

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 2

This chapter contains the order of the encampment and march of the tribes of Israel in their proper places about the tabernacle; the general direction for the same is in (^{-0400E}Numbers 1:1,2); the particulars follow; on the east of the tabernacle the camp of Judah was to pitch, and under his standard the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, (^{-0400B}Numbers 1:3-9); on the south side of it the camp of Reuben, and under his standard the tribes of Simeon and Gad, (^{-0400D}Numbers 1:10-16); then the tabernacle, with the camp of the Levites round it, were next, to stand or set forward, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁷Numbers 1:17); and on the west side the camp of Ephraim, and under his standard the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, (⁻⁰⁴⁰¹⁸Numbers 1:18-24); and on the north side the camp of Dan, and under his standard the tribes of Asher and Naphtali, (⁻⁰⁴⁰²⁵Numbers 1:25-31); the sum total of the numbers of which camps are given, exclusive of the camp of Levi, (⁻⁰⁴⁰³²Numbers 1:32,33); and the chapter is concluded with observing, that all was done according to the commandment of God, (⁻⁰⁴⁰³⁴Numbers 1:34).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron,* etc.] Very probably after the number of the children of Israel was taken, of which in the preceding chapter, and when the congregation of Israel with the tabernacle were about to set forward on their journey; and therefore directions are here given for their orderly and regular proceeding in it, in what form and manner they should both encamp and march;

saying: as follows.

Ver. 2. *Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard,* etc.] Or banner, of which there were four, as appears from the following account, under each of which were placed three tribes; and so every man of each tribe was to pitch his tent in the tribe he belonged to, and by the standard under which his tribe was marshalled, and in the rank that he was placed:

with the ensigns of their father's house; which were either lesser standards or banners, somewhat different from the great standard or banner, which

belonged to the camp consisting of three tribes, and which were peculiar to their several families and houses, and distinguished one from another, like flags in different regiments; or these were signs^{f6}, as the word may be rendered, or marks in the standards or banners, which, distinguished one from another; so the Targum of Jonathan, the signs which were marked in their standards: but what they were is not easy to say; Aben Ezra observes, and Abendana from him, that their ancients were used to say, that there was in the standard of Reuben the form of a man, on account of the mandrakes, (~~1304~~Genesis 30:14); and in the standard of Judah the form of a lion, because Jacob compared him to one, (~~0409~~Genesis 49:9); and in the standard of Ephraim the form of an ox, from the sense of those words, the firstling of his bullock, (~~6307~~Deuteronomy 33:17); and in the standard of Dan the form of an eagle, so that they might be like the cherubim the prophet Ezekiel saw, (~~3010~~Ezekiel 1:10), which is not very likely, such images and representations not being very agreeable, yea, even detestable to the people of the Jews in later times, and can hardly be thought to be in use with their early ancestors: others, as Jarchi, fancy that those standards were distinguished by their colours, as our flags or ensigns are; which, if they stopped here, would not be much amiss, but they go on and say, that each was according to the colour of his stone fixed in the breastplate, so that there were three colours in every flag or standard; thus, for instance, in the standard of Judah, which is the first, were the colours of the three precious stones, on which were the names of Judah, Issachar, and Reuben, namely, the emerald, sapphire, and diamond; and so in the rest of the standards; but others say, the letters of the names of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, differently disposed of, were on those standards; but rather, one would think, the names of the three tribes under every standard were embroidered on them, which would sufficiently distinguish one from another, and direct where tribe was to pitch; but of those things there is no certainty:

far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch: a mile from it, according to Jarchi, or two thousand cubits, which is supposed to be a sabbath day's journey, (~~4012~~Acts 1:12); and this distance is gathered from (~~0606~~Joshua 3:4), and is not improbable.

Ver. 3. *And on the east side, towards the rising of the sun,* etc.] Which rises in the east; or of all; for, as Jarchi observes, that which is “before” is called “Kedem”, the east, as the west is called “behind”:

shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch, throughout their armies; the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, formed one camp, which had its name from the principal tribe Judah; and this was divided into various regiments and companies, called armies, who severally pitched under one and the same standard. It is said ¹⁷ 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, (¹³²²1 Chronicles 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, (⁰⁴¹³Genesis 49:13);

and Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, [shall be] captain of the children of Judah; who had been assisting in numbering the people, and who afterwards offered to the dedication of the altar, (⁰⁴⁰²Numbers 1:2 7:2).

Ver. 4. *And his host, and those that were numbered of them*, etc.] As they had been before; and, supposing these words to be the words of God, there is no necessity of rendering them in the future, as some have observed; though they seem rather to be the words of Moses, who under every tribe repeats the number, which is exactly the same as when taken; and though it was not till twenty days after that they set forward according to their order of encampment, not one of them died, which Aben Ezra observes as a very wonderful thing;

[were] threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred; the number of the tribe of Judah were 74,600; (see ⁰⁴⁰²Numbers 1:27).

Ver. 5. *And those that do pitch next unto him [shall be] the tribe of Issachar*, etc.] 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:

and Nethaneel, the son of Zuar, [shall be] captain of the children of Issachar; (see ⁰⁴⁰⁸Numbers 1:8 7:18).

Ver. 6. *And his host*, etc.] The host of Issachar;

and those that were numbered thereof, [were] fifty and four thousand and four hundred.] 54,400 men. Which had been numbered, for it does not appear that there was a fresh account taken; (see ^{<0012>}Numbers 1:29).

Ver. 7. [*Then the tribe of Zebulun*, etc.] He pitched next; though the order of their encampment was not, as it may seem, first Judah, after him Issachar, and below him Zebulun; for Judah lay between these two, the one before him, and the other behind him; and it was Issachar that was behind, and Zebulun before, as Aben Ezra observes; they were pitched on each side of the standard of Judah, one on one side, and the other on the other side:

and Eliab, the son of Helon, [shall be], captain of the children of Zebulun; (see ^{<0013>}Numbers 1:9 7:24); each tribe had its own captain; nor does it appear that there was a general over those captains, that had the command of the camp, consisting of three tribes, but Moses was the generalissimo of all the camps.

Ver. 8. *And his host*, etc.] That is, the host of Zebulun;

and those that were numbered thereof, [were] fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. 57,400 men; (see ^{<0014>}Numbers 1:31).

Ver. 9. *All that were numbered in the camp of Judah [were] an hundred thousand and fourscore thousand and six thousand and four hundred, throughout their armies*, etc.] 186,400 men. The sum total of the three tribes, which formed that camp: this was the largest camp of them all, being near 30,000 more than Dan's, (^{<0015>}Numbers 2:31), which was the next in number unto it, and therefore placed foremost, and as the vanguard to the tabernacle:

these shall first set forth; in a march, when about to journey; when they saw the cloud remove, the priests blew with the trumpets, and then the camp of Judah moved first, as Jarchi observes, and when they went out to fight, Judah went up first, (^{<0016>}Judges 1:1,2).

Ver. 10. *On the south side [shall be] the standard of the camp of Reuben, according to their armies*, etc.] This camp consisted of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, which was divided into lesser bodies, regiments, or companies, called armies; and this was placed to the south of the tabernacle, or to the right hand, as Aben Ezra interprets it; this was the right wing of the whole army. Reuben's stone, according to the Jewish writers ^{f8}, 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, (^{<0499>}Genesis 49:19);

and the captain of the children of Reuben [shall be] Elizur the son of Shedeur; (see ^{<0406>}Numbers 1:5 7:30).

Ver. 11. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Reuben, as distinct from his camp, of which it was only a part, and of which Elizur was captain;

and those that were numbered thereof, [were] forty and six thousand and five hundred.] 46,500 men; (see ^{<0402>}Numbers 1:21).

Ver. 12. *And those which pitch by him [shall be] the tribe of Simeon,* etc.] 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:

and the captain of the children of Simeon [shall be] Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai; of whom (see ^{<0406>}Numbers 1:6 7:36).

Ver. 13. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Simeon:

and those that were numbered of them, [were] fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. 59,300 men; the same as in (^{<0403>}Numbers 1:23).

Ver. 14. *Then the tribe of Gad,* etc.] 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, (^{<0414>}Numbers 1:14 7:42). The letters **r**, "resh", and **d**, "daleth", being similar, are sometimes put one for the other, of which there are other instances, as in (^{<0103>}Genesis 10:3,4), compared with (^{<1006>}1 Chronicles 1:6,7).

Ver. 15. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Gad, as distinct from those of Reuben and Simeon, which together formed the camp;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] forty and five thousand and six hundred and fifty.] 45,650 men; (see ^{<40125>}Numbers 1:25).

Ver. 16. *And all that were numbered in the camp of Reuben [were] an hundred thousand and fifty and one thousand and four hundred and fifty, throughout their armies, etc.]* 151,450 men. Putting Reuben's host, and the hosts of Simeon and Gad together, (^{<40123>}Numbers 2:13,15), which was much lesser than the preceding camp, being 34,500 fewer in number:

and they shall set forth in the second rank: they in journeying moving next to the camp of Judah, and before the tabernacle; for though, while encamped, the camp of Reuben lay on the south, or right side of it, yet, when marching, went before it.

Ver. 17. *Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites, etc.]* Which reached four miles, according to the Targum of Jonathan, as did Judah's. Levi's stone, as the Jews say ^{f9}, 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" ^{f10}; 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:

as they encamp, so shall they set forward; this is to be understood, according to Aben Ezra, not of the camp of Levi, since the standard of Judah was to the east, and the Gershonites, which were to the west of the sanctuary, and the Merarites in the north, set forward together; but of the camps of Israel, which set forward, not as they were encamped about the tabernacle, for those that were encamped on the side of it, in marching went before and behind, but as they were encamped with respect to themselves; first marched the standard of Judah, then that of Reuben, which went before, and then those of Ephraim and Dan, which followed; and besides, as each camp was pitched, so it moved; as the camp of Judah, his host marched between those of Issachar and Zebulun, and the same order the rest observed:

every man in his place by their standards, as every individual person in the several tribes were ranked under their respective banners, so they marched.

Ver. 18. *On the west side [shall be] the standard of the camp of Ephraim, according to their armies,* etc.] It was in the rear or behind, consisting of his tribe, and of the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, divided into several companies, and extended four miles, as the above Targum. The Jewish writers say^{f11}, 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 (^{<06317>}Deuteronomy 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 (^{<04427>}Genesis 49:27);

and the captain of the sons of Ephraim [shall be] Elishama the son of Ammihud; of whom (see ^{<00110>}Numbers 1:10 7:48).

Ver. 19. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Ephraim;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] forty thousand and five hundred. 40,500 men. Not his camp, but his host, or the army, which consisted only of his own tribe (see ^{<00133>}Numbers 1:33).

Ver. 20. *And by him [shall be] the tribe of Manasseh,* etc.] 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:

and the captain of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; the same as in (^{<00110>}Numbers 1:10 7:54).

Ver. 21. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Manasseh;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] thirty and two thousand and two hundred. 32,200 men; (see ^{<00135>}Numbers 1:35).

Ver. 22. *Then the tribe of Benjamin,* etc.] He was to pitch under the same standard of Ephraim, and the other side of it from that of Manasseh; the

one being before, and the other behind, and the standard in the middle; (see Gill on “⁽⁰⁴¹⁷⁾Numbers 2:7”);

and the captains of the sons of Benjamin [shall be] Abidan the son of Gideoni; of whom (see ⁽⁰⁴¹¹⁾Numbers 1:11 7:60).

Ver. 23. *And his host*, etc. That is, the host of Benjamin;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] thirty and five thousand and four hundred. 35,400 men. The least number of all the tribes, excepting the tribe of Manasseh, (⁽⁰⁴²¹⁾Numbers 2:21); (see ⁽⁰⁴¹⁵⁾Numbers 1:37).

Ver. 24. *All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim [were] an hundred thousand and eight thousand and an hundred, throughout their armies*, etc.] 108,100 men. Which was the smallest of all the camps, and near eighty thousand fewer than the camp of Judah, (⁽⁰⁴¹⁹⁾Numbers 2:9):

and they shall go forward in the third rank; and which was the first following the tabernacle.

Ver. 25. *The standard of the camp of Dan [shall be] on the north side by their armies*, etc.] To the left of the tabernacle as encamped, and so was the left wing of the grand army; it consisted of the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, in which were several divisions and companies, whose camp also the Targum of Jonathan says reached four miles. According to the Jewish writers ^{f12}, 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 (⁽⁰⁴¹⁷⁾Genesis 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 (⁽⁰⁴¹⁹⁾Genesis 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 (⁽⁰⁴²¹⁾Genesis 49:21):

and the captain of the children of Dan [shall be] Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; who made mention of in (⁽⁰⁴¹⁰⁾Numbers 1:10 7:66).

Ver. 26. *And his host*, etc.] That is, the host of Dan;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. 62,700 men, which agrees with the account of this tribe in (⁽⁰⁴¹³⁾Numbers 1:39).

Ver. 27. *And those that encamp by him [shall be] the tribe of Asher,* etc.] 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:

and the captain of the children of Asher [shall be] Pagiel the son of Ocran; the same as in (⁴⁰¹³Numbers 1:13 7:72).

Ver. 28. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Asher;

and those that were numbered of them, [were] forty and one thousand and five hundred. 41,500 men; as they were numbered (⁴⁰⁴⁴Numbers 1:41).

Ver. 29. *Then the tribe of Naphtali,* etc.] That was to pitch by the same standard of Dan, on the other side of it:

and the captain of the children of Naphtali [shall be] Ahira the son of Enan; who is mentioned (⁴⁰¹⁵Numbers 1:15 7:78).

Ver. 30. *And his host,* etc.] That is, the host of Naphtali;

and those that were numbered of them; not that some part of the tribe of Naphtali was numbered, which made up the host Ahira was captain of, but the whole of it, who were all numbered that were of twenty years of age and upwards; and the same is to be observed in all the above places, where this phrase is used;

[were] fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 53,400 men; (see ⁴⁰⁴³Numbers 1:43).

Ver. 31. *All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan [were] an hundred thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred,* etc.] 157,600 men. Consisting of his own tribe, and those of Asher and Naphtali, which make the largest camp next to Judah:

they shall go hindmost with their standards; for though, while encamped, they lay to the north, or the left side of the tabernacle, yet, when marching, they brought up the rear, and were the rear guard to the tabernacle; so that it had in its van and rear the two largest camps, which were wisely ordered

for its safety: “standards” is put for “standard”, the plural for the singular; for there was but one standard to a camp, unless this takes in their ensigns, of which they had many.

Ver. 32. *These [are] those that were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers,* etc.] As the number was taken by Moses and Aaron, assisted by twelve princes of the tribe, who were now constituted captains over them, as so many hosts or armies:

all those that were numbered of the camp throughout their hosts: of the four camps, of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan, throughout the respective tribes or hosts that belonged to each of them,

[were] six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty; 603,550 men, which is exactly the sum total of them, as taken (⁴⁰⁴⁶Numbers 1:46). It is a large number, considering in how short a time, and that great part of it a state of bondage, from seventy persons, they rose unto it; but the spiritual Israel of God, consisting of his people of all nations, is a number which no man can number, (⁶⁰⁰⁹Revelation 7:9); besides, the number of the sealed ones, of every tribe, (⁰⁰⁴⁸Numbers 2:4-8); Now this encampment of the people of Israel was an emblem of the form and order of the spiritual Israel or church of God, under the Gospel dispensation. Christ in human nature is the tabernacle, who is in the midst of his people by his gracious presence; as the heart and life of the congregation of his saints, in whom they all centre and terminate, and where he sits enthroned as King of saints; and as the Levites encamped in four squadrons next unto the tabernacle, all around it, to these answer the living creatures in (²⁰⁰⁵Ezekiel 1:5 ⁶⁰⁰⁶Revelation 4:6); which design the ministers of the word, who are in the highest place in the church, between Christ and the congregation, and are near to him, to be supplied by him; then encamped the whole body of the people of Israel by their standards, with their ensigns, to whom answer the wheels in (²⁰¹⁵Ezekiel 1:15 10:9); and the twenty four elders in (⁶⁰⁰⁴Revelation 4:4); all which show the church to be militant, and that there is an order in Gospel churches, which makes them both comely and terrible, (²⁰⁶⁴Song of Solomon 6:4 ⁵⁰⁰⁵Colossians 1:5); and may teach every member to abide by his standard, and follow his ensign and ensign bearer, (²⁰¹⁰Isaiah 11:10 ⁶⁰⁴⁰Revelation 14:4 ⁶¹⁰¹1 Corinthians 11:1).

Ver. 33. *But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel,* etc.] At this time, not among the Israelites, but by themselves, they being a camp of themselves:

as the Lord commanded Moses; (⁴⁰¹⁴⁸Numbers 1:48,49).

Ver. 34. *And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses,* etc.] Formed themselves into camps, so many tribes to a camp, and over each tribe or host appointed a captain, and erected a standard to each camp, by which they pitched as directed, which is next particularly observed:

so they pitched by their standards; every tribe, and every person in the tribe, as they were ranked, pitched by the standard to which they belonged:

and so they set forward, after their families according to the house of their fathers; the camps, and the tribes in them the families in those tribes, and the houses or lesser families under them, when they marched, proceeded in this regular order, as they did on the twentieth of this month; (see ⁴⁰¹¹¹Numbers 10:11,12).