
NUMBERS 10:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Moses is commanded to make two silver trumpets for calling the assembly, Num 10:1, Num 10:2. On what occasions these trumpets should be sounded. First, for calling the assembly to the door of the tabernacle, Num 10:3. Secondly, to summon the princes and captains of the thousands of Israel, Num 10:4. Thirdly, to make the eastern camps strike their tents, Num 10:5. Fourthly, to make those on the south do the like, Num 10:6. No alarm to be sounded when the congregation only is to be assembled, Num 10:7. The sons of Aaron alone shall sound these trumpets, it shall be a perpetual ordinance, Num 10:8. Fifthly, the trumpets are to be sounded in the time of war, Num 10:9. Sixthly, on festival occasions, Num 10:10 On the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, the Israelites began their journey from the wilderness of Sinai, and came to the wilderness of Paran, Num 10:11, Num 10:12. By the commandment of God to Moses the first division, at the head of which was the standard of Judah, marched, first, Num 10:13, Num 10:14. Under him followed the tribe of Issachar, Num 10:15; and after them the tribe of Zebulun, Num 10:16. Then the Gershonites and Merarites followed with the tabernacle, Num 10:17. At the head of the second division was the standard and camp of Reuben, Num 10:18; and under him were that of Simeon, Num 10:19; and that of Gad, Num 10:20. Next followed the Kohathites bearing the sanctuary, Num 10:21. Then followed the third division, at the head of which was the standard of the camp of Ephraim, Num 10:22; and under him Manasseh, Num 10:23; and Benjamin, Num 10:24. At the head of the fourth division was the standard of the camp of Dan, Num 10:25; and under him Asher, Num 10:26; and Naphtali, Num 10:27. This was their ordinary method of marching in the wilderness, Num 10:28. Moses entreats Hobab the Midianite to accompany them through the wilderness, Num 10:29. He refuses, Num 10:30. Moses continues and strengthens his entreaties with reasonings and promises, Num 10:31, Num 10:32. They depart from Sinai three days' journey, Num 10:33. The cloud accompanies them by day and night, Num 10:34. The words used by Moses when the ark set forward, Num 10:35, and when it rested, Num 10:36.

NUMBERS 10:2 "Make two trumpets of silver. You shall make them of beaten work. You shall use them for the calling of the congregation, and for the journeying of the camps.

Verse 2

Make thee two trumpets of silver - The necessity of such instruments will at once appear, when the amazing extent of this numerous army is considered; and how even the sound of two trumpets could reach them all is difficult to conceive; but we may suppose that, when they were sounded, the motion of those that were within reach of that sound taught the others in succession what they should do.

As the trumpets were to be blown by the priests only, the sons of Aaron, there were only two, because there were only two such persons to use them at this time, Eleazar and Ithamar. In the time of Joshua there were seven trumpets used by the priests, but these were made, according to our text, of rams' horns, Jos 6:4. In the time of Solomon, when the priests had greatly increased, there were 120 priests sounding with trumpets, 2Chr 5:12.

Josephus intimates that one of these trumpets was always used to call the nobles together, the other to assemble the people; see Num 10:4. It is possible that these trumpets were made of different lengths and wideness, and consequently they would emit different tones. Thus the sound itself would at once show which was the summons for the congregation, and which for the princes only. These trumpets were allowed to be emblematical of the sound of the Gospel, and in this reference they appear to be frequently used. Of the fate of the trumpets of the sanctuary, See the note on Exo 25:31.

NUMBERS 10:3 When they blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

NUMBERS 10:4 If they blow just one, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves to you.

NUMBERS 10:5 When you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall go forward.

Verse 5

When ye blow an alarm - תרועה *teruah*, probably meaning short, broken, sharp tones, terminating with long ones, blown with both the trumpets at once. From the similarity in the words some suppose that the Hebrew *teruah* was similar to the Roman *taratantara*, or sound of their clarion.

NUMBERS 10:6 When you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall go forward. They shall blow an alarm for their journeys.

Verse 6

When ye blow an alarm the second time - A single alarm, as above stated, was a signal for the eastward division to march; two such alarms, the signal for the south division; and probably three for the west division, and four for the north. It is more likely that this was the case, than that a single alarm served for each, with a small interval between them. The camps, or grand divisions of this great army, always lay, as we have already seen, to the east, south, west, and north: and here the east and south camps alone are mentioned; the first containing Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; the second, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. The west and north divisions are not named, and yet we are sure they marched in consequence of express orders or signals, as well as the other two. There appears therefore a deficiency here in the Hebrew text, which is thus supplied by the Septuagint: Και σαλπικετε σημασιαν τριτην, και εξαρουσιν αι παρεμβολαι αι παρεμβαλλουσαι παρα θαλασσαν· και σαλπικετε σημασιαν τεταρτην, και εξαρουσιν αι παρεμβολαι αι παρεμβαλλουσαι προς βορραν. "And when ye blow a third alarm or signal, the camps on the west shall march: and when ye blow a fourth alarm or signal, the camps on the north shall march." This addition, however, is not acknowledged by the Samaritan, nor by any of the other versions but the Coptic. Nor are there any various readings in the collections of Kennicott and De Rossi, which countenance the addition in the above versions. Houbigant thinks this addition so evidently necessary, that he has inserted the Latin in his text, and in a note supplied the Hebrew words, and thinks that these words were originally in

the Hebrew text, but happened to be omitted in consequence of so many similar words occurring so often in the same verse, which might dazzle and deceive the eye of a transcriber.

NUMBERS 10:7 But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm.

NUMBERS 10:8 "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. This shall be to you for a statute forever throughout your generations.

NUMBERS 10:9 When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets. Then you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.

Verse 9

If ye go to war - These trumpets shall be sounded for the purpose of collecting the people together, to deliberate about the war, and to implore the protection of God against their enemies.

Ye shall be remembered before the Lord - When ye decamp, encamp, make war, and hold religious festivals, according to his appointment, which appointment shall be signified to you by the priests, who at the command of God, for such purposes, shall blow the trumpets, then ye may expect both the presence and blessing of Jehovah in all that ye undertake.

NUMBERS 10:10 "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God. I am the LORD your God."

Verse 10

In the day of your gladness - On every festival the people shall be collected by the same means.

NUMBERS 10:11 In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony.

Verse 11

The twentieth day of the second month - The Israelites had lain encamped in the wilderness of Sinai about eleven months and twenty days; compare Exo 19:1 with this verse. They now received the order of God to decamp, and proceed towards the promised land; and therefore the Samaritan introduces at this place the words which we find in Deu 1:6-8 : "The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying: Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount, turn and take your journey," etc.

NUMBERS 10:12 The children of Israel went forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran.

Verse 12

The cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran - This was three days' journey from the wilderness of Sinai, (see Num 10:33), and the people had three stations; the first at Kibroth-hattaavah, the second at Hazeroth, Num 11:35, and the third in the wilderness of Paran, see Num 12:16. But it is extremely difficult to determine these journeyings with any degree of exactness; and we are often at a loss to know whether the place in question was in a direct or retrograde position from the place previously mentioned.

NUMBERS 10:13 They first went forward according to the commandment of the LORD by Moses.

NUMBERS 10:14 First, the standard of the camp of the children of Judah went forward according to their armies. Nahshon the son of Amminadab was over his army.

Verse 14

The standard - of Judah - See this order of marching explained at large on Numbers 2 (note). The following is the order in which this vast company proceeded in their march: -

Judah Issachar Zebulun Gershonites, and Merarites carrying the tabernacle.

Reuben Simeon Gad The Kohathites with the sanctuary.

Ephraim Manasseh Benjamin

Dan Asher Naphtali.

NUMBERS 10:15 Nethanel the son of Zuar was over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar.

NUMBERS 10:16 Eliab the son of Helon was over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun.

NUMBERS 10:17 The tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who bore the tabernacle, went forward.

NUMBERS 10:18 The standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies. Elizur the son of Shedeur was over his army.

NUMBERS 10:19 Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai was over the army of the tribe of the children of Simeon.

NUMBERS 10:20 Eliasaph the son of Deuel was over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad.

NUMBERS 10:21 The Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary. The others set up the tabernacle before they arrived.

NUMBERS 10:22 The standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies. Elishama the son of Ammihud was over his army.

NUMBERS 10:23 Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur was over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh.

NUMBERS 10:24 Abidan the son of Gideoni was over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin.

NUMBERS 10:25 The standard of the camp of the children of Dan, which was the rear guard of all the camps, set forward according to their armies. Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai was over his army.

NUMBERS 10:26 Pagiel the son of Ocran was over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher.

NUMBERS 10:27 Ahira the son of Enan was over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali.

NUMBERS 10:28 Thus were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies; and they went forward.

NUMBERS 10:29 Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are journeying to the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has spoken good concerning Israel."

Verse 29

Moses said unto Hobab - For a circumstantial account of this person see the notes on Exo 2:15, Exo 2:16 (note), Exo 2:18 (note); Exo 3:1; Exo 4:20 (note), Exo 4:24 (note); and for the transaction recorded here, and which is probably out of its place, see Exo 18:5 (note), where the subject is discussed at large.

We are journeying - God has brought us out of thralldom, and we are thus far on our way through the wilderness, travelling towards the place of rest which he has appointed us, trusting in his promise, guided by his presence, and supported by his power. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good. Those who wish to enjoy the heavenly inheritance must walk in the way towards it, and associate with the people who are going in that way. True religion is ever benevolent. They who know most of the goodness of God are the most forward to invite others to partake of that goodness. That religion which excludes all others from salvation, unless they believe a particular creed, and worship in a particular way, is not of God. Even Hobab, the Arab, according to the opinion of Moses, might receive the same blessings which God had promised to Israel, provided he accompanied them in the same way.

The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel - The name Israel is taken in a general sense to signify the followers of God, and to them all the promises in the Bible are made. God has spoken good of them, and he has spoken good to them; and not one word that he hath spoken shall fail. Reader, hast thou left thy unhallowed connections in life? Hast thou got into the camp of the Most High? Then continue to follow God with Israel, and thou shalt be incorporated in the heavenly family, and share in Israel's benedictions.

NUMBERS 10:30 He said to him, "I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my relatives."

Verse 30

I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred - From the strong expostulations in Num 10:31 and Num 10:32, and from Jdg 1:16; Jdg 4:11, and 1Sam 15:6, it is likely that Hobab changed his mind; or that, if he did go back to Midian, he returned again to Israel, as the above scriptures show that his posterity dwelt among the Israelites in Canaan. Reader, after having been almost persuaded to become a Christian, to take Christ, his cross, his reproach, and his crown, for thy portion, art thou again purposing to go back to thy own land, and to thy kindred? Knowest thou not that this land is the place of destruction - that the children of this world, who are not taking God for their portion, are going to perdition? Up, get thee hence, for the Lord will destroy this place by fire; and all who are not of the kindred and family of Christ shall perish at the brightness of his appearing!

NUMBERS 10:31 He said, "Don't leave us, please; because you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes."

Verse 31

Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes - But what need had they of Hobab, when they had the pillar and fire continually to point out their way? Answer: The cloud directed their general journeys, but not their particular excursions. Parties took several journeys while the grand army lay still. (See Numbers 13, 20, 31, 32, etc). They therefore needed such a person as Hobab, who was well acquainted with the desert, to direct these particular excursions; to point them out watering places, and places where they might meet with fuel, etc., etc. What man cannot, under the direction of God's providence, do for himself, God will do in the way of especial mercy. He could have directed them to the fountains and to the places of fuel, but Hobab can do this, therefore let Hobab be employed; and let Hobab know for his encouragement that, while he is serving others in the way of God's providence, he is securing his own best interests. On these grounds Hobab should be invited, and for this reason Hobab should go. Man cannot do God's work; and God will not do the work which he has qualified and commanded man to perform. Thus then the Lord is ever seen, even while he is helping man by man. See some valuable observations on this subject in Harmer, vol. ii., 286. Instead of, And thou mayest be to us instead of eyes, the Septuagint translate the passage thus: Καὶ εσὴ ἐν ἡμῖν πρεσβυτῆς, And thou shalt be an elder among us. But Moses probably refers to Hobab's accurate knowledge of the wilderness, and to the assistance he could give them as a guide.

NUMBERS 10:32 It shall be, if you go with us, yes, it shall be, that whatever good the LORD does to us, we will do the same to you."

NUMBERS 10:33 They set forward from the Mount of the LORD three days' journey. The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them.

Verse 33

The ark - went before them - We find from Num 10:21 that the ark was carried by the Kohathites in the center of the army; but as the army never moved till the cloud was taken up, it is said to go before them, i. e., to be the first to move, as without this motion the Israelites continued in their encampments.

NUMBERS 10:34 The cloud of the LORD was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp.

NUMBERS 10:35 When the ark went forward, Moses said, "Rise up, LORD, and let your enemies be scattered! Let those who hate you flee before you!"

Verse 35

Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered - If God did not arise in this way and scatter his enemies, there could be no hope that Israel could get safely through the wilderness. God must go first, if Israel would wish to follow in safety.

NUMBERS 10:36 When it rested, he said, "Return, LORD, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel."

Verse 36

Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel - These were the words spoken by Moses, at the moment the divisions halted in order to pitch their tents. In reference to this subject, and the history with which it is connected, the 68th Psalm seems to have been composed, though applied by David to the bringing the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. See the notes on Psalm 68 (note). Many thousands, literally the ten thousand thousands. Unless the ark went with them, and the cloud of the Divine glory with it, they could have neither direction nor safety; unless the ark rested with them, and the cloud of glory with it, they could have neither rest nor comfort. How necessary are the word of God and the Spirit of God for the direction, comfort, and defense of every genuine follower of Christ! Reader, pray to God that thou mayest have both with thee through all the wilderness, through all the changes and chances of this mortal life: if thou be guided by his counsel, thou shalt be at last received into his glory.