

A Study in the Book of Numbers



By Cecilia Perh



Entrusting the Word
to the Faithful

Book	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Key Idea	Beginnings	Redemption	Worship	Wandering	Renewed Covenant
The Nation	Chosen	Delivered	Set Apart	Directed	Made Ready
The People	Prepared	Redeemed	Taught	Tested	Re-taught
God's Character	Powerful, Sovereign	Merciful	Holy	Just	Loving Lord
God's Role	Creator	Deliverer	Sanctifier	Sustainer	Rewarder
God's Command	"Let there be!"	"Let My people go!"	"Be holy"	"Go in!"	"Obey!"

Numbers in the Pentateuch

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
ORIGINS of the nation	DELIVERANCE of the nation	LIFE of the nation	TEST of the nation	REMINDERS to the nation
THEOCRACY BORN	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED		THEOCRACY TESTED AND PREPARED FOR THE NEW HOME	

COVENANT
IS AMPLIFIED
 “Keep my covenant to be a peculiar treasure:
 “Kingdom of priests”
 “holy nation”
 (Exo. 19:5-6)

LAWS
ARE PRESCRIBED
 “which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”
 (Lev. 18:5)

Irvin L. Jensen, p 102
 (Jensen’s Survey of the OT)

Numbers is the story of God leading His people, Israel, through wildernesses on their way to Canaan, the rest land He promised.

The journey moves from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho.

- It was a brief journey in the dark unknown, demanding the utmost in trust and patience (Numbers 1:1-10:10).**
- It is a long, aimless wandering in judgment for unbelief, consuming all but two of first census, 20 years and above (Numbers 10:11-20:29).**
- It is a new and swift journey by the next generation with a few of the old leaders, to enter into the land of rest and blessing (Numbers 21:1-36:13)**

Numbers: Journey to God's Rest



The Generation of Those Who Had Come Out of Egypt

Preparation

- organization
- consecration
- instruction

The Test

- of faith
- of obedience

The Judgment

- wandering
- death

Wilderness

SINAI

KADESH

A New Generation

Reorganisation

- repair

Plains of Moab

MOAB



The theme of Numbers is the consequence of disbelief and disobedience to the holy God. The Lord disciplined His people but remained faithful to His covenant promises in spite of their fickleness.

Numbers displays the patience, holiness, justice, mercy, and sovereignty of God toward His people.

It teaches that there are no shortcuts to His blessings – He uses trials and tests for specific purposes.

Numbers was written to trace the history of Israel’s wanderings from Sinai to Moab. But the fact that there was almost no record of the 38 years of wandering shows that Numbers is a very thematic history. It selects those events that are important to the development of God’s redemptive program. The sins of the first generation were written as a reminder and a warning to the second generation. They must implicitly trust God before they can possess the land of blessing.

Theme and Purpose



The Old Generation			The Tragic Transition				The New Generation																						
1	4	5	10:10	10:11	14	15	16	17	20	21	25	26	30	31	33	34	36												
Counting and Ordering of the People			Cleansing of the People			Complaints and Disbelief of the People			Instructions for Life in Canaan			The Rebellion of Korah			Aaron, the Levites and Moses			Serpent of Brass and Story of Balaam			Second Census and Laws of Israel			Settling east of Jordan			Preparations for Settling in Canaan		
Preparation			Preparation			Postponement			Postponement			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise					
Waiting			Waiting			Wandering			Wandering			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting					
Census, Instruction, Travel			Census, Instruction, Travel			-			-			-			-			-			-			-					
At Sinai			At Sinai			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab					
Sinai to Kadesh			Sinai to Kadesh			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness					
Preparation for the Journey			Preparation for the Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey					
About 2 months (39%)			About 2 months (39%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)					
Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19					
Getting Ready to Possess the land			Getting Ready to Possess the land			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD					
Structuring			Structuring			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing			Testing					
Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring					

Leviticus covered only one month, but Numbers stretches over almost 39 years (about 1444 BC to 1405 BC – traditional dating).

It records Israel's movement from the last 19 days at Mt Sinai (1:1; 10:11) to the arrival in the plains of Moab in the 40th year (22:1; 26:3; 33:5; Deut 1:3).

Most of this time was spent wandering in and around Kadesh-barnea. Their tents occupied several square miles whenever they camped since there were over 2.5 million people. God miraculously fed and sustained them in the desert – He preserved their clothing and gave them manna, meat, water, leaders, and a promise.

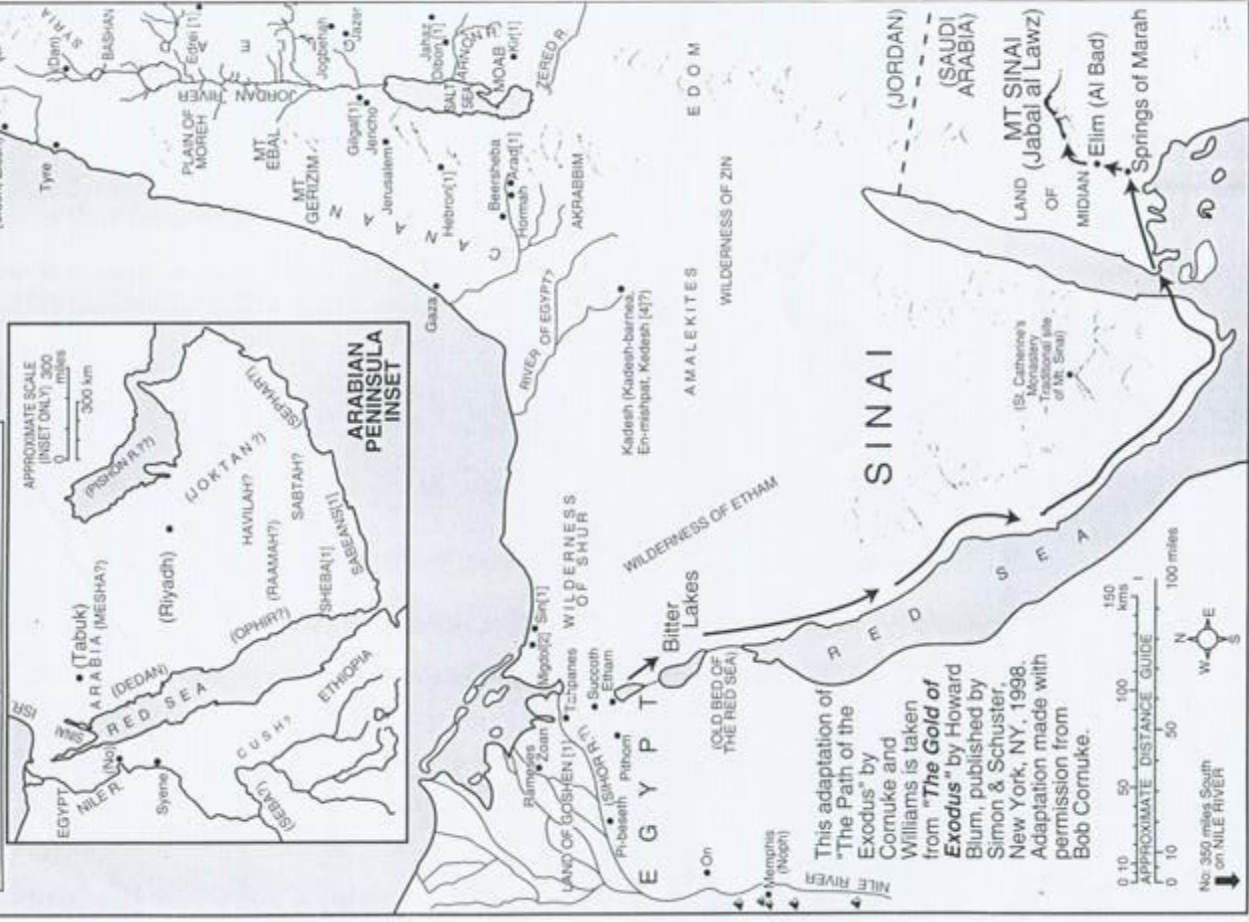
Date and Setting of the Book of Numbers



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

MAP SUPPLEMENT TO BIBLE MAP INSERT
NEW LOCATION OF MT. SINAI - SEE PAGE 4; AA-38-14 FOR GRID LOCATION

Era of the Exodus & Wandering
 Adapted from "The Path of the Exodus"
 C.A. 1997 by Cornuke and Williams



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION VISIT WEBSITE www.baseinstitute.org



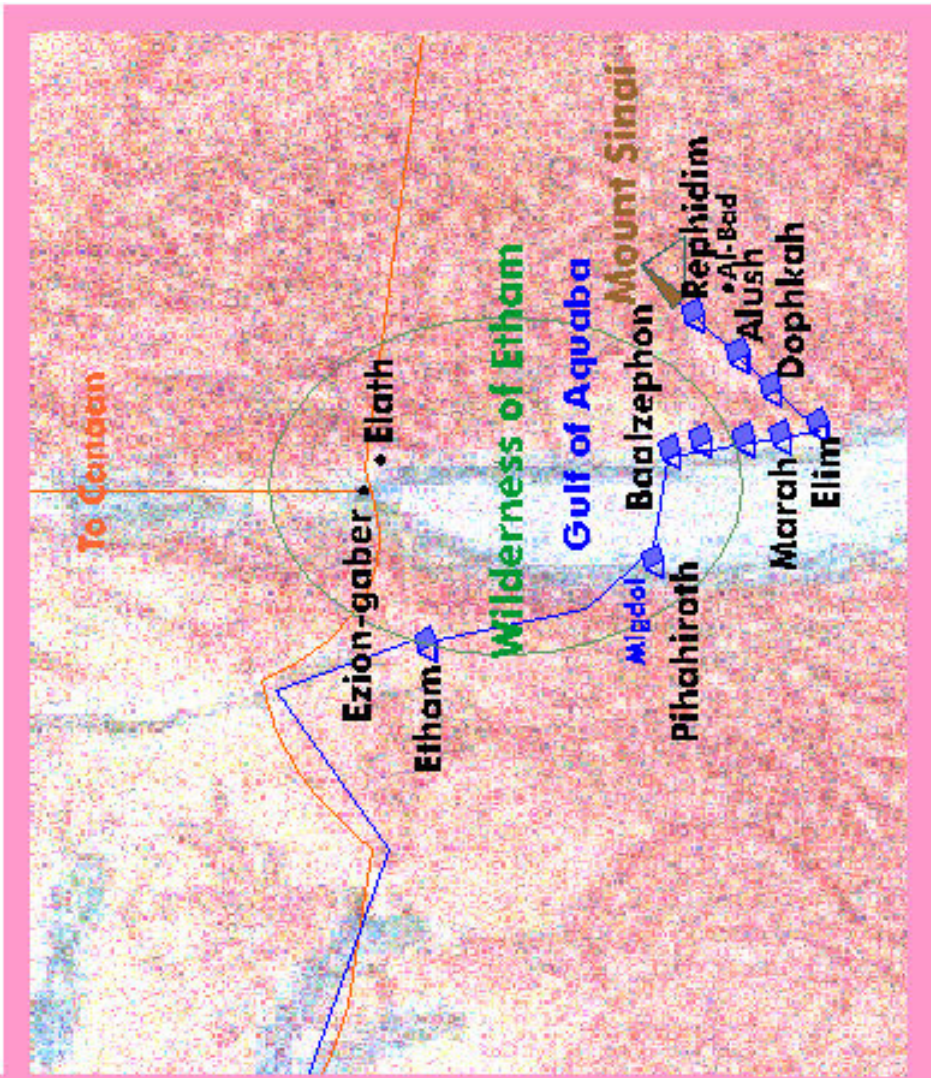
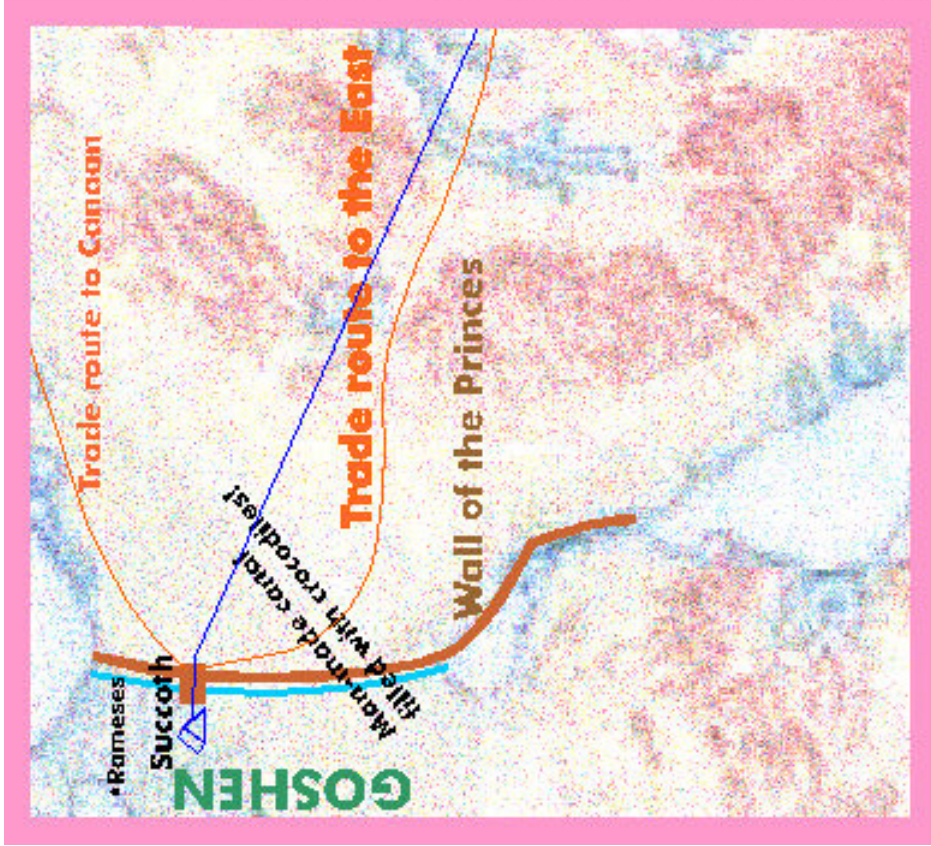
Copyright © Cecilia Perh 2009
www.etword.org

- **Moses' preparation of conquest involved four stages:**
 - **Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14)**
 - **Numbering the Soldiers (chapter 1)**
 - **Organizing the Tribes (chapter 2)**
 - **Assigning the Priestly Duties (chapters 3-4)**
- **The events in Numbers 7:1-9:15 precede the events in Numbers 1-6**
 - **Numbers 1:1 - Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt,**
 - **Numbers 9:1 - Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt,**

Historical Setting



The 12 tribal leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Numbers 7:1), a procedure that lasted 12 days



- This is the second year of Israel's National History (traditional dating, 1444 BC).



- The tabernacle was erected on the 1st day of the 1st month of Nisan (Exodus 40:2,17).
- The 12 Tribal Leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Numbers 7:1), a procedure that lasted 12 days.
- On the 13th day, the Levites were consecrated (Numbers 8) and on the 14th day they celebrated the Passover (Numbers 9:1-14) – the last Passover they celebrated until Joshua led them into the Promised land nearly 40 years later (Joshua 5:10).

Historical Setting

Israel was now to be formed into a commonwealth, or rather a kingdom; for “the Lord was their King” (1Sa_12:12), their government a theocracy, and Moses under him was king in Jeshurun, Deu_33:5. Now, for the right settlement of this holy state, next to the institution of good laws was necessary the institution of good order; and account therefore must be taken of the subjects of this kingdom, which is done in this chapter, where we have,

- I. Orders given to Moses to number the people (Num_1:1-4).
- II. Persons nominated to assist him herein (Num_1:5-16).
- III. The particular number of each tribe, as it was given in to Moses (v. 17-43).
- IV. The sum total of all together (Num_1:44-46).
- V. An exception of the Levites (Num_1:47, etc.).

Matthew Henry on Numbers 1



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

35,400

BENJAMIN

40,500

EPHRAIM

32,200

MANASSEH

ASHER

41,500

DAN

62,700

NAPHTALI

53,400

MERARITES

6,200

54,400

ISSACHAR

74,600

JUDAH

7,500

KOATHITES

8,600

57,400

ZEBULUN

GERSHONITES

LEVITES

45,650

GAD

46,500

REUBEN

59,300

SIMEON



The thousands of Israel, having been mustered in the former chapter, in this are marshalled, and a regular disposition is made of their camp, by a divine appointment. Here is,

- I. A general order concerning it (Num_2:1, 2).**
- II. Particular directions for the posting of each of the tribes, in four distinct squadrons, three tribes in each squadron.**
 - 1. In the vanguard on the east were posted Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (Num_2:3-9).**
 - 2. In the right wing, southward, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (Num_2:10-16).**
 - 3. In the rear, westward, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, (Num_2:18-24).**
 - 4. In the left wing, northward, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali (Num_2:25-31).**
 - 5. The tabernacle in the centre (Num_2:17).**
- III. The conclusion of this appointment (Num_2:32, etc.).**

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 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.

Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



לָאָזֶי, a standard, banner, or flag, denotes primarily the larger *field sign*, possessed by every division composed of three tribes, which was also the banner of the tribe at the head of each division; and secondarily, in a derivative signification, it denotes the *army* united under one standard, like σημεῖα, or *vexillum*. It is used thus, for example, in Num 2:17, 31, 34, and in combination with הָאָזֶי in Num 2:3, 10, 18, and 25, where “standard of the camp of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan” signifies the hosts of the tribes arranged under these banners.

תִּנִּיחַ, the signs (ensigns), were the smaller flags or banners which were carried at the head of the different tribes and subdivisions of the tribes (the fathers' houses). Neither the Mosaic law, nor the Old Testament generally, gives us any intimation as to the form or character of the standard (degel). 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; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards.

Kiel and Delitzsch on Numbers 2:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

(Note: Jerome Prado, in his commentary upon Ezekiel (ch. 1 p. 44), gives the following minute description according to rabbinical tradition: “The different leaders of the tribes had their own standards, with the crests of their ancestors depicted upon them. On the east, above the tent of Naasson the first-born of Judah, there shone a standard of a green colour, this colour having been adopted by him because it was in a green stone, viz., an emerald, that the name of his forefather Judah was engraved on the breastplate of the high priest (Exo 25:15.), and on this standard there was depicted a lion, the crest and hieroglyphic of his ancestor Judah, whom Jacob had compared to a lion, saying, 'Judah is a lion's whelp.'”

Towards the south, above the tent of *Elisur* the son of *Reuben*, there floated a red standard, having the colour of the sardius, on which the name of his father, viz., *Reuben*, was engraved upon the breastplate of the high priest. The symbol depicted upon this standard was a human head, because *Reuben* was the first-born, and head of the family.

Kiel and Delitzsch on Numbers 2:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

On the west, above the tent of *Elishamah* the son of *Ephraim*, there was a golden flag, on which the head of a calf was depicted, because it was through the vision of the calves or oxen that his ancestor Joseph had predicted and provided for the famine in Egypt (Gen 41); and hence Moses, when blessing the tribe of Joseph, i.e., *Ephraim* (Deu 33:17), said, 'his glory is that of the first-born of a bull.' The golden splendour of the standard of Ephraim resembled that of the chrysolite, in which the name of Ephraim was engraved upon the breastplate.

Towards the north, above the tent of *Ahiezer* the son of *Dan*, there floated a motley standard of white and red, like the jaspis (or, as some say, a carbuncle), in which the name of Dan was engraved upon the breastplate. The crest upon this was an eagle, the great foe to serpents, which had been chosen by the leader in the place of a serpent, because his forefather Jacob had compared Dan to a serpent, saying, 'Dan is a serpent in the way, an adder (*cerastes*, a horned snake) in the path;' but Ahiezer substituted the eagle, the destroyer of serpents as he shrank from carrying an adder upon his flag.")

Kiel and Delitzsch on Numbers 2:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 2:1-2 - Here is the general appointment given both for their orderly encampment where they rested and their orderly march when they moved. Some order, it is possible, they had observed hitherto; they came out of Egypt in rank and file (Exo_13:18), but now they were put into a better model.

1. They all dwelt in tents, and when they marched carried all their tents along with them, for they found no city to dwell in, Psa_107:4. This represents to us our state in this world. It is a movable state (we are here today and gone tomorrow); and it is a military state: is not our life a warfare? We do but pitch our tents in this world, and have in it no continuing city. Let us, therefore, while we are pitching in this world, be pressing through it.

2. Those of a tribe were to pitch together, every man by his own standard. Note, It is the will of God that mutual love and affection, converse and communion, should be kept up among relations. Those that are of kin to each other should, as much as they can, be acquainted with each other; and the bonds of nature should be improved for the strengthening of the bonds of Christian communion.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

3. Every one must know his place and keep in it; they were not allowed to fix where they pleased, nor to remove when they pleased, but God quarters them, with a charge to abide in their quarters. Note, It is God that appoints us the bounds of our habitation, and to him we must refer ourselves. He shall choose our inheritance for us (Psa_47:4), and in his choice we must acquiesce, and not love to flit, nor be as the bird that wanders from her nest.

4. Every tribe had its standard, flag, or ensign, and it should seem every family had some particular ensign of their father's house, which was carried as with us the colours of each troop or company in a regiment are. These were of use for the distinction of tribes and families, and the gathering and keeping of them together, in allusion to which the preaching of the gospel is said to *lift up an ensign, to which the Gentiles shall seek, and by which they shall pitch, Isa_11:10, Isa_11:12. Note, God is the God of order, and not of confusion.* These standards made this mighty army seem more beautiful to its friends and more formidable to its enemies. The church of Christ is said to be as *terrible as an army with banners,* Son_6:10....

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:1-2

5. They were to pitch about the tabernacle, which was to be in the midst of them, as the tent of pavilion of a general in the centre of an army. They must encamp round the tabernacle.

- (1.) That it might be equally a comfort and joy to them all, as it was a token of God's gracious presence with them. Psa_46:5, God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. Their camp had reason to be hearty, when thus they had God in the heart of them. To have bread from heaven every day round about their camp, and fire from heaven, with other tokens of God's favour, in the midst of their camp, was abundantly sufficient to answer that question, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not? Happy art thou, O Israel!* It is probable that the doors of all their tents were made to look towards the tabernacle from all sides, for every Israelite should have his eyes always towards the Lord; therefore they worshipped at the tent-door. The tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, that it might be near to them; for it is a very desirable thing to have the solemn administrations of holy ordinances near us and within our reach. *The kingdom of God is among you.*
- (2.) That they might be a guard and defence upon the tabernacle and the Levites on every side. No invader could come near God's tabernacle without first penetrating the thickest of their squadrons. **Note,** If God undertake the protection of our comforts, we ought in our places to undertake the protection of his institutions, and stand up in defence of his honour, and interest, and ministers.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

6. Yet they were to pitch afar off, in reverence to the sanctuary, that it might not seem crowded and thrust up among them, and that the common business of the camp might be no annoyance to it. They were also taught to keep their distance, lest too much familiarity should breed contempt. It is supposed (from Jos 3:4) that the distance between the nearest part of the camp and the tabernacle (or perhaps between them and the camp of the Levites, who pitched near the tabernacle) was 2000 cubits, that is, 1000 yards, little more than half a measured mile with us; but the outer parts of the camp must needs be much further off. Some compute that the extent of their camp could be no less than twelve miles square; for it was like a movable city, with streets and lanes, in which perhaps the manna fell, as well as on the outside of the camp, that they might have it at their doors. In the Christian church we read of a throne (as in the tabernacle there was a mercy-seat) which is called a glorious high throne from the beginning (Jer_17:12), and that throne surrounded by spiritual Israelites, twenty-four elders, double to the number of the tribes, clothed in white raiment (Rev_4:4), and the banner over them is Love; but we are not ordered, as they were, to pitch afar off; no, we are invited to draw near, and come boldly. The saints of the Most High are said to be round about him, Psa_76:11. God by his grace keep us close to him!

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:1-2

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

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

5 "And 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, 6 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 54,400.

7 "Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and the leader of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab the son of Helon, 8 and his army, **even** his numbered men, 57,400.

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

classic strategy of war – martial array / 3 brigades, headed by Judah with Issachar & Zebulun flanking him

Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



It is said Judah's stone was the "nophech" (which we render an emerald), and his flag was coloured in the likeness of the colour of the heavens, and there was formed upon it a lion. Issachar's was the sapphire, and his flag was coloured black, like to black lead, and there were framed upon it the sun and moon, on account of what is said, 1Ch 12:32. Zebulun's was a diamond, and his flag was coloured white, and there was formed upon it a ship, because of what is said, Gen 49:13,

Num 2:5 - And those that do pitch next unto him shall be the tribe of Issachar,.... Who with Zebulun, after mentioned, as placed with him under the same standard, were the brethren of Judah, by the same mother Leah, and so fitly put together, as most likely to continue in harmony and love; and being the youngest sons of Leah, and brethren of Judah, would, without any reluctance or murmuring, pitch under their elder brother's standard:

Gill on Numbers 2:3-9

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, 11 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 46,500.

12 "And 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, 13 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 59,300.

14 "Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the sons of Gad: Eliasaph the son of Deuel, 15 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 45,650.

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

for Victory, send your extra forces to where you are winning, not losing or holding you own

Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



Reuben's stone, according to the Jewish writers, was the "sardius", and his flag was coloured red, and there were figured upon it mandrakes. Simeon's stone was the topaz, and his flag was coloured green, and on it was figured "shechem". Gad's stone was the agate, and his flag was coloured neither black nor white, but mixed, and there was figured upon it a camp or host, on account of what is said, Gen 49:19,

Num 2:12 - And those which pitch by him shall be the tribe of Simeon,....
Under his standard, and on one side of it; Reuben and Simeon being brothers by the mother as well as the father's side, might well be thought to agree together; and Reuben being the eldest brother, and the eldest of all Jacob's sons, Simeon would not grudge to pitch under him:

Num 2:14 - Then the tribe of Gad,.... Who was placed on the other side of Reuben's standard, and according to the former direction he must be before, and Simeon behind; and Gad being the eldest son of Leah's handmaid Zilpah, is fitly placed under Leah's firstborn, and being the son of an handmaid, could not object to his situation: **and the captain of the sons of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel:** who is called Deuel, Num 1:14. The letters ך, "resh", and ך, "daleth", being similar, are sometimes put one for the other, of which there are other instances, as in Gen 10:3, compared with 1Ch 1:6.

Gill on Numbers 2:10-16

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.



Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



Num 2:17 - Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites,.... Which reached four miles, according to the Targum of Jonathan, as did Judah's. Levi's stone, as the Jews say, was the carbuncle, and his flag was coloured, a third part white, and a third part black, and a third part red, and on it were formed Urim and Thummim:

in the midst of the camp; or "camps"; between the camps of Judah and Reuben, before mentioned, and those of Ephraim and Dan, which are after spoken of: the order in which they moved was this, as Aben Ezra observes; the Gershonites and Merarites marched between the standard of Judah and the standard of Reuben; and the Kohathites marched, and with them Aaron and his sons, between the standard of Reuben and the standard of Ephraim:

John Gill on Numbers 2:17

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

20 "And next to him *shall be* the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the sons of Manasseh: Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, 21 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 32,200.

22 "**Then comes** the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan the son of Gideon, 23 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 35,400.

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

Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



The Jewish writers say, that Joseph's stone is the onyx or sardonyx, and his flag was coloured very black, and on it were figured for the two princes, Ephraim and Manasseh, Egypt, because they were born in Egypt; and upon the flag of Ephraim was figured an ox, because of what is said in Deu_33:17; and on the flag of the tribe of Manasseh was figured an unicorn, because of what is said in the same place. Benjamin's stone was the jasper, and his flag was coloured like to twelve colours, and on it was figured a wolf, because of what is said Gen_49:27,

Num 2:20 - And by him shall be the tribe of Manasseh,.... Who though the elder brother to Ephraim, yet Ephraim was preferred to him, and had a standard given him, and his elder brother was directed to pitch by it; and this being agreeably to the prophecy of Jacob, could not well be objected to; and Benjamin, the younger brother of Joseph, being placed under the standard of a son of his, that stood in his father's room, could not be offended; and these all being the descendants of Rachel, might well be thought to agree together, and be very well pleased with their situation:

John Gill on Numbers 2:18-24

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

27 "And 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, 28 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 41,500.

29 "Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the sons of Naphtali: Ahira the son of Enan, 30 and his army, **even** their numbered men, 53,400.

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



Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes

According to the Jewish writers, Dan's stone was the "ligure", and his flag was coloured like to a sapphire, and there was figured upon it a serpent, on account of what is said Gen 49:17; Asher's stone was the "tarshish" or beryl, and his flag was coloured like to a precious stone, with which women adorn themselves, and on it was figured an olive tree, on account of what is said Gen 49:20. Naphtali's stone was the amethyst, and his flag was coloured like to clear wine, whose redness is not strong, and on it was figured an hind, on account of what is said of him Gen 49:21,

Num 2:27 - And those that encamp by him shall be the tribe of Asher,....
Dan had a standard given him, though the son of an handmaid, being the firstborn of the sons of the handmaids, and his tribe being a warlike tribe, and very numerous; and Asher and Naphtali are placed by him, being the sons of handmaids also, and could not but contentedly pitch by him, who was the eldest of the sons of the handmaids Naphtali being his younger brother by mother's as well as father's side, and Asher the second son of Zilpah, Leah's maid:

John Gill on Numbers 2:25-31

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 2:10-31 - The description given of the position of Reuben and his attendant tribes on the south, of Ephraim and his associates on the west, of Dan and his confederates on the north, with that of Judah on the east, suggests the idea of a square or quadrangle, which, allowing one square cubit to each soldier while remaining close in the ranks, has been computed to extend over an area of somewhat more than twelve square miles. But into our calculations of the occupied space must be taken not only the fighting men, whose numbers are here given, but also the families, tents, and baggage. **The tabernacle or sacred tent of their Divine King, with the camp of the Levites around it (see on Num_3:38), formed the center, as does the chief's in the encampment of all nomad people.** In marching, this order was adhered to, with some necessary variations. Judah led the way, followed...by Issachar and Zebulun [Num_10:14-16]. Reuben, Simeon, and Gad formed the second great division [Num_10:18-20]. They were followed by the central company, composed of the Levites, bearing the tabernacle [Num_10:21]. Then the third and posterior squadron consisted of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin [Num_10:22-24], while **the hindmost place was assigned to Dan, Asher, and Naphtali** [Num_10:25-27]. Thus Judah's, which was the most numerous, formed the van: and Dan's, which was the next in force, brought up the rear; while Reuben's and Ephraim's, with the tribes associated with them respectively, being the smallest and weakest, were placed in the center. (See on Num_10:13).

JFB on Numbers 2:10-31



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

“Among other things we must remark that rule of military tactics which requires that the advanced and rear guards should be stronger than the center. In a well-regulated camp, cleanliness is considered indispensably necessary; this is particularly remarkable in the Israelitish army, where the most exact order was maintained. Hence every person who had any kind of disease, and those who were reputed unclean, were forbidden to enter it; Num_5:2, 3; Deu_23:10.”

“Those who have the health of men, and of a whole army confided to them, are not ignorant that diseases may be easily produced by putrid exhalations from excrementitious matter; and that such matter will produce in camps pestilential fevers and dysenteries. For this reason, care should be always taken that offices, at a distance from the camp, be provided for the soldiers, and also that those who are sick should be separated from the others, and sent to hospitals to be properly treated. In military tactics we find two distinct wings spoken of; the right and the left.”

The Israelitish army not only had them on one side, as is customary, but on all their four sides. On the eastern side, the tribe of Issachar formed the right, that of Zebulun the left, and that of Judah the center. On the south, Simeon formed the right wing, Gad the left, and Reuben the center. Towards the west, Manasseh composed the right, Benjamin the left, and Ephraim the center. And on the north, Asher was on the right wing, Naphtali on the left wing, and Dan in the center.

Adam Clarke quoting Scheuchzer



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Notwithstanding this, however, the army was not in danger of being easily broken; for every tribe being numerous, they were supported by several ranks, in such a manner that the first being broken, the second was capable of making resistance; and if the second gave way, or shared the same fate as the first, it found itself supported by the third, and so on with the rest. The square form in which the Jewish army was ordinarily placed, was the very best for security and defense. The use and importance of the hollow square in military tactics is well known. “For so large a multitude of people, and for so numerous an army, it was needful that all the necessary articles of life should be prepared beforehand, or be found ready to purchase. In these respects nothing was wanting to the Israelites. Their bread came down to them from heaven, and they had besides an abundance of every thing that could contribute to magnificence. If we may credit Josephus, they had amongst them public markets, and a variety of shops. Ant., i. iii. c. 12, sec. 5. The tabernacle being erected, it was placed in the midst of the camp, each of the three tribes stretching themselves on the wings, and leaving between them a sufficient space to pass. “It was, says Josephus, like a well appointed market where every thing was ready for sale in due order, and all sorts of artificers kept their shops; so that this camp might be considered a movable city.” In Exo_32:27 we likewise find that mention is made of the gates of the camp: ‘Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate

Adam Clarke quoting Scheuchzer

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

to gate throughout the camp.' From whence we may certainly conclude that if the camp had gates, the Israelites had also sentinels to guard them. If this be true, we may also believe that they were surrounded with entrenchments, or that at least their gates were defended by some fortifications. Sagittarius (de Jan. Vet., c. 18. 10) (says) that the tabernacle was not only guarded by the Levites, but that there were likewise sentinels at the gates, and at the entrance of the Israelitish camps.... "If we examine and compare the camp of Israel with that of our most numerous armies, which in these days are composed of 100,000 or of 150,000 men, we cannot but consider it of vast extent. The Jews say it was twelve miles in circumference; this is not at all improbable, and consequently the front of each wing must be three miles in extent. But taking in the tents, the soldiers and their numerous families, the beasts of burden, the cattle, and the goods, it certainly must have formed a very considerable enclosure, much more than twelve miles.... Reyher (Math. Mos., p. 568) assigns to the Tribe of Judah, A space of 298 2/5 cubits in breadth and 250 in length - Which makes 74,600 square cubits. "We must observe that we are here merely speaking of the ground which the soldiers of this tribe occupied whilst remaining close to each other in their ranks, and that in this computation there is but one cubit square allowed for each man; wherefore, if we take in the arrangement of the soldiers, the tents, the necessary spaces, the families, the beasts of burden, and the movables, a much larger extent of ground is requisite. All those circumstances do not come into Reyher's calculation."

Adam Clarke quoting Scheuchzer

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

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.

33 The Levites, **however**, were not numbered among the sons of Israel, **just as** the LORD had commanded Moses.

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.

Numbers 2 – Organizing the Tribes



Num 2:3-34 - We have here the particular distribution of the twelve tribes into four squadrons, three tribes in a squadron, one of which was to lead the other two. Observe,

1. God himself appointed them their place, to prevent strife and envy among them. Had they been left to determine precedence among themselves, they would have been in danger of quarrelling with one another (as the disciples who strove *which should be greatest*); each would have had a pretence to be first, or at least not to be last. Had it been left to Moses to determine, they would have quarrelled with him, and charged him with partiality; therefore God does it, who is himself the fountain and judge of honour, and in his appointment all must acquiesce. If God in his providence advance others above us, and abase us, we ought to be as well satisfied in his doing it in that way as if he did it, as this was done here, by a voice out of the tabernacle; and this consideration, that it appears to be the will of God it should be so, should effectually silence all envies and discontents. And as far as our place comes to be our choice our Saviour has given us a rule in Luk 14:8, Sit not down in the highest room; and another in Mat 20:27, He that will be chief, let him be your servant. Those that are most humble and most serviceable are really most honourable.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:3-34

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

2. Every tribe had a captain, a prince, or commander-in-chief, whom God himself nominated, the same that had been appointed to number them, Num_1:5. Our being all the children of one Adam is so far from justifying the levellers, and taking away the distinction of place and honour, that even among the children of the same Abraham, the same Jacob, the same Judah, God himself appointed that one should be captain of all the rest. There are powers ordained of God, and those to whom honour and fear are due and must be paid. Some observe the significancy of the names of these princes, at least, in general, how much God was in the thoughts of those that gave them their names, for most of them have *El, God, at one end or other of their names. Nethaneel, the gift of God; Eliab, my God a Father; Elizur, my God a rock; Shelumiel, God my peace; Eliasaph, God has added; Elishama, my God has heard; Gamaliel, God my reward; Pagiel, God has met me.* By this it appears that the Israelites in Egypt did not quite forget the name of their God, but, when they wanted other memorials, preserved the remembrance of it in the names of their children, and therewith comforted themselves in their affliction.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:3-34



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

3. Those tribes were placed together under the same standard that were nearest of kin to each other; Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, were the three younger sons of Leah, and they were put together; and Issachar and Zebulun would not grudge to be under Judah, since they were his younger brethren. Reuben and Simeon would not have been content in their place. Therefore Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, is made chief of the next squadron; Simeon, no doubt, is willing to be under him, and Gad, the son of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, is fitly added to them in Levi's room: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, are all the posterity of Rachel. Dan, the eldest son of Bilhah, is made a leading tribe, though the son of a concubine, that more abundant honour might be bestowed on that which lacked; and it was said, *Dan should judge his people*, and to him were added two younger sons of the handmaids. Thus unexceptionable was the order in which they were placed.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:3-34



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

4. The tribe of Judah was in the first post of honour, encamped towards the rising sun, and in their marches led the van, not only because it was the most numerous tribe, but chiefly because from that tribe Christ was to come, who is the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, and was to descend from the loins of him who was now nominated chief captain of that tribe. Nahshon is reckoned among the ancestors of Christ, Mat_1:4. So that, when he went before them, Christ himself went before them in effect, as their leader. Judah was the first of the twelve sons of Jacob that was blessed. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were censured by their dying father; he therefore being first in blessing, though not in birth, is put first, to teach children how to value the smiles of their godly parents and dread their frowns.
5. The tribes of Levi pitched closely about the tabernacle, within the rest of their tribes, Num_2:17. They must defend the sanctuary, and then the rest of the tribes must defend them. Thus, in the vision which John saw of the glory of heaven, between the elders and the throne were four *living creatures full of eyes*, Rev_4:6, Rev_4:8. Civil powers should protect the religious interests of a nation, and be a defence upon that glory.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:3-34



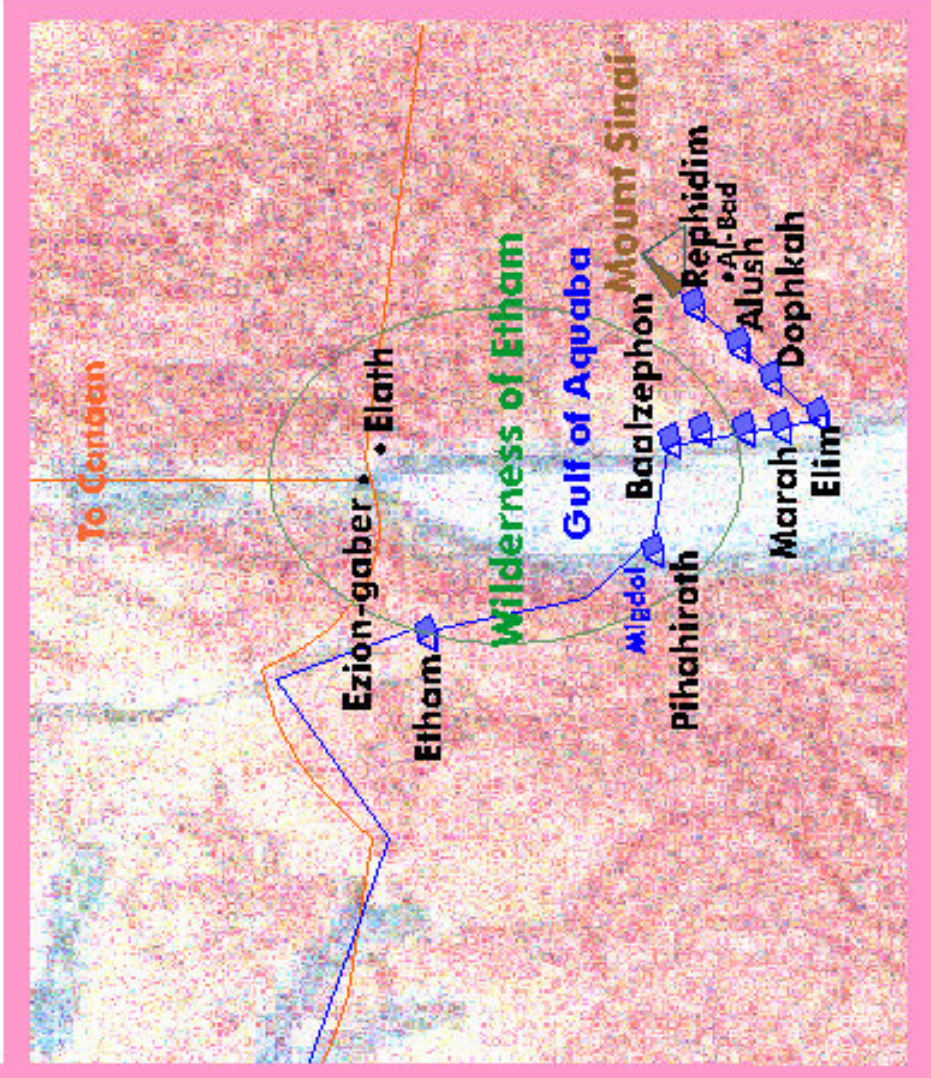
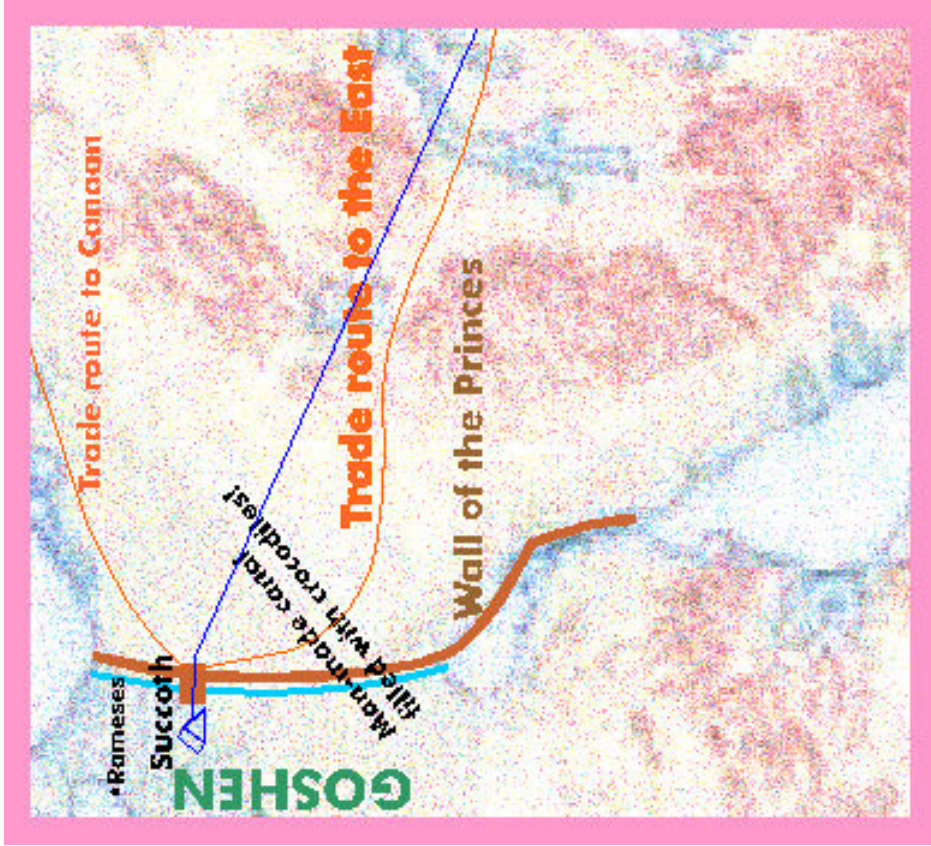
6. The camp of Dan (and so that tribe is called long after their settlement in Canaan (Jdg_13:25), because celebrated for their military prowess), though posted in the left wing when they encamped, was ordered in their march to bring up the rear, Num_2:31. They were the most numerous, next to Judah, and therefore were ordered into a post which, next to the front, required the most strength, for as the strength is so shall the day be.

Lastly, The children of Israel observed the orders given them, and did as the Lord commanded Moses, Num_2:34. They put themselves in the posts assigned them, without murmuring or disputing, and, as it was their safety, so it was their beauty; Balaam was charmed with the sight of it: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! Num_24:5. Thus the gospel church, called the camp of saints, ought to be compact according to the scripture model, every one knowing and keeping his place, and then all that wish well to the church rejoice, beholding their order, Col_2:5.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 2:3-34



The 12 tribal leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Numbers 7:1), a procedure that lasted 12 days



Num 2:33-34 - We have learned now that they must know who they were and where they belonged. They must know their pedigree in order to know their place in the camp. They could not go to war unless they were sure of their position.

Just so, Christian warfare is not carried on in the realm of doubts and fears but in the clear light of a sure salvation. Our enemies today are the world, the flesh, and the devil. My friend, they will overcome you if you are not sure of your salvation.

Every person in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a God-appointed place. All service in the church is to be directed by the Holy Spirit. We are told that by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. When you were put into the body, you were put in as a member. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1Co 12:12-14).

When He puts you into that body, He puts you there to serve. Every believer has a gift. You have a gift. The exercise of that gift is your Christian service.

J. Vernon McGee on Numbers 2:33-34

 **Entrusting the Word to the Faithful**

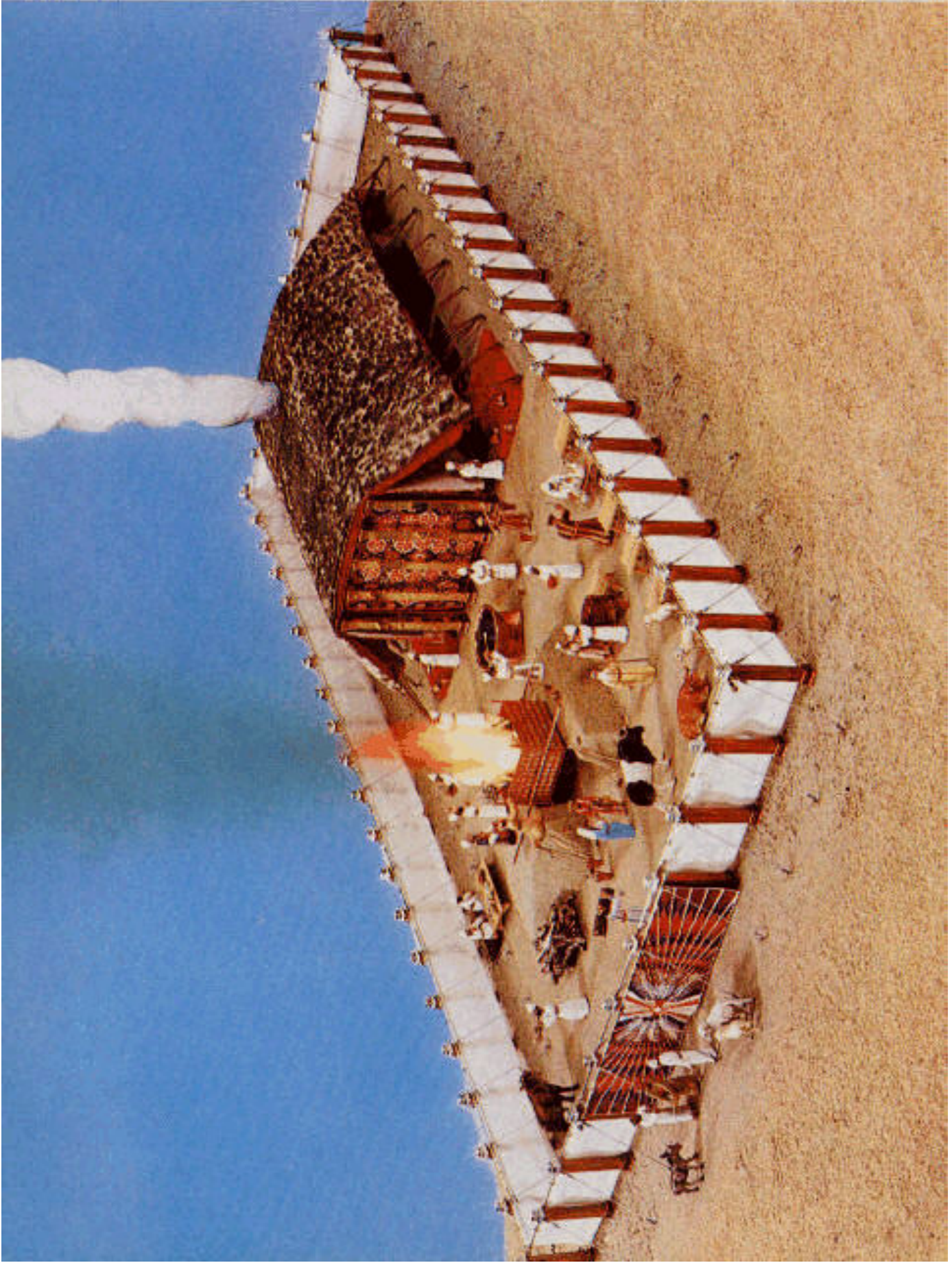
There are many members of the human body and each has its function. There are over 20 bones in the foot alone. So in the body of Christ there are many gifts and each of us is to exercise his gift. You and I are to find out what our gift is. I believe that God rewards His own by the exercise of that gift....

Remember Dorcas? She made clothes. You remember that when she died, they called in Simon Peter and the widows showed him the clothes Dorcas had made for them. Simon Peter probably said, "We had better raise this woman from the dead. The church needs her!" And God raised her from the dead.

Friend, you ought to find your place in the camp. Are you usurping another's place? Are you occupying a place in the church that you really can't fill and that belongs to someone else? We ought to encourage each member of our church to find his place, and that should hearten the humblest member of the church. You have a gift and God wants you to exercise it. Don't try to do someone else's job. You do what God has called you to do.

J. Vernon McGee on Numbers 2:33-34





Detailed Outline of the Book of Numbers

I. Preparations for Travel (Numbers 1:1-10:10)

- A. The First Census (chapter 1)
- B. The Order of the Tribes (chapter 2)
- C. The Census and Duties of the Levites (chapters 3-4)
- D. Cleansing and Consecration (chapters 5-6)
- E. The Tabernacle Service (chapters 7-8)
- E. The Supplementary Passover (chapter 9:1-14)
- F. The Fiery Cloud and the Silver Trumpets (chapters 9:15-10:10)

II. The Journey to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 10:11-14:45)

- A. The Departure from Sinai (chapters 10:11-36)
- B. The Rebellion of the People (chapter 11)
- C. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (chapter 12)
- D. Spying out the Promised Land (chapter 13)
- E. God's Judgment on Unbelief (chapter 14)

III. The Journey to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 15:1-22:1)

- A. Covenant Statutes Reviewed (chapter 15)
- B. The Rebellion of Korah (chapter 16)

- C. The Budding of Aaron's Rod (chapter 17)
- D. The Responsibility of Priests and Levites (chapter 18)
- E. The Red Heifer Sacrifice (chapter 19)
- F. The Waters of Meribah, Edom, Aaron's death (chapter 20)
- G. Journey to Moab (chapters 21:1-22:1)
- F. Balak and Balaam (chapters 22:2-24:25)
- G. The Idolatry of Israel (chapter 25)

IV. Final Preparations for Entering Canaan (Numbers 26:1-36:13)

- A. The Second Census (chapter 26)
- B. Daughters of Zelophehad (chapter 27:1-11)
- C. Joshua appointed as Moses' Successor (chapter 27:12-23)
- D. Laws concerning Offerings and Vows (chapters 28-30)
- E. The War against Midian (chapter 31)
- F. Inheritance of Eastern Tribes (chapter 32)
- G. Resume of the journey from Egypt (chapter 33:1-49)
- H. Final Instructions about Conquest and Inheritance (chapters 33:50-36:13)