

Numbers 2 Commentary

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Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS		
"Wilderness Wandering"		
WALKING Numbers 1-12	WANDERING Numbers 13-25	WAITING Numbers 26-36

Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	Aaron & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai Mt Sinai			To Moab Mt Hor			At Moab Mt Nebo		
En Route to Kadesh (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere (Wilderness)			En Route to Canaan (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: Moses								

Numbers 2:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

GOD STILL SPEAKS HIS WILL THROUGH HIS WORD!

Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying - Notice two words (**spoke** and **saying**) emphasize Jehovah audibly spoke with His voice to Moses.

This formula **the LORD spoke to Moses** is repeated in Numbers - Beloved as frequent as this phrase is in the OT, it pales in comparison to our continual access to God's throne room through Christ in prayer and through His Word. In theory, it should be said of you and I each day that Jehovah spoke to _____. (Put your name in that blank). No, He won't speak audibly, but if you confess your sins and submit yourself to Him, seeking to hear from Him in His Word, you will "hear" from Him through His Word and His Spirit! (cf Ps 145:18⁺, Pr 8:17, Isa 55:6, Mt 6:33⁺)

Num. 1:1; Num. 2:1; Num. 3:5; Num. 3:11; Num. 3:14; Num. 3:44; Num. 4:1; Num. 4:17; Num. 4:21; Num. 5:1; Num. 5:5; Num. 5:11; Num. 6:1; Num. 6:22; Num. 7:4; Num. 8:1; Num. 8:5; Num. 8:23; Num. 9:1; Num. 9:9; Num. 13:1; Num. 14:26; Num. 15:1; Num. 15:17; Num. 16:20; Num. 16:23; Num. 16:36; Num. 16:44; Num. 17:1; Num. 18:25; Num. 19:1; Num. 20:7; Num. 20:23; Num. 25:10; Num. 25:16; Num. 26:1; Num. 26:52; Num. 27:6; Num. 28:1; Num. 31:1; Num. 31:25; Num. 33:50; Num. 34:1; Num. 34:16; Num. 35:1; Num. 35:9;

Irving Jensen - A mass of people, unordered, invites confusion and riot. Jesus honored order when He prepared to feed over five thousand people at one time. He commanded them to "sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties" (Mark 6:39, 40). How much more the need for order and efficiency with over two million Israelites in the wilderness!

Wiersbe - When the motions of the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle announced that the camp would move, it would have been difficult if not impossible to break camp and start the march quickly and efficiently without some kind of order in the camp. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) is an admonition for God's people in every age, "for God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor 14:33). (The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

Numbers 2:2 "The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance.

BGT Numbers 2:2 νθρωπος χ μενος α το κατ τγμα κατ σημ ας κατ ο κους πατρι ν α τ ν παρεμβαλ τωσαν ο υ ο Ισραηλ ναντ οι κ κλ τ ς σκην ς το μαρτυρ ου παρεμβαλο σιν ο υ ο Ισραηλ

NET Numbers 2:2 "Every one of the Israelites must camp under his standard with the emblems of his family; they must camp at some distance around the tent of meeting.

NLT Numbers 2:2 "When the Israelites set up camp, each tribe will be assigned its own area. The tribal divisions will camp beneath their family banners on all four sides of the Tabernacle, but at some distance from it.

ESV Numbers 2:2 "The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side.

NIV Numbers 2:2 "The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family."

KJV Numbers 2:2 Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.

YLT Numbers 2:2 'Each by his standard, with ensigns of the house of their fathers, do the sons of Israel encamp; over-against round about the tent of meeting they encamp.'

- **shall camp:** Nu 2:3,10 1:52 10:14,18,22,25
- **the banners of their fathers' households:** Isa 11:10-12 18:3 Zec 9:16
- **far off** (KJV): Heb. over against, Jos 3:4
- **around the tent:** Nu 1:50,53 Ps 76:11 Isa 12:6 Eze 43:7 1Co 14:33,40 Php 1:27 Col 2:19 Rev 4:2-5
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THE ARRANGEMENT OF ISRAEL'S CAMP

GOD'S DIRECTIONS FOR CAMPING AND MARCHING

Gene Getz - The opening chapters of Numbers focus primarily on organization and administration. The children of Israel were to worship according to the will of God, travel in an orderly fashion, and constantly stay ready for warfare. (Life Essentials)

The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' households- God is not a God of confusion but order and here we see His instructions for the military encampment (they are not camping in a park!) and in Nu 10:14-25 He gives the order in which they are to march. Note that ONE standard identified each group of THREE tribes, thus there were four standards surrounding the Tabernacle (cf Ezekiel 1:10+, Rev 4:7+).

Guzik - Israel had been on this Exodus journey for more than a year, and had assembled just about any way they had pleased. But now, ready to enter into the Promised Land, they had to take the next step in organization: Ordering themselves.

THOUGHT - O, for His **good soldiers** (2 Ti 2:3-4+) to have ears to hear and hearts to obey His instructions to us as to how we are to march out against our inveterate deadly enemies "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:12+, see "**Good Soldier of Christ**")

Standard (01714)(degel) is a masculine noun used almost exclusively in Numbers and which denotes a flag, a banner, or a standard which identified the various tribes of Israel (Nu 1:52; 2:2). It represented the tribe to which a group belonged (Nu 2:3, 10). It depicted the attitude and intent of the lover toward his bride (Song 2:4). "He has brought me to his banquet hall, And his **banner** over me is love." The love of the maiden for the man was the rallying point of her life.

Keil and Delitzsch - "Neither the Mosaic law, nor the Old Testament generally gives us any intimation as to the form or character of the standard (degheh). According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a **lion**, that of Reuben the likeness of a **aman**, or of a man's head, that of Ephraim the figure of an **ox**, and that of Dan the figure of an **eagle**; so that the four living creatures united in the

cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards."

Ezekiel 1:10+ As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a **aman**; all four had the face of a **lion** on the right and the face of a bull (**ox**) on the left, and all four had the face of an **eagle**.

Degel - 14x in 14v - banner(1), standard(10), standards(3). Num. 1:52; Num. 2:2; Num. 2:3; Num. 2:10; Num. 2:17; Num. 2:18; Num. 2:25; Num. 2:31; Num. 2:34; Num. 10:14; Num. 10:18; Num. 10:22; Num. 10:25; Song. 2:4

Banners (0226) ('**oth**) means a sign and most of the eighty occurrences of 'ôt refer to "miraculous signs." All the plagues on the Egyptians are called "signs." Clearly in this context it means an ensign, a standard, a flag, that marked each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Oth in Numbers - Num. 2:2; Num. 14:11; Num. 14:22; Num. 16:38; Num. 17:10;

NLT Study Bible - The use of such tribal symbols or battle flags finds an analogy in modern bedouin life, where the divisions of tribe, clan, and family have long held great importance.

They shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance- God in the center when camped or marching (Nu 2:31, 34), good advice for all God's soldiers! The Hebrew word for camp is **chanah** meaning to decline, pitch one's tent, encamp. The **Lxx** uses the verb **paremballo** meaning literally to throw up and so to enclose an object or area on all sides. **Paremballo** was actually a military technical term expressing preparations to besiege a city (Lk 19:43+), so even the **camp** was in a sense prepared for war by encircling the Tabernacle of God, a good position to assume when preparing for war (then and now beloved - Jehovah in our midst - see passage below). One is reminded of the old westerns when a wagon train was attacked by Indians and took up position to fight by encircling the wagons. NET Note adds that **shall camp** (must camp) is in "The imperfect tense is to be taken in the nuance of instruction." Note the phrase **at a distance** ("some distance" NIV, NET) with the tribe of Levi serving as guardians to prevent defilement of the sacred space and to keep anyone from experiencing God's punishment from coming too close to the tabernacle.

Deut 7:21 "You shall not dread them (YOUR ENEMIES), for (TERM OF EXPLANATION) **the LORD your God is in your midst**, a great and awesome God.

THOUGHT - Websters says "dread" usually adds the idea of intense reluctance to face or meet a person or situation and suggests aversion as well as anxiety. Moses is telling Israel "Don't let your knees start knocking when you see the giants". God is greater & more awesome than any obstacle. This is good advice for us all in regard to addressing and defeating any of the giants (giant problems, giant obstacles, giant disappointments, giant losses, etc) in the land where God has brought us. None of these issues He allows in our life are TOO BIG for God. So don't dread them. (See How to Handle Fear)

Zeph 3:17+ "**The LORD your God is in your midst**, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

The tent of meeting - (See [note](#) below) This phrase is used 146x in 140v in the OT and is first used in Ex 27:21+.

Tent of Meeting 56x in 54v in Numbers - Num. 1:1; Num. 2:2; Num. 2:17; Num. 3:7; Num. 3:8; Num. 3:25; Num. 3:38; Num. 4:3; Num. 4:4; Num. 4:15; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:25; Num. 4:28; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:31; Num. 4:33; Num. 4:35; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:39; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:43; Num. 4:47; Num. 6:10; Num. 6:13; Num. 6:18; Num. 7:5; Num. 7:89; Num. 8:9; Num. 8:15; Num. 8:19; Num. 8:22; Num. 8:24; Num. 8:26; Num. 10:3; Num. 11:16; Num. 12:4; Num. 14:10; Num. 16:18; Num. 16:19; Num. 16:42; Num. 16:43; Num. 16:50; Num. 17:4; Num. 18:4; Num. 18:6; Num. 18:21; Num. 18:22; Num. 18:23; Num. 18:31; Num. 19:4; Num. 20:6; Num. 25:6; Num. 27:2; Num. 31:54;

Meeting (appointed times, festival, feast, meeting) (04150) (**moed** from the verb **ya'ad** meaning to appoint or fix) can refer to either a time or place of meeting (eg, in "tent of meeting"). Appointed sign, appointed time, appointed season, place of assembly, set feast. An appointed meeting time in general (Gen. 18:14; Ex. 13:10). **Moed** often designates a determined time or place without any regard for the purpose. Since the Jewish festivals occurred at regular intervals, this word becomes closely identified with them. Thus **moed** is a common term for the worshiping assembly of God's people. A specific appointed time, usually for a sacred feast or festival (Hos. 9:5; 12:9). **Moed** as in the present context is used of those places where God's people were to focus on God and their relationship with Him, which would include: the tent of meeting (Ex. 33:7); the Temple (Lam. 2:6); the synagogues (Ps. 74:8).

Testimony, the Hebrew noun **moed**, is translated **marturion/martyrion** (source of English "**martyr**") means evidence, proof, the content of what a witness tells. In the context of the "tabernacle of testimony" God Himself

is the PERFECT WITNESS! **Marturion** is the declaration of facts which confirms or makes something known, which is apropos for Jehovah made His will known to Moses in the Tent of Meeting! **Testimony** (marturion) means just that—a testimony or witness. A person can only testify to what he himself has seen or heard or experienced. A witness in a courtroom is to report only what he knows objectively, factually, and personally. He is not to speculate, guess, or deduce. Jehovah is Truth, so whatever He says is dependable and true.

Marturion/martyrion in Numbers - Num. 1:1; Num. 1:50; Num. 1:53; Num. 2:2; Num. 2:17; Num. 3:7; Num. 3:8; Num. 3:10; Num. 3:25; Num. 3:38; Num. 4:3; Num. 4:4; Num. 4:5; Num. 4:15; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:25; Num. 4:26; Num. 4:28; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:31; Num. 4:33; Num. 4:35; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:39; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:43; Num. 4:47; Num. 5:17; Num. 6:10; Num. 6:13; Num. 6:18; Num. 7:5; Num. 7:89; Num. 8:9; Num. 8:15; Num. 8:19; Num. 8:22; Num. 8:24; Num. 8:26; Num. 9:15; Num. 10:3; Num. 10:11; Num. 11:16; Num. 12:4; Num. 12:5; Num. 14:10; Num. 16:18; Num. 16:19; Num. 16:42; Num. 16:43; Num. 16:50; Num. 17:4; Num. 17:7; Num. 17:8; Num. 17:10; Num. 18:2; Num. 18:4; Num. 18:6; Num. 18:21; Num. 18:22; Num. 18:23; Num. 18:31; Num. 19:4; Num. 20:6; Num. 25:6; Num. 27:2; Num. 31:54

Mishkan as it related to God's Dwelling place had at least two names - (1) **Tent of meeting** - First Chronicles we read "they ministered with song before the **tabernacle** (Lxx = **skene** = generally used to describe a transitory, movable lodging place for nomads, pilgrims, etc) of the tent (Heb = ohel) of meeting (See **discussion** of "tent of meeting"), until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order." (2) **Tent of Testimony** - (Ex. 38:21; Nu 9:15) because the the Ten Commandments (God's "Testimony") were kept in the Holy of Holies. Of note is that once Solomon's Temple was finished, the word mishkan was almost never used of that structure.

Wiersbe - With the pillar of cloud hovering over the center of the camp by day and ablaze with fire at night (**ED**: SEE **Shekinah glory cloud**), and the tents of the various tribes arranged in their assigned places, the camp of Israel must have been an awesome sight. When the Prophet Balaam looked at the camp from the mountain heights, he said, "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters" (Nu 24:5-6NIV). (Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

NET Note on at a distance - The Hebrew expression מִנְּקֵדָה (minneged) means "from before" or "opposite; facing" and "at some distance" or "away from the front of." The Israelites **were camping as a military camp**, each tribe with the standards and emblems of the family. The standard was the symbol fastened to the end of a pole and carried to battle. It served to rally the tribe to the battle. The Bible nowhere describes these, although the serpent emblem of Numbers 21:8–9+ may give a clue. But they probably did not have shapes of animals in view of the prohibition in the Decalogue. The standards may have been smaller for the families than the ones for the tribes. See further K. A. Kitchen, "**Some Egyptian Background to the Old Testament**," **TynBul 5 1960**; and T. W. Mann, Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Tradition, 169–73. (The Egyptian army from approximately this same era camped in a similar defensive formation to protect the sacred objects that accompanied their field campaigns).

Nelson Study Bible - None dared draw too close to the tabernacle, so that God's holiness might be maintained (see Isa. 6:1-5). In contrast, a person may come very close to Jesus. This is not because Jesus as God is any less holy, but because He has come so very near to us in order to save us.

NLT Study Bible.The tribes camped around the sanctuary at a safe distance (cp. Josh 3:4 = "However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.") that respected the gap between God's holiness and the non-Levitical tribes.

Young's literal is "**do the sons of Israel encamp; over-against round about**" - The **Lxx** uses the word enantio which literally mean opposite or , over against the Tabernacle, Liddell-Scott adding the idea of " fronting, face to face." The point is that Jehovah as to be their FOCUS.

THOUGHT - Does this not remind us of our charge in the NT (even as we too are always prepared for spiritual warfare) to keep " fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2+) Paul gives a similar command to "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:2-3+)

Life Application Study Bible - The nation of Israel was organized according to tribes for several reasons. (1) It was an effective way to manage and govern a large group. (2) It made dividing the Promised Land easier. (3) It was part of their culture and heritage (people were not known by a last name, but by their family, clan, and tribe). (4) It made it easier to keep detailed genealogies, and genealogies were the only way to prove membership in God's chosen nation. (5) It made travel much more efficient. The people followed the tribe's standard (a kind of flag) and thus stayed together and kept from getting lost.

Constable - "The Egyptians characteristically placed the tent of the king, his generals, and officers at the center of a large army camp, but for the Israelites another tent was central: the sanctuary in which it placed God to dwell among his people. From him proceeds the power to save and to defend, and from this tent in the middle he made known his ever-saving will." (Quoting B. Maarsingh, Numbers: a practical commentary)

Constable - "This picture of the organization of Israel in camp is an expression of the author's understanding of the theology of the divine presence. There are barriers which divide a holy God from a fallible Israel. The structure of the tent itself and the construction of the sophisticated priestly hierarchy has the effect, at least potentially, of emphasizing the difference and distance between man and God. This is valuable to theology as a perspective, but requires the compensating search for nearness and presence. The . . . author sought to affirm this in and through his insistence that God is to be found, tabernacled among his people, at the center of their life as a community." (Quoting Budd)

George Bush - The former order respecting the mustering was given to Moses alone; the present respecting the arrangement of the camp is given to both **Moses and Aaron**. The typical bearings of this arrangement had a more important reference to the spiritual order of the church, and therefore Aaron, the high priest, has a prominent part assigned him in the transaction. Moses represents that part of the economy which was more distinctively secular. ([Numbers 2](#))

Brian Bell - Tell me this book won't apply to us: By its end we will cover 38 years of... "grumbling & judgement, sinning & punishment, repenting & forgiveness, warring & deliverance, attitudes of ingratitude, self-absorption, fear & desperation." Where are you in your spiritual journey? At the base of Sinai marveling at God's holiness & soaking in His word? Are you perched on the edge of the Promise Land, eager to push ahead & take possession of all God has promised you? Maybe you're in some Wandering times, taking the long way home, the hard way to God; the trip lengthened by your disobedience or desire for something besides God? Good news: God has signed on for your whole trip! He doesn't abandon us just because we wander. He's with us in our wanderings: guiding, prompting, disciplining, sustaining, forgiving, & renewing us. What seems like aimless wanderings to us has purpose & direction if God is in it. Where are you in your spiritual journey? - Sitting under Sinai? Poised at the Promise Land? Or Wandering in the Wilderness? Do you sense that God is with you on the journey? What evidence do you have of His presence? Deut.31:6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE STANDARDS OF ISRAEL Numbers 2

The hosts of Israel were divided by Jehovah into four camps, and every camp had its own standard. The order in which they were to march when the pillar of cloud moved was also distinctly specified by the Lord. This arrangement has doubtless a deeply moral significance. The order was neither by birth nor according to numbers. Judah, who went first, was the fourth son of Jacob, and the camp that was to go last was the second largest of all. Just as all the vessels and sacrifices were full of spiritual meaning, so the various positions in the grand march of obedience to the call of God has likewise its spiritual lessons for us who are pilgrims and sojourners with Him. Perhaps the meaning of the names of the different camps and their moral connection with one another will afford us a clue into a truth, which to us may be profitable. The—

1. Standard of Judah. Judah went first (Nu 2:3–9). Judah means "Praise the Lord." It is surely meet that the praising camp should lead the way. Praise is perhaps the first sign of a soul truly right with God. It is only when we have apprehended our own needy and guilty state, and by faith laid hold on the mercy and all-sufficiency of Christ that we can praise the Lord with a sincere heart. Can we ever make progress in the Divine life if we have not first of all taken our stand beneath the banner of praise? Judah was made head of his brethren, and from him kings were to descend (Gen. 49:8–10). Praising Christians will always be princes among the people. The sceptre of power shall not depart from them. Praise ye the Lord.

2. Standard of Reuben. This camp came immediately after Judah. Reuben means, "Behold a son." Behold one in the full enjoyment of sonship. Reuben as a son sought to save the life of Joseph (Gen. 37:21), and offered his two sons as security for Benjamin. After praise comes the testimony of true sonship, "Behold a son." Who will believe that we are the sons of God if our lives are not bright with His praise? If the spirit of praise and adoration fills your heart, then may you expect others to take knowledge, saying, "Behold a son." Moreover, the great and blessed privileges of sonship can only be entered into and enjoyed by a thankful, trusting heart. Begin to praise and your testimony as a son will be felt and acknowledged by others. It becometh the sons of God to shout for joy.

3. Standard of Ephraim (Nu 2:18–24). Ephraim means "double fruitfulness." Abundant fruit is sure to come after praise and the perfect life of sonship. We praise not the Lord because we are not fruitful, instead of praising Him that we may be made fruitful. Under Jehoshaphat the people of Judah "began to sing and to praise," then the Lord set ambushments and gave them the victory (2 Chr 20:22). In our unbelief we will not bless the Lord until we see, although the Lord has said, "Believe, and thou shalt see." But

the way into “double fruitfulness” lies through the full appreciation of our privileges as the sons of God. The branch must receive from the vine a branch’s portion. Fruitfulness always implies fullness.

4. Standard of Dan (Nu 2:25–31). The meaning of Dan is judging. A judge is one seated in authority. The camp of Dan “shall go hindmost” (v. 31). The privilege of judging comes last of all. Is it not written that “the saints shall judge the world?” Are they not to “reign with Christ a thousand years?” Are we not to be made kings as well as priests unto God? And is it not said that “we shall reign on the earth? Yes, after Ephraim comes Dan, after fruitfulness comes exaltation and reward (Luke 19:17).

1. As SINNERS. Praise Him for the great things He hath done for us.
2. As SONS. Receive the great things He is offering to us.
3. As SERVANTS. Be fruitful in the work He has given us.
4. As JUDGES. Expect the honour promised us.

These four standards are also suggestive of—

1. Christ’s birth, with its angelic songs.
2. Christ’s life, “Behold the Man.”
3. Christ’s death and resurrection. Double fruitfulness.
4. Christ’s coming again. Judging His people.

R C Sproul - Immanuel: God With Us (See study of Immanuel-Emmanuel)

“The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family.” [Num. 2:2]

According to Numbers 2 and 3, God arranged the Israelite camp in a square with three tribes on each side. The central tribe on the east was Judah, on the south, Reuben, on the west, Ephraim, and on the north, Dan. This was an immense outer square, set back some distance from the tabernacle.

Forming an inner square immediately around the tabernacle were the Levites, also separated into four groups. On the east side, in front of the tabernacle gate, were the Aaronic priests. On the south side were the Kohathites, on the west, the Gershonites, and on the north, the Merarites.

This configuration had a number of meanings. Some scholars have pointed out that the symbol of Judah was a lion, that of Reuben was a man, that of Ephraim was an ox, and that of Dan was an eagle. These are the four faces of the cherubim who guard God’s throne on its four sides (Ezek. 1:5–23; Rev. 4:6–9). Thus, the nation of Israel was functioning as a guard for God’s holiness, just as Adam was supposed to guard the original garden of Eden.

Since the tabernacle faced the east, in order to come into the tabernacle a person had to move through the encampment of the Aaronic priests. The priests were the mediators who gave human access to God. A stranger would also have to come through the kingly tribe of Judah to approach the tabernacle.

Perhaps most important, though, was the symbolic fact that God was in their midst, right in the center of the camp. The word Immanuel means “God with us,” and that was the prophetic name Jesus bore during his incarnation. God was Immanuel to Israel in the wilderness. His throne, his palace, his tent of meeting, was central in the society he created. The tabernacle was not just one institution among many, side by side with state, school, and business. It certainly was not peripheral to society as is the case today. Rather, God’s meeting house was the highest of all the tents—30 feet high—and positioned in the center.

There was a time when towns and cities were built with the church building on a hill in the center of town with a high steeple. It was located there for biblical and strategic purposes. In our day we need to recover that vision of the centrality of God’s presence.

Coram Deo (BEFORE THE FACE OF GOD) - How can the church become central in society once again? Read Mark 10:42–45, and consider what it means in relation to this question. What specific things can your local church do to acquire influence and spiritual dominion over the place where you live?

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Numbers 2:2–34

The Children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard. (R.V.)

Our God is a God of order; and it was needful for the order of the camp, whether at rest or on the march, that each man should know his place, and keep to it. But though there were different standards and positions, there was one center, the ark, and one host of redeemed men.

Each believer has an appointed place in the great army of God. It is indicated by the voice of God, and by the circumstances of our life; and it should be jealously retained. Repeatedly the Apostle bade his converts abide in the calling wherein they were called. Yours may be towards the bleak north of difficulty, or the warm south of privilege — in the home, the country parish, or the difficult foreign post. But, on the whole, you should stay where you are; unless the Captain of our salvation moves you by some unmistakable indication of his will. The apostle Paul ever lived in such dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance, and for the unfolding of the Divine purpose, that from some apparently trivial circumstance he would “gather” the movements of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And interval there was none between his apprehension of the Divine purpose and his endeavor to strike his tent and follow wherever it might lead (Acts 16:6–7).

The main point with us all is to face the ark, to which the doors of all the tents looked, so that we may ever catch the first symptom of the movement of the cloud. On the whole, we do best to pitch and fight under our own standards. There is a closer bond of brotherhood possible between those who think alike. But whilst we are positive in what we affirm for ourselves, let us not deny that other standards represent necessary aspects of the common faith.

Question: [What was the tent of meeting?](#)

Answer: The phrase **tent of meeting** is used in the Old Testament, specifically in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as the name of a place where God would meet with His people, Israel. Usually, the “**tent of meeting**” was used as another name for the **Tabernacle of Moses**. However, before the **tabernacle** was constructed, God met with Moses in a temporary **tent of meeting**: “Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘**tent of meeting**.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the **tent of meeting** outside the camp. . . . As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses” (Exodus 33:7, 9). The fact that Moses set up the **tent of meeting outside of the camp** underscored that the people had broken fellowship with God at Sinai when they had made the golden calf (see Exodus 33:3). After the tabernacle was built, Moses no longer needed his temporary tent, and the term **tent of meeting** began to be applied to the **tabernacle**.

In the Law that God gave Moses, God provided specific instructions to build a place of worship (Exodus 25—27). This “tent of meeting” or tabernacle could be taken up and moved each time they changed locations while wandering in the wilderness. The word tabernacle is an English rendition of the Hebrew word *miskan*, or “dwelling place.” The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy items that the Israelites were instructed to use in the worship of and sacrifice to Yahweh.

Interestingly, the word tent or tabernacle is also used in the New Testament to draw profound spiritual conclusions about salvation. Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews make a distinction between a heavenly tent and an earthly tent, between what was “built by human hands” and what is “not part of this creation” (2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11). Hebrews 9:1–10 describes the earthly tabernacle, or “tent of meeting,” as a place into which the priests would go to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Then, in verse 11, Christ is shown to be a better “high priest” who entered once through the “greater and more perfect tent,” referring to His body, to offer a sacrifice that would satisfy the wrath of God completely, for all time. This refers to His blood shed on the cross. The point of the passage is to show how, if the blood of animals could temporarily cleanse worshipers of the guilt of sin, the perfect blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, would cleanse His followers perfectly—that is, eternally—of their sins.

In Hebrews 10:14⁺, the writer says that Jesus has “**perfected forever those who are being** (ED: [present tense](#) in divine passive = continually being = A PROCESS) **sanctified**.” This verse expresses a spiritual paradox. By entering the “tent of meeting,” which was His own body, and offering up His own blood, Christ “perfected forever” those who have faith in Him. And the result of belief in Christ is sanctification, a continual upward spiral of holiness and closeness to God, as the Holy Spirit performs His work within Christ’s followers. In this way, we are eternally “perfect” because of the preciousness of Christ’s blood applied to our lives (ED: OUR ETERNAL POSITION IN CHRIST = “POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION” - DESCRIBED IN Hebrews 10:12⁺ WHERE SANCTIFIED IS [perfect tense](#) = PAST COMPLETED ACTION, ONGOING EFFECT), yet at the same time we are “being sanctified” (divine passive) by the Holy Spirit Who indwells us and changes us into the image of Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9⁺; Romans 8:29⁺; ED: cf 2 Cor 3:18⁺).

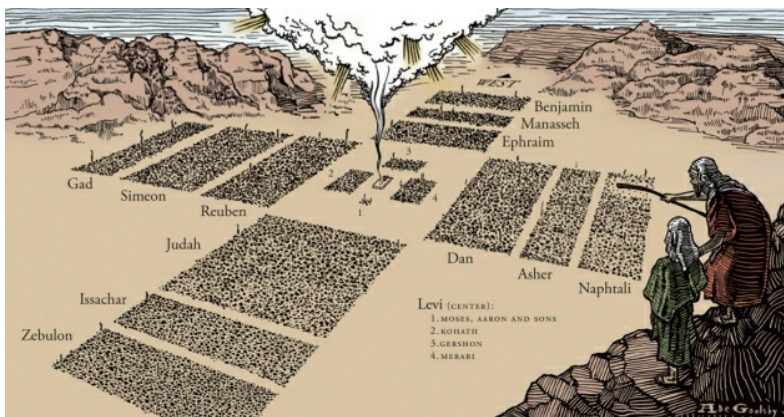
Paul also mentions the “**tent of meeting**” or the **tabernacle**, comparing it to the earthly human body:

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this **tent** we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 5:1–5⁺).

When Paul says, “**The tent that is our earthly home,**” he is referring to our earthly body, our temporary dwelling place. Just as the Israelites moved the tent of meeting from place to place waiting for entrance to the Promised Land, believers in Christ are wanderers on the earth—people who are not “at home” in the world and who “**seek a city that is to come**” (Hebrews 13:14). Paul says that those who belong to God will be “further clothed” with immortality upon their deaths and that their earthly tent (their body) will be replaced with a “heavenly dwelling.” God does the work of preparing us for that day of glorification by the process of sanctification by the Spirit, and that work happening within us is a “guarantee” that our inheritance and our heavenly dwelling are real. “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13–15+). (Source: Gotquestions.org)

Numbers 2:3 "Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab,

- **the standard:** Ge 49:8-10 Jdg 1:1,2 1Ch 5:2
- **Nahshon:** Nu 1:7 7:12,17 10:14-16 26:19-22 Ru 4:20 1Ch 2:10 Mt 1:4 Lu 3:32-33 ("son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab")
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries



God in the Center - Tribes Arranged Around Jehovah

THE PRESTIGIOUS POSITION: JUDAH TOWARD THE SUNRISE

Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab - (See [depiction above](#)) In Ex 26:18-37 we see that the tent of meeting was set up facing east, toward the sunrise (could this be a spiritual pun?), toward **the camp of Judah** from which one day would come **the lion of the tribe of Judah**, [Yeshua](#) the Anointed One ([mashiach/masiyah](#)) (Rev 5:5+). Note that beginning with Judah the description goes clockwise with the Tabernacle in the center. Nahshon appears in later genealogies in the messianic line in Ruth 4:20+ and then in Matt. 1:4+.

HCSB Study Bible - Just as wonder and beauty are reflected in the order of creation in Genesis 1, so the unity and symmetry of the sacred assembly of Israel evoke splendor and awe.

We Judah's ascendance to the chief of the 12 tribes (even though it was not the first born - Reuben was firstborn).

Genesis 49:8-12 “**Judah**, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you. 9“Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? 10“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. 11“He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. 12“His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk.

Guzik on the leader **Nahshon** - God recognized a specifically called leader for the tribe of Judah (and for the other tribes following). The order and organization God called Israel to required leadership, with leaders both recognized by God and respected by the people.

NET Note - The sentence begins with a vav (ו) on a word that is not a finite verb, indicating a new section begins here. The verbal form is a participle with the article used substantively, with the meaning "and/nor those camping." Many English versions employ a finite verb; cf. KJV "on the east side ... shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch."

Gilbrant - The Tabernacle was set up facing east, according to the directions given in Exo. 26:18-37. In the camp, Judah was leader of the three tribes on the east and thus had the place of prominence. The Hebrews, and the Semites in general, considered east as their prime direction. For us, north is the prime direction because the compass points that way. But the most obvious datum point for ancient times was the rising sun. The Hebrew word for east is qedem, which can mean "in front." South was yamin, "right hand." The southernmost nation of the Arabian Peninsula today is called Yemen, the Arabic cognate of yamin. North was called "left," and west was sometimes called "back" or "seaward." On the other hand, the Egyptians based their directions facing the source of the Nile, and west was "the right."

Standard (01714) see [degel](#) "The origin of the Heb. term is not very obvious, though the Arab, has **dagal** (3x-Ps 20:5, Song 6:4, 10), to veil, to cover. The Greek renders it by **tagma** (only NT use - 1 Cor 15:23 = "But each in **his own order** [tagma]: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming." HALLELUJAH!), an orderly band, a cohort." (Bush) We find the related Hebrew word (dagal) in Ps 20:5

**We will sing for joy over your victory,
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.**

Spurgeon - We will rejoice in thy salvation. In Jesus there is salvation; it is his own, and hence it is called thy *salvation*; but it is ours to receive and ours to rejoice in. We should fixedly resolve that come what may, we will rejoice in the saving arm of the Lord Jesus. The people in this psalm, before their king went to battle, felt sure of victory, and therefore began to rejoice beforehand; how much more ought we to do this who have seen the victory completely won! Unbelief begins weeping for the funeral before the man is dead; why should not faith commence piping before the dance of victory begins? Buds are beautiful, and promises not yet fulfilled are worthy to be admired. If joy were more general among the Lord's people, God would be more glorified among men; the happiness of the subjects is the honour of the sovereign.

And in the name of our God we will set up our banners. We lift the standard of defiance in the face of the foe, and wave the flag of victory over the fallen adversary. Some proclaim war in the name of one king, and some of another, but the faithful go to war in Jesu's name, the name of the incarnate God, **Immanuel, God with us**. The times are evil at present, but so long as Jesus lives and reigns in his church we need not furl our banners in fear, but advance them with sacred courage.

Jesu's tremendous Name
Puts all our foes to flight;
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb
A Lion is in fight.

The church cannot forget that Jesus is her Advocate before the throne, and therefore she sums up the desires already expressed in the short sentence,

The Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Be it never forgotten that among those petitions is that choice one, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." (John 17:24)

Ronald Allen - It is somewhat surprising to have these three tribes first in the order of march since Reuben is regularly remembered as Jacob's firstborn son (Nu 1:20). However, because of the perfidy of the three older brothers (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi; see Ge 49:3-7), Judah was ascendant and was granted pride of place among his brothers (49:8). Judah became scion of the royal line in which the Messiah would be born (49:10; Ru 4:18-21; Mt 1:1-16). Further, the placement on the east was significant in Israel's thought. East is the place of the rising of the sun, the source of hope and sustenance. Westward was the sea. Israel's traditional stance was with its back to the ocean and the descent of the sun. The ancient Hebrew people were not a seafaring folk like the Phoenicians and the Egyptians. For Israel the place of pride was on the east; hence there we find the triad of tribes headed by Judah, Jacob's fourth son, the father of the royal house that leads to King Messiah. (EBC - Numbers)

Sunrise (04217) (**mizrach** from **zarach** = to rise, come forth) masculine noun showing the place of the sunrise, east, eastward. It combines with šemeš to indicate the direction east, mizraḥ šemeš (Num. 21:11; 1 Ki. 7:25). It is used alone more often to mean east (Josh. 11:3; 1 Chr. 9:24; Neh. 12:37; Ps. 103:12). **TWOT** - Used in relation to the sun rising, it refers specifically to the place or area of sunrise. It is often translated "east." It is

used in a strictly locative sense (Isaiah 41:2; Joshua 11:8) but also figuratively in prophecies of woe (Amos 8:12) and of blessedness (Zech. 14:4). **Gilbrant** - Mizrāch is used exclusively to designate the cardinal direction east. It can be used as part of a phrase to describe the entirety of the earth, "from the rising of the sun to the west" (e.g., Deut. 4:47) or "from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Mal. 1:11). It can be used as a directive, "toward the east/rising of the sun" (e.g., Josh. 12:1). Mizrāch can also represent the "eastern" side of a locale (e.g., 2 Chr. 5:12). It is used once as a proper name to designate the East Gate of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:29). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

Mizrach - 71v - east(41), east side(2), east side*(2), east*(9), eastern(2), eastward(5), rising(6), sunrise(3), sunrise*(3), sunrising(1). - Exod. 27:13; Exod. 38:13; Num. 2:3; Num. 3:38; Num. 21:11; Num. 32:19; Num. 34:15; Deut. 3:17; Deut. 3:27; Deut. 4:41; Deut. 4:47; Deut. 4:49; Jos. 1:15; Jos. 4:19; Jos. 11:3; Jos. 11:8; Jos. 12:1; Jos. 12:3; Jos. 13:5; Jos. 13:8; Jos. 13:27; Jos. 13:32; Jos. 16:1; Jos. 16:5; Jos. 16:6; Jos. 17:10; Jos. 18:7; Jos. 19:12; Jos. 19:13; Jos. 19:27; Jos. 19:34; Jos. 20:8; Jdg. 11:18; Jdg. 20:43; Jdg. 21:19; 1 Ki. 7:25; 2 Ki. 10:33; 1 Chr. 4:39; 1 Chr. 5:9; 1 Chr. 5:10; 1 Chr. 6:78; 1 Chr. 7:28; 1 Chr. 9:18; 1 Chr. 9:24; 1 Chr. 12:15; 1 Chr. 26:14; 1 Chr. 26:17; 2 Chr. 4:4; 2 Chr. 5:12; 2 Chr. 29:4; 2 Chr. 31:14; Neh. 3:26; Neh. 3:29; Neh. 12:37; Ps. 50:1; Ps. 103:12; Ps. 107:3; Ps. 113:3; Isa. 41:2; Isa. 41:25; Isa. 43:5; Isa. 45:6; Isa. 46:11; Isa. 59:19; Jer. 31:40; Dan. 8:9; Dan. 11:44; Amos 8:12; Zech. 8:7; Zech. 14:4; Mal. 1:11

Numbers 2:4 and his army, even their numbered men, 74,600.

- Nu 1:27 26:22
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 74,600.

Army (hosts) (06635)(**tsaba** from **tsaba** = to go forth to war, to wage war, to serve) is a masculine **noun** meaning troops or army (2Ki 5:1) and so has to do with fighting, war or warfare in many of the OT passages. The **TWOT** says the root verb **tsaba** "has to do with fighting, e.g. Israel warring against Midian (Nu 31:7). It has also a wider use in the sense of rendering service." And so in a group of uses in Numbers (Nu 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 8:24-25) tsaba has to do with service related to the Tent of Meeting (or Tabernacle). So one might say **tsaba** is used in contexts of warfare or worship!

Tsaba in Numberbs Num. 1:3; Num. 1:20; Num. 1:22; Num. 1:24; Num. 1:26; Num. 1:28; Num. 1:30; Num. 1:32; Num. 1:34; Num. 1:36; Num. 1:38; Num. 1:40; Num. 1:42; Num. 1:45; Num. 1:52; Num. 2:3; Num. 2:4; Num. 2:6; Num. 2:8; Num. 2:9; Num. 2:10; Num. 2:11; Num. 2:13; Num. 2:15; Num. 2:16; Num. 2:18; Num. 2:19; Num. 2:21; Num. 2:23; Num. 2:24; Num. 2:25; Num. 2:26; Num. 2:28; Num. 2:30; Num. 2:32; Num. 4:3; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:35; Num. 4:39; Num. 4:43; Num. 8:24; Num. 8:25; Num. 10:14; Num. 10:15; Num. 10:16; Num. 10:18; Num. 10:19; Num. 10:20; Num. 10:22; Num. 10:23; Num. 10:24; Num. 10:25; Num. 10:26; Num. 10:27; Num. 10:28; Num. 26:2; Num. 31:3; Num. 31:4; Num. 31:5; Num. 31:6; Num. 31:14; Num. 31:21; Num. 31:32; Num. 31:36; Num. 31:48; Num. 31:53; Num. 32:27; Num. 33:1

Numbered (06485)(**pequddah/pāqadh/paqad**) conveys the root idea of something that is attended to or set in order -- fighting men under an officer (2 Chr. 17:14), priests in an order (1 Chr. 23:11; 24:19); arrangement of Tabernacle (Nu 4:16[2x]). Office of one in charge of something (Ps 109:8) or officers (2 Ki. 11:18; Isa. 60:17). Usually pequddah means accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Nu 16:29; Jer. 48:44). In Job 10:12 God's attention was for Job's good. "The basic meaning is to exercise oversight over a subordinate, either in the form of inspecting or of taking action to cause a considerable change in the circumstances of the subordinate either for the better or for the worse." (TWOT) "Most often, the word means accounting and refers to a time of accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Num. 16:29; Jer. 48:44)." (Baker) **Paqad** is used 103x in 90v in Numbers out of about 297x in OT.

Numbers 2:5 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and the leader of the sons of Issachar: Nethanel the son of Zuar,

- Nu 1:8,28,29 7:18,23 10:15 26:23-25
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

ISSACHAR TOWARD THE SUNRISE

Those who camp next to him (next to Judah - [see schematic](#)) shall be the tribe of Issachar, and the leader of the sons of Issachar: Nethanel the son of Zuar - (See [depiction above](#))

Numbers 2:6 and his army, even their numbered men, 54,400.

- Nu 1:29 26:25
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 54,400.

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:7 "Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and the leader of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab the son of Helon,

- Nu 1:9,30,31 7:24,29 10:16
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

ZEBULUN TOWARD THE SUNRISE

Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and the leader of the sons of Zebulun:

Zebulun - The sixth son of Jacob. His mother was Leah (Gen. 35:23). He and his sons went to Egypt (Gen. 46:14). He lived near the shore of the Mediterranean and had some access to the sea (Gen. 49:13), evidently Galilee. The name of the tribe and territory of Zebulun. The territory, in lower Galilee, was bounded on the east by Asher, on the north and south by Issachar and Naphtali, on the southeast by Issachar, and on the southwest by Manasseh. It was located near major trade routes through the Jezreel Valley to the south (Josh. 19:10-16; Judg. 1:30). The tribe failed to drive out some Canaanites from a few cities. This tribe showed itself valiant for the Lord in various battles (Judg. 4:6, 10; 5:14, 18; 6:35; 1 Chr. 12:33, 40). Its population was conquered and deported by the Assyrians (722 b.c.). Ezekiel's new Temple vision reserves a place for this tribe (48:26, 27, 33). (CWD)

Eliab the son of Helon - ([see schematic](#))

Eliab ('God is father,') -:"There are six men with this name. The first was the son of Helon and leader of the tribe of Zebulun during the Exodus. He assisted Moses and Aaron in the military census which was taken while they were in Sinai. He was responsible for bringing the tribe's offering when the altar was dedicated at the tabernacle (Num. 1:9; 7:24; 10:16)." (Gilbrant)

the son of Helon ("the strong one.")

Numbers 2:8 and his army, even his numbered men, 57,400.

- Nu 1:31 26:26,27
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even his numbered men, 57,400.

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:9 "The total of the numbered men of the camp of Judah: 186,400, by their armies. They shall set out first.

- Nu 10:14
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

JOURNEYING IN ORDER THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

The total of the numbered men of the camp of Judah: 186,400, by their armies- Note that Judah, Issachar and Zebulun represent the fourth, fifth, and sixth sons of Jacob by Leah. Wiersbe suggests that "Since the entrance to the tabernacle was there, it was important to have the largest number of soldiers protecting it." (Ibid)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

They shall set out first - When the nation begins to travel or journey from one location to another, Judah will be the lead nation. God called for Israel to move out in specific order, not as a mob.

NLT Study Bible. - This largest of the tribal groups (*186,400*) could provide adequate protection for the sacred tent and its attendants.

Numbers 2:10 "On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Reuben: Elizur the son of Shedeur,

- **camp of Reuben:** Ge 49:3,4 1Ch 5:1
- **Elizur:** Nu 1:5 7:30,35 10:18
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Reuben: Elizur the son of Shedeur - [see schematic](#) with adjacent tribes on the south.

Gilbrant - South was yamin, "right hand." The southernmost nation of the Arabian Peninsula today is called Yemen, the Arabic cognate of yamin.

Standard ([01714](#)) see [degel](#)

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Reuben means "behold my firstborn," but he became as "uncontrollable as water." Why? Ge 35:22 says "It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that **Reuben** went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob." And then in Ge 49:3-4 we read "Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. **Uncontrolled** (pahaz = to be reckless, to be arrogant. It means to be undisciplined, wild, insolent) **as water**, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it—he went up to my couch. **Ryrie** adds "Reuben, the firstborn, forfeited his place of preeminence because of his fornication with Bilhah (Ge 35:22). Jacob predicted instability and ineffectiveness. No prophet, judge, or hero came from this tribe (Judg. 5:15-16; 1 Chr. 5:1)."

Elizur - This name means "God is a rock" and refers to Elizur, the son of Shedeur from the tribe of Reuben. During Israel's Exodus from Egypt, Elizur was the leader of his tribe (Num. 2:10). He assisted Moses and Aaron as they conducted a census of the Israelite community (Num. 1:5). When Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle (7:1), Elizur represented his tribe in the offering of a gift on the fourth day of the tabernacle's dedication (7:30-35). Later, as the Israelite community broke camp and left Sinai (cf. 10:11-13), Elizur led his tribe (v. 18). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

Shedeur (The name may mean "[Shaddai](#) is fire," "Shaddai is light" or "Shaddai gives light.") Num. 1:5; Num. 2:10; Num. 7:30; Num. 7:35; Num. 10:18

Numbers 2:11 and his army, even their numbered men, 46,500.

- Nu 1:21 26:7
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 46,500

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:12 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the sons of Simeon: Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai,

- **Shelumiel**: Nu 1:6 7:36,41 10:19
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon [see schematic](#) with adjacent tribes on the south.

And the leader of the sons of Simeon: Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai

Simeon - - The second of Leah's sons from Jacob. His name means "hearing" (Gen. 29:33; 35:23). He and Levi savagely avenged the rape of their sister Dinah by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite (Gen. 34:1-4). He had many sons, one by a Canaanite woman (Gen. 46:10). Jacob noted his violent nature in his prophetic utterance (Gen. 49:5). Simeon's tribal inheritance lay within Judah. It included some strategic cities, such as Beersheba, Hormah and Ziklag in the Negev area. Ezekiel allotted Simeon's descendant a place in his vision of a new Temple and New Jerusalem (Ezek. 48:24-33). (Baker)

Shelumiel means something like "God is my peace." or "At Peace With God" and is from the verb שלם (shalem), to be or make whole or complete, and לַא ('el), God. (Num. 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19).

Zurishaddai has the familiar name **Shaddai** ([Shadday](#)) and means "The Almighty is my rock and strength." (Nu 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19)

Numbers 2:13 and his army, even their numbered men, 59,300.

- Nu 1:23 26:14
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 59,300

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:14 "Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the sons of Gad: Eliasaph the son of Deuel,

- **Eliasaph**: Nu 1:14 7:42,47 10:20, Son of Deuel
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Then comes the tribe of Gad, [see schematic](#) with adjacent tribes on the south.

and the leader of the sons of Gad:

Eliasaph - 'God has added' (el = God + yasaph = add) Used of two people. Ten days after Moses had finished setting up the Tabernacle, Deuel's son Eliasaph presented an offering on behalf of his brethren (Nu 7:42, 47). When the Israelites left Sinai, Deuel's son was placed in charge of the warriors belonging to the tribe of Gad (Nu 10:20).

Chief of Gad (Num. 1:14; 2:14; 3:24; 7:42, 47; 10:20)

Chief of Gershon (Num. 3:24).

the son of Deuel - **NET Note** on **Deuel** - The Leningrad codex, upon which BHS is based, has "**Reuel**" here. In reading "Deuel" the translation presented above follows many medieval Hebrew manuscripts, Smr, and the Latin Vulgate. Cf. Num 1:14. (The letters R and D are similar in Heb. and were easily confused by the scribes who copied the text.)

Numbers 2:15 and his army, even their numbered men, 45,650.

- Nu 1:25 26:18
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 45,650

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:16 "The total of the numbered men of the camp of Reuben: 151,450 by their armies. And they shall set out second.

- Nu 2:9,24,31
- they shall: Nu 10:18
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

SECOND TO MARCH OUT

The total of the numbered men of the camp of Reuben: 151,450 by their armies. And they shall set out second- Tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad follow the lead tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Reuben and Simeon were the first and second sons by Leah. The third tribe in this group was Gad the oldest son of Leah's handmaid.

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbers 2:17 "Then the tent of meeting shall set out with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; just as they camp, so they shall set out, every man in his place by their standards.

NET Numbers 2:17 "Then the tent of meeting with the camp of the Levites will travel in the middle of the camps. They will travel in the same order as they camped, each in his own place under his standard.

NLT Numbers 2:17 "Then the Tabernacle, carried by the Levites, will set out from the middle of the camp. All the tribes are to travel in the same order that they camp, each in position under the appropriate family banner.

ESV Numbers 2:17 "Then the tent of meeting shall set out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; as they camp, so shall they set out, each in position, standard by standard.

NIV Numbers 2:17 Then the Tent of Meeting and the camp of the Levites will set out in the middle of the camps. They will set out in the same order as they encamp, each in his own place under his standard.

- **Tent of meeting:** Nu 2:1 1:50-53 3:38 10:17,21 1Co 14:40 Col 2:5
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

THE TENT OF MEETING MOVES OUT

From ESV Study Bible

Then the tent of meeting shall set out with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; just as they camp Levi was the third son of Leah. The **Tent of Meeting** is synonymous with the Tabernacle. The tribes on the east (Judah, Issachar, Zebulun) and on the south (Reuben, Simeon, Gad) marched ahead of the Tabernacle and the Levites, and those on the west (Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin) and north (Dan, Asher, Naphtali) marched behind the Tabernacle. Note the phrase **in the midst of the camps** emphasizing God's presence within the heart of the camp. Yahweh is in the center (midst) of Israel not only when it is camped but also when it is marched out. Jehovah should be at the center of all Israel's (and our) activities beloved!

THOUGHT - Believers are indwelt by the Spirit in their heart, their "center," so whatever our posture or position, God is in the center. This makes the exhortation of Solomon even more vital to obey (even that obedience enable by the Spirit), that we "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." (Pr 4:23+).

Ronald Allen points out that the Tent of Meeting in the midst or center of the camp "is a change from Exodus 33:7–14. Then Moses' personal tent (see Note) was without the camp, and Moses would go outside the camp to seek the word of God. Here the tent is within the camp, and all Israel was positioned around it. Earlier, the Lord would "come down" from time to time; here he was continually in their midst. There is a sense here of the progressive manifestation of the presence of God in the midst of the people. First he was on the mountain of Sinai; then he came to the tent outside the camp; then he indwelt the tent in the midst of the camp. One day he would reveal himself through the incarnation in the midst of his people (Jn 1:1–18); and, on a day still to come, there will be an even greater realization of the presence of the person of God dwelling in the midst of his people in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:1–4). The story of the Bible is largely the story of the progressive revelation of God among his people (Heilsgeschichte—"the history of salvation," in the "good sense") and the progressive preparation of a people to be fit to live in his presence." (EBC)

so they shall set out, every man in his place by their standards- NET = "They will travel in the same order as they camped, each in his own place under his standard." This clearly refers to a specifically designated place for each man.

Standard (01714) see [degel](#)

The nation of Israel marched out as **ONE BODY**, even though composed of 12 divisions, with **ONE GOD** in their midst and they were all in order reminding us of the ideal New Testament pattern...

There is **ONE BODY** and **one** Spirit, just as also you were called in **one** hope of your calling; 5 **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, 6 **ONE GOD** and Father of all **Who is over all and through all and in all.** (Eph. 4:4-6+)

Wiersbe - Whenever the camp moved, the ark of the covenant went before, carried by the priests. Then the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun marched next, followed by the Gershonites and Merarites carrying the tabernacle proper (frames, curtains, coverings). Next came Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, followed by the Kohathites carrying the tabernacle furnishings. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were next, while Dan, Asher, and Naphtali brought up the rear. The largest number of soldiers (186,400) led the way and the next largest (157,600) were the rear guard. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch)

Numbers 2:18 "On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud,

- **camp of Ephraim:** Nu 1:32 10:22 Ge 48:5,14-20 De 33:17 Ps 80:1,2
- **Elishama:** Nu 1:10 7:48,53 10:22 1Ch 7:26,27
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim by their armies,

Standard (01714) see [degel](#)

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

and the leader of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud- Elishama ('God has heard' "God hears" - Num. 1:10; Num. 2:18; Num. 7:48; Num. 7:53; Num. 10:22 1Ch 7:26,27) Name used by six persons in the Old Testament. **Gilbrant** - Elishama also was the father of Nun and the grandfather of Joshua, the leader of Israel who succeeded Moses (1 Chr. 7:26). During Israel's exodus from Egypt, Elishama was the head of his tribe and assisted Moses and Aaron as they conducted a census of the Hebrew community (Nu. 1:2-5, 10). When Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle (cf. Nu 7:1), Elishama represented his tribe in the offering of a gift on the seventh day of the tabernacle's dedication (cf. Nu 7:48-53). Later, as the Israelite community broke camp and left Sinai (cf. Nu 10:11-13), Elishama led his tribe (Nu 10:22). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

the son of Ammihud ('my kinsman is majesty,' - Num. 1:10; Num. 2:18; Num. 7:48; Num. 7:53; Num. 10:22; Num. 34:20; Num. 34:28; 2 Sa 13:37; 1 Chr. 7:26; 1 Chr. 9:4);

Numbers 2:19 and his army, even their numbered men, 40,500.

- Nu 1:33 26:37
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 40,500.

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:20 "Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the sons of Manasseh: Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur,

- **Gamaliel:** Nu 1:10 7:54,59 10:23
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh- Manasseh - The firstborn son of Joseph in Egypt. His mother was Asenath, an Egyptian woman whose father was a priest in Heliopolis (On) (Gen. 41:50). The name means "cause to forget" and was given by Joseph because Manasseh's birth helped Joseph forget his family and hard times (Gen. 41:51). Jacob gave his firstborn blessing, however, to Ephraim whose descendants outstripped Manasseh's (Gen. 48:19-20). Both became key tribes in northern Israel, and Jacob blessed both under Joseph's name (Gen. 49:22-26). Their fruitfulness and God's care for them are emphasized. Manasseh had a son named Machir (Gen. 50:23). (Baker)

and the leader of the sons of Manasseh: Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur (the rock has ransomed,')

Numbers 2:21 and his army, even their numbered men, 32,200.

- Nu 1:35 26:34
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 32,200

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:22 "Then comes the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan the son of Gideoni,

- **Abidan:** Nu 1:11 7:60,65 10:24
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Then comes the tribe of Benjamin = 'son of right hand' from yasph = to add,

And the leader of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan ('my father is judge' - Nu 1:11; Nu 2:22; Nu 7:60; Nu 7:65; Nu 10:24) the son of Gideon

Numbers 2:23 and his army, even their numbered men, 35,400.

- Nu 1:37 26:41
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 35,400

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:24 "The total of the numbered men of the camp of Ephraim: 108,100, by their armies. And they shall set out third.

- Nu 2:9,16,31
- **And:** Nu 10:22
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

THIRD TO MARCH OUT

The total of the numbered men of the camp of Ephraim: 108,100, by their armies. And they shall set out third- Judah first, Reuben second, Ephraim third as they break camp to move on to the next location.

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Armies (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbers 2:25 "On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Dan: Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai,

- **Ahiezer:** Nu 1:12 7:66,71 10:25
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Dan: Ahiezer('my brother is help,') the son of Ammishaddai ("servant of Shaddai" or 'my kinsman is Shaddai,' [Shadday](#)) Gilbrant says Ammishaddai "used in combination with 'el , a general term for God, to mean "the God who provides all that is needed" (El Shaddai), though we translate the term "God Almighty." Ammi means "my people"; thus, Ammishaddai can mean "the people of the Almighty." (Ibid)

Standard ([01714](#)) see [degel](#)

Armies (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbers 2:26 and his army, even their numbered men, 62,700.

- Nu 1:39 26:43
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 62,700.

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:27 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the sons of Asher: Pagiel the son of Ochran,

- Pagiel: Nu 1:13 7:72,77
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, 'happy one,' son of Jacob

and the leader of the sons of Asher: Pagiel (occurrence of God,)

the son of Ochran - his name is derived from the verb 'ākhar, meaning "trouble," "perplexed" or "afflicted one."

Numbers 2:28 and his army, even their numbered men, 41,500.

- Nu 1:41 26:47
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 41,500.

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:29 "Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the sons of Naphtali: Ahira the son of Enan,

- **the tribe**: Nu 1:42,43 26:48-50
- **Ahira**: Nu 1:15 7:78,83 10:27
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the sons of Naphtali:

Ahira the son of Enan - **Ahira** appears five times in Numbers, referring to the same individual (Nu 1:15; 2:29; 7:78, 83; 10:27). He was the son of Enan, the leader of the tribe of Naphtali. His name means "the (divine) kinsman is is a friend." The first mentioning of Ahira is in the context of taking a census of the people of his tribe, as each tribe supplies an individual to aid Moses in this endeavor who was "the head of the house of his fathers" (Nu 1:4). Part of the task of the leader was to organize the community of the tribe, evidenced in Nu 2:29, as the tribe was to encamp on the northern fringe of the wilderness camp, under the direction of Ahira. The tribe followed Ahira when moving (Nu 10:27). Finally, as representative of the tribe, Ahira offers the dedicatory offering of the tribe on the newly consecrated altar in the wilderness (Nu 7:78, 83). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

Numbers 2:30 and his army, even their numbered men, 53,400.

- Nu 1:42,43 26:50
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

and his army, even their numbered men, 53,400

Army (hosts) ([06635](#)) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbered ([06485](#)) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:31 "The total of the numbered men of the camp of Dan was 157,600. They shall set out last by their standards."

- Nu 2:9,16,24
- **Numbers 2 Resources** - Multiples Sermons and Commentaries

LAST TO MARCH OUT

The total of the numbered men of the camp of Dan was 157,600. They shall set out last by their standards- We see the same order in Nu 10:25-27+.

Numbered (06485) see note on [paqad](#)

Standard (01714) see [degel](#)

C H Spurgeon - "They shall go hindmost with their standards." —Numbers 2:31

The camp of Dan brought up the rear when the armies of Israel were on the march. The Danites occupied the hindmost place, but what mattered the position, since they were as truly part of the host as were the foremost tribes; they followed the same fiery cloudy pillar, they ate of the same manna, drank of the same spiritual rock, and journeyed to the same inheritance. Come, my heart, cheer up, though last and least; it is thy privilege to be in the army, and to fare as they fare who lead the van. Some one must be hindmost in honour and esteem, some one must do menial work for Jesus, and why should not I? In a poor village, among an ignorant peasantry; or in a back street, among degraded sinners, I will work on, and "go hindmost with my standard."

The Danites occupied a very useful place. Stragglers have to be picked up upon the march, and lost property has to be gathered from the field. Fiery spirits may dash forward over untrodden paths to learn fresh truth, and win more souls to Jesus; but some of a more conservative spirit may be well engaged in reminding the church of her ancient faith, and restoring her fainting sons. Every position has its duties, and the slowly moving children of God will find their peculiar state one in which they may be eminently a blessing to the whole host.

The rear guard is a place of danger. There are foes behind us as well as before us. Attacks may come from any quarter. We read that Amalek fell upon Israel, and slew some of the hindmost of them. The experienced Christian will find much work for his weapons in aiding those poor doubting, desponding, wavering, souls, who are hindmost in faith, knowledge, and joy. These must not be left unaided, and therefore be it the business of well-taught saints to bear their standards among the hindmost. My soul, do thou tenderly watch to help the hindmost this day.

Numbers 2:32 These are the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers' households; the total of the numbered men of the camps by their armies, 603,550.

- Nu 2:9 1:46 11:21 26:51 Ex 12:37 38:26

These are the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers' households; the total of the numbered men of the camps by their armies, 603,550 - "The total of 603,550 equals that of Nu 1:46, and the exclusion of the Levites is likewise repeated. Repetition is a common practice in Hebrew narrative, showing consistency and development in the broader narrative." (HCSB SB)

Allen - These verses (vv 32-33) conform to and summarize Nu 1:44–53. The total number is the same as in Nu 1:46, and the distinction of the Levites is maintained (Nu 1:47–53). The arrangement of the numbers of the tribes in triads (each with subtotals, as well as the grand total for the whole) signifies the concept of stability in these large numbers in the text. (EBC)

Numbered (06485) see note on [paqad](#)

Armies (hosts) (06635) see note on [tsaba](#)

Numbers 2:33 The Levites, however, were not numbered among the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded

The Levites, however, were not numbered among the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses- See Nu 1:47-49+

Numbered (06485) see note on [paqad](#)

Numbers 2:34 Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they set out, every one by his family according to his father's household.

- **according:** Nu 1:54 Ex 39:42 Ps 119:6 Lu 1:6
- **so they:** Nu 2:2 10:28 23:9,10,21 24:2,5,6

OBEDIENCE TO JEHOVAH'S COMMAND

Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses- "Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all which the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did." (Nu 1:54+)

So they camped by their standards, and so they set out, every one by his family according to his father's household This is an amazing statement in light of their disobedience and disbelief in the near future. This shows one can have a good beginning but a disastrous ending (all died in the wilderness because of their disobedience). O how we each need to memorize, meditate on and continually practice Paul's admonition in 1 Cor 10:12 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) that he does not fall."

THOUGHT - Israel's momentary obedience reminds me of the "chain" of virtues in 2 Peter 1:5- "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith **supply** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love." Specifically note that after moral excellence, knowledge and self-control comes perseverance, the very virtue the nation of Israel would soon prove she sorely lacked! How is your self-control? Is it persevering or is it passing and [perfunctory](#)? Remember, the only way to **persevere** is by continual reliance on the supernatural power of the Spirit!

Ronald Allen - Certainly the text points to the mercy of God and his blessing on the people. It may have been the beauty of the order of this plan of encampment that led the unlikely prophet Balaam to say, "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, / your dwelling places, O Israel!" (Nu 24:5). Fittingly, Balaam's words—the gasp of an outsider—became among the most treasured in the community. Cyrus Gordon wrote of them, "They have remained the most cherished passages in Scripture throughout Synagogue history" In receiving praise from the outsider Balaam, the order and beauty of the camp must continue to stir the heart of the faithful to exhibit even more robust praise. Again the book of Numbers, despite our initial misgivings, is a book of worship. (**Take a moment of worship and [Play song](#)**) (EBC)

Lite Application Study Bible - This must have been one of the biggest campsites the world has ever seen! It would have taken about 12 square miles to set up tents for just the 600,000 fighting men-not to mention the women and children. Moses must have had a difficult time managing such a group. In the early stages of the journey and at Mount Sinai, the people were generally obedient to both God and Moses. But when the people left Mount Sinai and traveled across the rugged wilderness, they began to complain, grumble, and disobey. Soon problems erupted, and Moses could no longer effectively manage the Israelites. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers present a striking contrast between how much we can accomplish when we obey God and how little we can accomplish when we don't.

Standard (01714) see [degel](#)

Irving Jensen - By finding their designated places and keeping to them, the families of the Israelites were taught some vital lessons preparatory to marching and going to war. They were taught to keep their places, whether in camp or on the move; to recognize their dependency on others for protection on all sides; to keep their eyes on the standards, and to heed the voices of their leaders. They were also taught that both camping and marching were in the divine purposes. The journey to Canaan would involve marching, and it would involve camping. Never would the Israelites reach Canaan if they did not keep moving forward; the demands of moving forward would be hard and long, hence the need of mustering renewed strength at camping time. **Perhaps the most important**

lesson God was teaching the Israelites in the directions for camping and marching was that He, Jehovah, their Covenant Maker and Covenant Fulfller, must be central in their lives. The tabernacle was not arbitrarily placed in the center of the camp. It was placed there by divine design to be the crossroads of all daily activity, to be the major focus of attention, to be a continual reminder of the Person who dwelt in the midst of the people and Who was rightfully commanding worship and loyalty. (Numbers)

David Guzik on Numbers 2 Observations

1. God is a God of order; here, before Israel can take the Promised Land, He requires they order themselves also. Not only is it more efficient and useful, but it also simply more like God—ordered and organized.

a. There is a limit to what we can be and what we can do for the LORD without order and organization. It isn't that order and organization are requirements for progress in the Christian life; they are progress in the Christian life, becoming more like the LORD.

b. Nothing is accomplished in God's kingdom without order and organization. While it may seem so to us, it is only an illusion—behind the scenes, God is moving with utmost order and organization, though we cannot see it.

2. God orders things according to His wisdom, not ours. In the arrangement of the tribes, He did not place the largest tribes closest to the tabernacle (as if bigger was always better); Ephraim, the closest westward tribe, is the third smallest tribe. Nor did He place all the large tribes on the outward perimeter for greatest protection (Benjamin, the second smallest tribe, is on the outer perimeter). God always has order and organization, but it may not make sense to us.

a. Our resistance to God's order and organization is almost always the product of simple selfishness—wanting to do things our own way, instead of the LORD's. For slaves, it is simple—slaves are always told what to do and don't need to be ordered and organized. But free men must be taught order and organization, and must submit to it.

3. Everything was positioned in relation to the presence of God, the tabernacle. God could have described where the tribe of Judah was in relation to the tribe of Dan, but He did not. The reference point was always God Himself.

a. It is hard to underestimate the trouble people get into in their walk with God because they position and measure themselves in reference to other people. God is to be our focus, not other people.

4. The tribes of Israel camped around four banners, which were said to be a lion, a man, a calf, and an eagle. We find the same four creatures surrounding the throne of God in Revelation.

a. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. (Revelation 4:7)

i. "According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man's head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle." (Keil—Delitzsch)

b. God's order is never arbitrary, or just made up on a whim. It is after His heavenly pattern. We must always accept God's order and organization, even when we don't understand it. ([Enduring Word](#))