

**Numbers 10:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,  
Numbers 10:2 Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.**

**Numbers 10:3 And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.**

I think it is good to remind ourselves that this record, along with others in scripture, was not necessarily written in a chronological format, while some others are. This usually becomes apparent from the context. Also, many times the focus is more on the big picture. The details are included when they are needed to help our understanding of the things that God wants us to learn as we study His word. Moses is making a record as inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and includes everything He intends for us to know.

*Romans 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime **were written for our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

*1 Corinthians 10:9–11 "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and **they are written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

This chapter opens with the LORD instructing Moses to make two trumpets. Each one is to be made from a solid piece of silver. They are to be used to call the people to assemble at the door of the tabernacle and to signal that it was time to journey. The NIV Commentary notes: "The silver trumpet was a long, straight, slender metal tube with a flared end." According to JFB, Josephus informs us that the arch of Titus represents that these trumpets were "straight, a cubit or more in length, the tubes of the thickness of a flute." JFB also explains that the sound from these trumpets would "be quite sufficient, for sound is conveyed easily through the pure atmosphere and reverberated strongly among the valleys of the Sinaitic hills."

Considering the size of the congregation, I liked Adam Clarke's observation: "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."

I love to study prophecy and what to expect in the future, and I remember the special insights that Jon Courson shared about these two trumpets in connection with that subject. He noted that just as these two trumpets were used to call the people together and announce that it was time to depart, so too would the trump of God be used to call His people out with the rapture to depart for heaven. He also noted that there were only two times in scripture (symbolized with the two trumpets) that the trump of God was referenced as being used. (1) In Exodus when they gathered to hear from God at Sinai and (2) in the New Testament

both in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians in reference to the rapture of the church.

*Exodus 19:16–18 “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.”*

*1 Corinthians 15:51–52 “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”*

*1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

Other things that point to the trump of God at the rapture as the last trump:

- The other trumpets mentioned in Revelation are blown by angels.
- When Jesus gathers together the nations before His throne to determine who will get to enter the kingdom, it is not preceded with the trump of God.
- Other places in scripture (besides those above) that connect God’s voice with a trumpet

*Hebrews 12:19 “And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.... (in reference to Exodus 19)*

*Revelation 1:10–11 “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last....”*

*Revelation 4:1 “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither....”*

Obviously, these thoughts do not bear on this passage in Numbers, but the applications Courson made make sense and are certainly thought provoking.

Joe Focht pointed out that the people were to be ready at any moment to respond to the signal of the trumpets. The obvious prophetic comparison—Are we ready to hear God’s trumpet that will call us home at any moment? Are you looking forward to that moment? Are we living so as not to be ashamed when that time comes?

**Numbers 10:4 And if they blow *but with one trumpet*, then the princes, which**

***are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee.***  
**Numbers 10:5 When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward.**  
**Numbers 10:6 When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys.**  
**Numbers 10:7 But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm.**  
**Numbers 10:8 And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations.**

This section implies that the use of the trumpets involved different sounds and/or signals to convey different messages. Only the sons of Aaron, the priests, were to blow the trumpets—not the Levites. At the sound of one trumpet, the princes or heads of Israel were to gather together before Moses at the tabernacle. At the sound of an alarm (obviously a specific identifiable sound), the camps on the east of the tabernacle were to move forward. The second alarm signaled that the camps on the south were to move forward. A different sounding alarm was used to call the whole congregation to gather together.

Explanatory note: Obviously, the camps on the north and west were not addressed regarding the signal to move camp. JFB notes that the Septuagint states that “on three alarms being sounded, those on the west; while on four blasts, those on the north decamped.” (That is a bit confusing to me since the west was to march in the rear. I guess they didn’t necessarily have to blow the signal in order of the number of alarms.)

**Numbers 10:9 And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.**

This verse implies that yet a different sound from the trumpets signaled an alarm that called for the LORD to save them from any enemy who might choose to attack them in an act of war once they were in the promised land.

The NIV Commentary explains it this way: “The trumpet blast was analogous to prayer, a means of participation in activating the will of God. By blowing the trumpets before the battle, Israel expected God’s active presence in the battle scene.”

**Numbers 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I *am* the LORD your God.**

The trumpets were also to be used to reflect gladness and in conjunction with appointed feast days (from the Hebrew for solemn days) in connection with the

burnt offerings and sacrifices for peace offerings. This seems to be another way of showing their submission to and recognition of God as their LORD.

**Numbers 10:11 ¶ And it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony.**

**Numbers 10:12 And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.**

**Numbers 10:13 And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**

We have another time marker in these verses—the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year since leaving Egypt. On this day the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle signaling that the children of Israel were to prepare to depart from the wilderness of Sinai. It eventually came to rest in the wilderness of Paran. According to Eerdman’s Dictionary, Paran was “a desert region S of Judah, W of Edom, and N of the wilderness of Sinai, and probably encompassing Kadesh-barnea.”

Point is made that Moses was directing their journey according to the LORD’s command.

JFB points out that it should only have taken a few weeks for the LORD to lead them into conquest of the land of Canaan from this place.

I liked David Guzik’s observation: “One would be tempted to think that after such extensive preparation - a virtual transformation from slave people to Promised Land people - the actual entering into the Promised Land would be easy. This was not the case. The preparation was exactly that - preparation. Ahead of them are the greatest challenges, challenges that can only be met by faith. A soldier might think boot camp finishes something - but it doesn’t. It only prepares for a greater challenge: The actual battle itself.”

**Numbers 10:14 In the first *place* went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host *was* Nahshon the son of Amminadab.**

**Numbers 10:15 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar *was* Nethaneel the son of Zuar.**

**Numbers 10:16 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun *was* Eliab the son of Helon.**

As previously commanded, the camp of Judah on the east led the departure—the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Their leaders were Nahshon the son of Amminadab, Nethaneel the son of Zuar and Eliab the son of Helon respectively.

**Numbers 10:17 And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle.**

**Numbers 10:18 And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host *was* Elizur the son of Shedeur.**

**Numbers 10:19 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon *was* Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.**

**Numbers 10:20 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Gad *was* Eliasaph the son of Deuel.**

The record here notes that the tabernacle was taken down and that the sons of Gershon and Merari followed next carrying all the things necessary to assemble the tabernacle in readiness for receiving the most holy things. (This differs from the general overview given in Numbers 2, but makes sense in view of the lead time necessary to be ready to place the most holy things in the holy place.) These two groups of Levites were to be followed by the camp of Reuben—the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad. Their leaders were Elizur the son of Shedeur, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai and Eliasaph the son of Deuel respectively.

**Numbers 10:21 And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and *the other* did set up the tabernacle against they came.**

The camp of Reuben was to be followed by the Kohathites who carried the most holy things pertaining to the sanctuary. Moses notes that the tabernacle would be ready to receive them due to their lead time.

**Numbers 10:22 And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host *was* Elishama the son of Ammihud.**

**Numbers 10:23 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh *was* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.**

**Numbers 10:24 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin *was* Abidan the son of Gideoni.**

The Kohathites were to be followed by the camp of Ephraim—the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. Their leaders were Elishama the son of Ammihud, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur and Abidan the son of Gideoni.

**Numbers 10:25 And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, *which was* the rereward of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host *was* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.**

**Numbers 10:26 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher *was* Pagiel the son of Ocran.**

**Numbers 10:27 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali *was* Ahira the son of Enan.**

**Numbers 10:28 Thus *were* the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.**

At the rear followed the camp of Dan—the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali. Their leaders were Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, Pagiel the son of Ocran and Ahira the son of Enan.

**Numbers 10:29 ¶ And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD**

said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel.

**Numbers 10:30** And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.

**Numbers 10:31** And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.

**Numbers 10:32** And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

This section is a bit confusing to me. Moses asks his brother-in-law Hobab to stay and journey with them and enjoy “the good” that God had planned for His people once they reached the promised land. Hobab declined and declared his intent to return home. Moses then begs him to stay and help direct them on their journey since he was so familiar with the territory. Some of the translations even specify that he could tell them where to camp. My understanding is that they are supposed to be following the cloud of God’s presence for direction.

JFB offers the following explanation: “But it should be recollected that the guidance of the cloud, though it showed the general route to be taken through the trackless desert, would not be so special and minute as to point out the places where pasture, shade, and water were to be obtained and which were often hid in obscure spots by the shifting sands.”

Though we aren’t told Hobab’s decision here in Numbers, the book of Judges seems to indicate that he agreed to stay with them.

*Judges 1:16 “And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.”*

I liked this application from Adam Clarke: “They who know most of the goodness of God are the most forward to invite others to partake of that goodness.”

**Numbers 10:33** And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them.

**Numbers 10:34** And the cloud of the LORD *was* upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

The record notes that they journeyed for three days in search of a place to rest and that the cloud of the LORD covered them each day (for protection is implied).

Another niggling problem—Moses states that the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them. My understanding is that the ark was being carried by the Kohathites who were traveling behind the camp of Reuben.

John Gill offers an explanation that makes good sense to me: "...yet others think it may be said to go before, though in the middle; just as a general of an army may be said to go before, and lead his army, though he is not directly in the front of it; so the cloud being always over the ark, directing the march, it may be said to go before and point out a convenient place to rest in; for searching cannot be properly ascribed to the ark, nor even to the Lord himself, and can only signify pointing out or discovering a proper place to take up their abode in: this ark of the covenant, so called because the covenant or law was laid up in it, was a type of Christ the end of the law for righteousness, and who is the forerunner of his people, is gone before them to prepare a place for them; and the three days' journey may have respect to his resurrection from the dead on the third day for their justification, which is the foundation of their rest, peace, and joy."

**Numbers 10:35 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.**

**Numbers 10:36 And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.**

The NLT gives a clearer understanding of these two verses.

*Numbers 10:35–36 "And whenever the Ark set out, Moses would cry, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered! Let them flee before you!" And when the Ark was set down, he would say, "Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel!""*

It's like when my family takes a trip, we pray beforehand for God's safety and protection and thank Him for answering that prayer when we arrive at our destination.

As I observe what is happening in our country today, my heart resonates with the cry of Moses—"Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered! Let them flee before you!"