

12.36 Second Numbering; Midianites Slain (Numbers 26; 31)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *spoil*: the rewards of battle taken by the conqueror
- *atonement*: satisfaction made for the cleansing of the sins of people

Scripture: (NASB)

26:1 Then it came about after the plague, that the LORD spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, 2 “Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers’ households, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel.”. . .

Now the sons of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt *were*: 5 Reuben, Israel’s firstborn . . . and those who were numbered of them were 43,730. . . . 12 The sons of Simeon . . . 22,200. 15 The sons of Gad . . . 40,500. 19 The sons of Judah *were* Er and Onan, but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. 20 The sons of Judah . . . 76,500. 23 The sons of Issachar . . . 64,300. 26 The sons of Zebulun . . . 60,500.

28 The sons of Joseph according to their families: Manasseh and Ephraim. 29 The sons of Manasseh. . . . 33 Now Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but only daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 34 These are the families of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them were 52,700.

35 These are the sons of Ephraim . . . 32,500. These are the sons of Joseph according to their families. 38 The sons of Benjamin . . . 45,600. 42 These are the sons of Dan . . . 64,400. 44 The sons of Asher . . . 53,400. 48 The sons of Naphtali . . . 45,400. 51 These are those who were numbered of the sons of Israel, 601,730.

52 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 53 “Among these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To the larger *group* you shall increase their inheritance, and to the smaller *group* you shall diminish their inheritance. . . . 56 According to the selection by lot, their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller *groups*.”

57 These are those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon . . . of Kohath . . . of Merari. . . . 62 Those who were numbered of them were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward, for they were not numbered among the sons of Israel since no inheritance was given to them among the sons of Israel.

63 These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. 64 But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest. . . . And not a man was left of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

31:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people.” 3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD’s vengeance on Midian. 4 A thousand

from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.” 5 So there were furnished from the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. 6 Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war with them, and the holy vessels and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. 7 So they made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male. 8 They killed the kings of Midian along with the *rest of* their slain: . . . the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. 9 The sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods they plundered. 10 Then they burned all their cities where they lived and all their camps with fire. 11 They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of beast. 12 They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. 14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. 15 And Moses said to them, “Have you spared all the women? 16 Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord. 17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. 18 But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves. 19 And you, camp outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day. 20 You shall purify for yourselves every garment and every article of leather and all the work of goats’ hair, and all articles of wood.”

21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to battle, “This is the statute of the law which the Lord has commanded Moses: 22 only the gold and the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin and the lead, 23 everything that can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean, but it shall be purified with water for impurity. But whatever cannot stand the fire you shall pass through the water. 24 And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may enter the camp.”

25 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 26 “You and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers’ households of the congregation take a count of the booty that was captured, both of man and of animal; 27 and divide the booty between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation. 28 Levy a tax for the Lord from the men of war who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the persons and of the cattle and of the donkeys and of the sheep; 29 take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the Lord. 30 From the sons of Israel’s half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys and of the sheep, from all the animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.” 31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

32 Now the booty that remained from the spoil which the men of war had plundered was 675,000 sheep, 33 and 72,000 cattle, 34 and 61,000 donkeys, 35 and of human beings, of the women who had not known man intimately, all the persons were 32,000.

36 The half, the portion of those who went out to war, was as follows: the number of sheep was 337,500, 37 and the Lord’s levy of the sheep was 675; 38 and the cattle were 36,000, from which the Lord’s levy was 72; 39 and the donkeys were 30,500, from which the Lord’s levy was 61; 40 and the human beings were 16,000, from whom the Lord’s levy was 32 persons. 41 Moses gave the levy which was the Lord’s offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

42 As for the sons of Israel’s half, which Moses separated from the men who had gone to war-- 43 now the congregation’s half was 337,500 sheep, 44 and 36,000 cattle, 45 and 30,500 donkeys, 46 and the human beings were 16,000-- 47 and from the sons of Israel’s half, Moses took one drawn out of every fifty, both of man and of animals, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the Lord, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of

hundreds, approached Moses, 49 and they said to Moses, “Your servants have taken a census of men of war who are in our charge, and no man of us is missing. 50 So we have brought as an offering to the Lord what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord.” 51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of wrought articles. 52 All the gold of the offering which they offered up to the Lord, from the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels. 53 The men of war had taken booty, every man for himself. 54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the Lord.

Introduction/Review:

Just as Israel was getting closer and closer to their promised land, they messed up badly. Deceived and beguiled by Midianites and Moabites, they took to worshipping false gods, a worship that was a total slap in the face of God, who had carried them through difficult places and provided for their every need forty years. The plague that resulted killed 24,000 Israelites, perhaps the very last of those who were in the unbelieving generation banned from entering the land.

Story:

Second census

After the plague ended with the zealous action of Phinehas the priest, God ordered second census. The first census in which were counted 603,550 men able to go to war comes at the beginning of the book of Numbers. All these people had died. Now God ordered another census which counted 601,730 men able to go to war. This second census had all new names except for two. Who were those two men who did not die with the rest of the unbelieving Israelites? [Joshua and Caleb.]

If we check this chart [found below], we can see that five tribes lost population over the forty years while seven tribes gained more people than they had had previously. Not counting the Levites, there was a net loss of almost 2000 people. However, if we consider the population of the Levites, the net loss is only 820 people. That isn't much at all (>0.002) when one considers that the total population including women and children, was probably still around two million.

Count of soldiers

Why was a second census necessary? Two reasons are obvious: (1) The count of soldiers was necessary data when Israel was to fight against the Canaanite people, whose land they were conquering. The number of soldiers, almost 602,000, was a significant army. But “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD” (Proverbs 21:31).

Division of land

(2) The second reason why a census was necessary was because the land was to be divided according to the count of people within each tribe. The larger the population, the larger parcel of ground. Check the chart again. Which tribe would get the most land? [Judah, with 75,500 men.] Which tribe would get the smallest parcel of land? [Simeon, with 22,200 men.] Actually, Simeon's land ended up coming out of Judah's because Judah's portion was too large for them (Joshua 19:9). This was a fulfillment of Genesis 49:7 when Jacob predicted Simeon and Levi would be scattered within Israel.

Now, Moses had lived 120 years—40 in Pharaoh's palace; 40 in the wilderness taking care of Jethro's sheep; 40 leading the Israelites out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. It was near the time when he should die, but he had a few things yet to do.

Revenge against Midian

God said to Moses, “It's pay-back time. Fight against and destroy the Midianites because of their part in getting Israel to worship false gods. Afterward you will be gathered to your people—you will die.”

Moses gave God's command to the people and called for a thousand men from each of all the tribes. If there were twelve tribes, and one thousand came from each tribe, how many thousand men were to fight against Midian? [12,000.] Did Moses send all the available soldiers? Check the chart to see. [No. There were 601,730 available soldiers.]

Death of Balaam

Phinehas took the silver trumpets made to sound the alarm for war and went with the soldiers to battle. Israel had a great victory. They burned all the Midianite cities and killed all the men, including five kings of Midian. Another man was slain in this battle, a man who wanted money and would even do wrong to get it. Who do you think that man was? Yes, it was Balaam. If he had already received his payment for his wicked counsel, he didn't have those riches for long. My guess is that before he died, ✓he possessed his wealth from Midian and Moab for less than a month or two. Justice was completed.

Spoil from battle

After battle, Israel brought back lots of spoil—all the Midianite cattle and all their flocks and all their goods. They also brought back something that caused Moses great anger—all the women and children. When Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet the army outside the camp, Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women? These are the ones who caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord so that the plague slew many among the congregation of the Lord."

So Moses saved the girls to be used as servants (and wives). Before they could come into the camp, however, all the soldiers and the captives had to purify themselves by washing their bodies and all garments, including the clothes they had taken as spoil, and anything made of leather, goats' hair, or wood." Metals like gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead had to be purified by fire. The purification process took a whole week. When it was completed, the people and purified articles could come back home to their tents.

Dividing the spoil

Instruction about dividing the spoil was specific: Half went to the soldiers, and half went to the congregation that had stayed home. One out of every 500 captives, cattle, donkeys, and sheep went to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the Lord. From the congregation's spoil, one out of every fifty of the people, cattle, donkeys, and of the sheep went to the Levites.

The spoil was abundant: 675,000 sheep, 2,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 people.

Offering for atonement

The captains of the soldiers checked to see how many men they had lost in the battle. Their answer? Absolutely no one of Israel had died in battle! In thanks to God and to make atonement for themselves,* they brought an offering to the Lord from what each man found—articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces. The total weight of all the gold brought by the captains of thousands and of hundreds was 16,750 shekels. in today's market (March 2020), that gold (24K) would be worth over \$11 million! (16,750 shekels = 419 pounds = 16 oz. = 6700 ounces x \$1674.19/ounce = \$11, 217,039.50; <http://goldpricez.com/calculate/gold-rates>).

So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds and brought it to the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the Lord.

*"[N]ot only this offering was brought as a token of gratitude and thankfulness, for sparing of everyone of their lives, and giving them such success and victory, and so large a spoil of the enemy; but also to expiate any sins they had been guilty of in going out, and coming in, and particularly for sparing the women they should have put to death" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/numbers-31-50.html>)..

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Activities:

- Play dough: bracelets; rings; necklaces;
- Snack: Something golden like Golden Oreo[®] Cakes, Goldfish[®], Malt O Meal Golden Puffs[®] cereal.
- For a math lesson, figure how much of the spoil was kept by the soldiers and by the congregation, and how much was given to Eleazar and to the Levites. The answers are given in Numbers 31:36–47.
- Review questions: (Game: With the understanding that the jewelry will be returned to its owner, let a student who answers a question correctly put on a piece of gold-colored jewelry. Have some masculine chains available for the boys.)
 1. Give one reason why God ordered a census. [To count the soldiers; to apportion the land.]
 2. Roughly how many soldiers were in Israel? [601,000 to 602,000.]
 3. What did the census have to do with dividing the land? Who would get larger or smaller portions? [Tribes with larger census numbers would get larger portions; smaller populations would get less land.]
 4. Against whom did God want Israel to take revenge? [Midian.]
 5. Why did God want Israel to take revenge on Midian? [Because they had caused Israel to sin and be destroyed by the plague.]
 6. How many soldiers came from each tribe to battle? [One thousand per tribe; 12,000 in all.]
 7. Who went to war with the Israelite troops? Hint: he brought the silver trumpets played by priests to sound an alarm. [Phinehas.]
 8. What notable man who gave such bad advice died in the war with Midian? [Balaam.]
 9. How many Israelites were killed in the war with Midian? [Zero.]
 10. What did the captains of the army give as thanks and an atonement? [Gold jewelry.]

Memory Verse[s]:

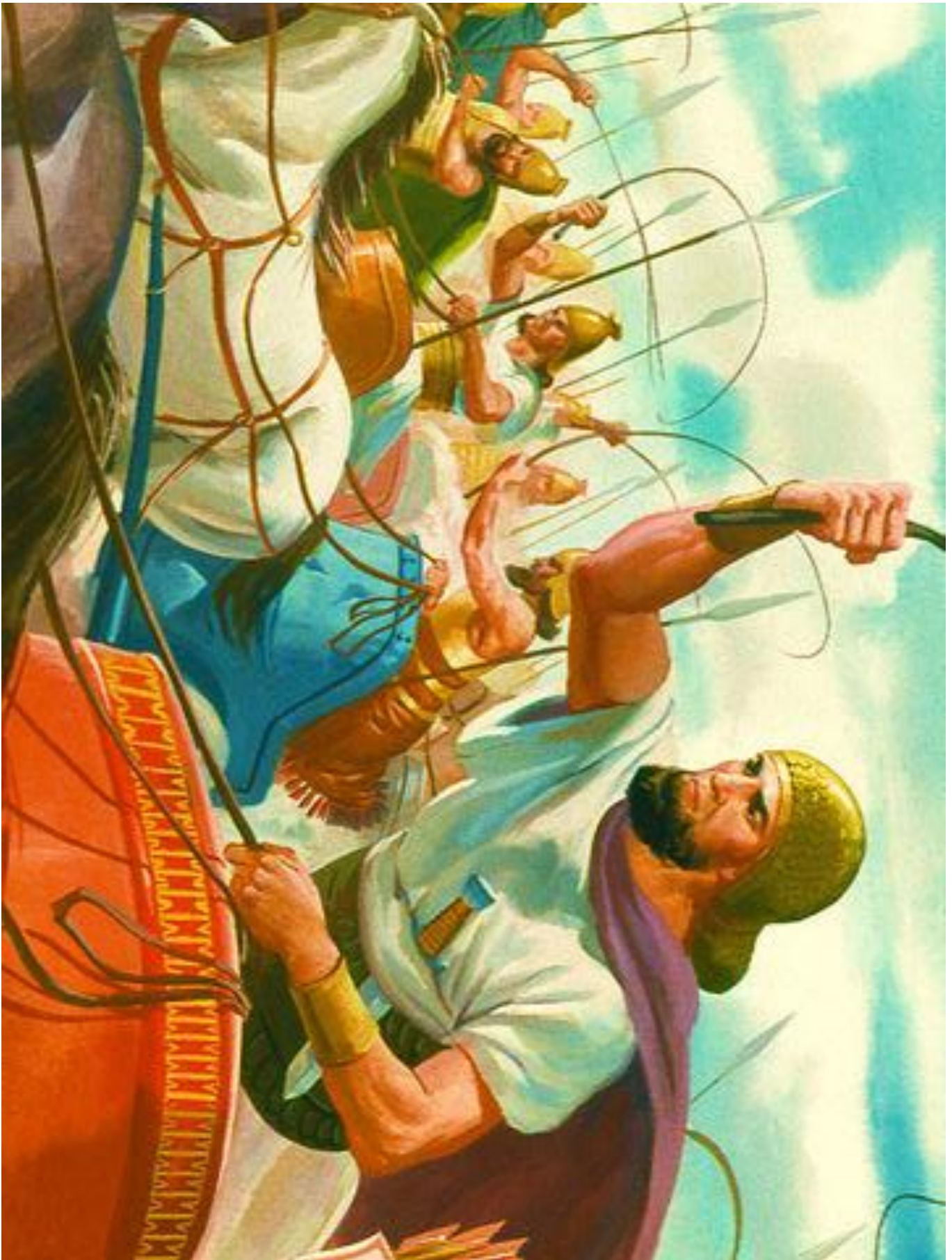
- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the “Exodus 20:1–17” song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the “Lessons” and “Songs” pages at teachingthebibletochildren.org. “Stop! It’s the Law,” a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same “Songs” page.

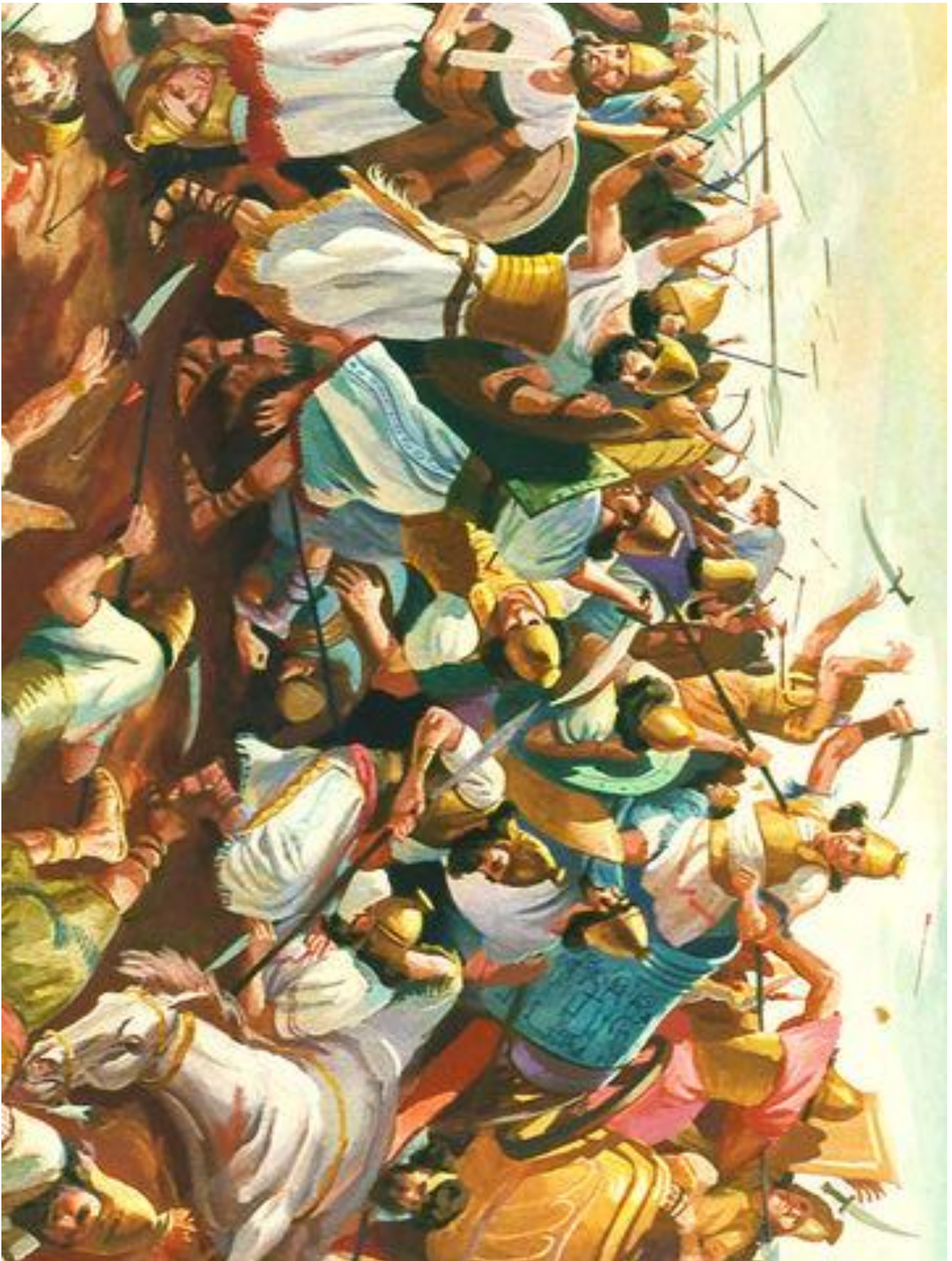
Handwork:

- Make a golden bracelet out of a paper towel core. Extensive instructions for one can be found at <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/ancient-egyptian-bracelet.html>, but perhaps construction could be simplified by spray painting the core prior to class and having students glue on jewels or other decorations.

spoil

atonement





Censuses of Israel

Tribe	1st Census	2nd Census	Difference
-Reuben	46,500	43,730	-2,770
-Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100
-Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150
+Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900
+Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900
+Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100
-Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000
+Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500
+Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200
+Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700
+Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900
-Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8,000
TOTALS	603,550	601,730	-1,820
+Levi	22,000	23,000	1,000
Grand Total	625,550	624,730	-820