

surplus of females in that nation. A great multitude of females over and above that of males, will account for the peculiar passage of Scripture to which I will now refer you. It will be found in the 3rd chapter of Numbers. I have not time to turn to it and read it, but I will quote you the substance thereof. Moses and Aaron were commanded to number all the males in Israel from a month old and upward that were called the firstborn among the various tribes. Now the firstborn does not mean the oldest male child of the first wife, for sometimes the first wife has no children, but it means the firstborn son that is born to the father whether by the first wife, or second, or third, or any number of wives that he may have; the term firstborn pertains to the first male child that is born to the father. So it was accounted to Jacob's family of twelve sons. Reuben only was called the firstborn of Israel until he lost his birthright, through transgression, which, we are told in the 5th chapter of first Chronicles, was taken from him and given to one of the sons of Joseph. But so far as age or birth was concerned, Reuben was the firstborn; and had it not been for his transgression, he would have inherited a double portion of his father's substance, for that was the law in ancient times.

Now how many of the firstborn could be found in the midst of Israel? We are told that there were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three firstborn males among the eleven tribes: the tribe of Levi was not reckoned at that time, but all the male members of the tribe of Levi, from a month old and upwards was twenty-two thousand souls. Now if the tribe of Levi numbered in proportion to the other eleven tribes, the number of firstborn males in all the twelve tribes would probably

amount to between twenty-four and twenty-five thousand souls, it could not have run over that. There might have been some of the firstborn who were dead, which would make a few more families: then there might have been other families who never had any male children, which would increase the families still more. Supposing then, in order to give all the advantages possible, and to make as many families as we possibly can consistently, that we say, instead of twenty-five thousand firstborn in the midst of all Israel, that there were thirty thousand; that is allowing for all these contingencies I have named, where families have no males, and those families that have male children under a month old which were not reckoned, and those families which might have had firstborn male children who died and the number might possibly be increased to four or five thousand more, making the total number of families about thirty-thousand.

Thus we see that the number of firstborn males from a month old or upwards give us a clue to the number of families; we may not be able to determine the number exactly, but these data will enable us to approximate very closely. It is generally admitted, that Israel, at that time, numbered twenty-five hundred thousand souls. There might have been a variation from this of a few thousand souls, but according to the Scriptural and all other evidences that can be gleaned, the number above referred to is about the number of souls that existed in Israel at that time. Among that twenty-five hundred thousand souls then, there were thirty-thousand families. How many were there in a family? All that you have to do to tell how many there were in a family, is to divide twenty-five hundred thousand by