

**Exegetical Notes, Numbers 2:1-34**  
**“Structural Order”**

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**Numbers 2:1-34**

**Verse 1-2**

*YHWH said to Moses and Aaron: “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.”*

- Having counted the men of military age according to the instructions God gave, the camp is now put in structured order according to God's command.
- Each tribe will have its own place so that the people know exactly where they are to be according to God's plan. There is no uncertainty. Everybody has their place and should be able to recognize it.

**Verse 3-9**

*On the east, toward the sunrise, the divisions of the camp of Judah are to encamp under their standard. The leader of the people of Judah is Nahshon son of Amminadab. His division numbers 74,600. The tribe of Issachar will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Issachar is Nethanel son of Zuar. His division numbers 54,400. The tribe of Zebulun will be next. The leader of the people of Zebulun is Eliab son of Helon. His division numbers 57,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Judah, according to their divisions, number 186,400. They will set out first.*

- The first division of the camp is set on the east side of the Tent of Meeting. It is known as the camp of Judah. The division was composed of the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.
- Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun are the sons of Jacob and his wife Leah.
- The standard of the division of Judah bore the face of a lion according to Hebrew tradition.

- It seems strange that first place should be given to Judah as Judah is Jacob's fourth born, not first born son. However, Judah was the brother who held out against the others when Joseph was sold into slavery and Judah is the tribe from which the Messiah will come.
- When the camp moved forward in march, Judah led the procession.

### **Verse 10-16**

*On the south will be the divisions of the camp of Reuben under their standard. The leader of the people of Reuben is Elizur son of Shedeur. His division numbers 46,500. The tribe of Simeon will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Simeon is Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai. His division numbers 59,300. The tribe of Gad will be next. The leader of the people of Gad is Eliasaph son of Deuel. His division numbers 45,650. All the men assigned to the camp of Reuben, according to their divisions, number 151,450. They will set out second.*

- The second division of the camp, set on the south side of the Tent of Meeting, was the camp of Reuben. This division was composed of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad.
- Reuben and Simeon were the sons of Jacob and Leah. Reuben was Jacob's first born son. Gad was the son of Jacob and Zilpah, Leah's maid.
- The standard of the division of Reuben bore the image of a man.
- When the camp moved forward in march, Reuben came second.

### **Verse 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 own standard.*

- In the center of the camp was the Tent of Meeting. Surrounding the Tent of the Meeting were the tents of the people of Levi. The camp of the Levites served as a barrier of protection between the people and the Tent of Meeting.

### **Verse 18-24**

*On the west will be the divisions of the camp of Ephraim under their standard. The leader of the people of Ephraim is Elishama son of Ammihud. His division numbers 40,500. The tribe of Manasseh will be next to them. The leader of the people of Manasseh is Gamaliel son of Pedahzur. His division numbers 32,200. The tribe of Benjamin will be*

***next. The leader of the people of Benjamin is Abidan son of Gideoni. His division numbers 35,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Ephraim, according to their divisions, number 108,100. They will set out third.***

- The third division of the camp is set on the west side of the Tent of Meeting. It is known as the camp of Ephraim.
- Ephraim and Manasseh are the sons of Joseph, who was the son of Jacob and his wife Rachel, who were adopted by Jacob. Though Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph, he was given greater blessing by his grandfather Jacob. Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's son. His mother was Rachel, Jacob's wife.
- The standard of the division of Ephraim bore the image of an ox according to Hebrew tradition.

#### **Verse 25-31**

***On the north will be the divisions of the camp of Dan, under their standard. The leader of the people of Dan is Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. His division numbers 62,700. The tribe of Asher will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Asher is Pagiel son of Ocran. His division numbers 41,500. The tribe of Naphtali will be next. The leader of the people of Naphtali is Ahira son of Enan. His division numbers 53,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Dan number 157,600. They will set out last, under their standards.***

- The fourth division of the camp is set on the north side of the Tent of Meeting. It is known as the camp of Dan.
- Dan and Naphtali are the sons of Jacob and Bilhah, Rachel's maid. Asher is the son of Jacob and Zilpah, Leah's maid.
- The standard of the division of Dan bore the image of an eagle according to Hebrew tradition.
- When the camp moved out, this division came last in the line of march.

#### **Verse 32-34**

***These are the Israelites, counted according to their families. All those in the camps, by their divisions, number 603,550. The Levites, however, were not counted along with the other Israelites, as YHWH commanded Moses. So the Israelites did everything YHWH commanded Moses; that is the way they encamped under their standards, and that is the way they set out, each with his clan and family.***

- Israel followed the instructions God had given to her through Moses exactly.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Structural Order*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)