of God might be brought into the house built for the name of Yahweh.

**Chronological Notes**

- 1) Merrill argues: “After the revolutions of both Absalom and Sheba it would have been reasonable for David to reassess his military situation against the possibility of similar uprisings or other emergencies.”<sup>1</sup> In support of this hypothesis is the fact that Joab and the army commanders were able to take over nine months to gather the population statistics (v. 8). This suggests a very peaceful condition in Israel that characterized David’s later reign but not his earlier reign.

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 272.