

**Numbers 2:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
Numbers 2:2 Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.**

Once again it is emphasized that the information recorded here is according to the commandment of the LORD. Point is made that the children of Israel are to camp as designated by their tribal flag and identified by its insignia. It is also emphasized that they are to maintain an appropriate distance from the tabernacle in showing reverence to the LORD. The NIV Commentary notes the following: "Jewish tradition suggests that the tribal banners corresponded in color to the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:15-21) and that the standard of the triad led by Judah had the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the figure of a man, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle."

Numbers 2:3 ¶ And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab *shall be* captain of the children of Judah.

Numbers 2:4 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred.

It seems that the twelve tribes are divided into groups of three and each group is identified with one of four designated tribes. On the east was the "camp of Judah," which occupied the middle part of that group. Nahshon, son of Amminadab, was the recognized leader of the tribe of Judah, which numbered 74,600.

Numbers 2:5 And those that do pitch next unto him *shall be* the tribe of Issachar: and Nethaneel the son of Zuar *shall be* captain of the children of Issachar.

Numbers 2:6 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* fifty and four thousand and four hundred.

Numbers 2:7 Then the tribe of Zebulun: and Eliab the son of Helon *shall be* captain of the children of Zebulun.

Numbers 2:8 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* fifty and seven thousand and four hundred.

Judah was to be flanked on each side by the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun. Nethaneel, son of Zuar, was the recognized leader of Issachar, which numbered 54,400. Eliab, son of Helon, was the recognized leader of Zebulun, which numbered 57,400.

Numbers 2:9 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. These shall first set forth.

These three tribes were known as the camp of Judah, and had an army 186,400 strong. When directed to break camp, this group was to lead the way.

Numbers 2:10 On the south side *shall be* the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their armies: and the captain of the children of Reuben *shall be* Elizur the son of Shedeur.

Numbers 2:11 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* forty and six thousand and five hundred.

The camp of Reuben was to be positioned on the south side of the tabernacle. Elizur, son of Shedeur, was the recognized leader of the tribe of Reuben, which numbered 46,500 and was to be in the middle of this group.

Numbers 2:12 And those which pitch by him *shall be* the tribe of Simeon: and the captain of the children of Simeon *shall be* Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

Numbers 2:13 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.

Numbers 2:14 Then the tribe of Gad: and the captain of the sons of Gad *shall be* Eliasaph the son of Reuel.

Numbers 2:15 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty and five thousand and six hundred and fifty.

Reuben was to be flanked on either side by the tribes of Simeon and Gad. Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, was the recognized leader of the tribe of Simeon, which numbered 59,300. Eliasaph, son of Reuel, was the recognized leader of the tribe of Gad, which numbered 45,650.

Numbers 2:16 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. And they shall set forth in the second rank.

These three tribes formed the camp of Reuben and were to follow the camp of Judah when directed to break camp and travel.

Numbers 2:17 Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards.

Following the camps of Judah and Reuben were the Levites who were responsible for transporting the tabernacle and all associated items. The tabernacle's location in the center of the camp signified how the LORD should be the center of the nation's focus in everything they did.

Numbers 2:18 On the west side *shall be* the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud.

Numbers 2:19 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty thousand and five hundred.

The camp of Ephraim was to be positioned on the west side of the tabernacle.

Elishama, son of Ammihud, was the recognized leader of the tribe of Ephraim, which numbered 40,500 and was to occupy the middle position of this camp.

Numbers 2:20 And by him *shall be* the tribe of Manasseh: and the captain of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

Numbers 2:21 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty and two thousand and two hundred.

Numbers 2:22 Then the tribe of Benjamin: and the captain of the sons of Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideon.

Numbers 2:23 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty and five thousand and four hundred.

Ephraim was flanked on each side by the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin. Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, was the recognized leader of Manasseh, which numbered 32,200. Abidan, son of Gideon, was the recognized leader of Benjamin, which numbered 35,400.

Numbers 2:24 All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim *were* an hundred thousand and eight thousand and an hundred, throughout their armies. And they shall go forward in the third rank.

The camp of Ephraim totaled an army 108,100 strong and followed the Levites what they broke camp to travel.

Numbers 2:25 The standard of the camp of Dan *shall be* on the north side by their armies: and the captain of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

Numbers 2:26 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* threescore and two thousand and seven hundred.

The fourth group located on the north side of the tabernacle was identified as Dan. The tribe of Dan occupied the middle position. Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai, was the recognized leader of Dan, which numbered 62,700.

Numbers 2:27 And those that encamp by him *shall be* the tribe of Asher: and the captain of the children of Asher *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran.

Numbers 2:28 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty and one thousand and five hundred.

Numbers 2:29 Then the tribe of Naphtali: and the captain of the children of Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan.

Numbers 2:30 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* fifty and three thousand and four hundred.

Dan was flanked on each side by the tribes of Asher and Naphtali. Pagiel, son of Ocran, was the recognized leader of Asher, which numbered 41,500. Ahira, son of Enan, was the recognized leader of Naphtali, which numbered 53,400.

Numbers 2:31 All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan *were* an hundred thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred. They shall

go hindmost with their standards.

The camp of Dan was 157,600 strong and served as the rearguard of the congregation when they traveled.

Numbers 2:32 These *are* those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts *were* six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

The total army of the Israelites totaled 603,550 strong.

Numbers 2:33 But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Numbers 2:34 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

Once again, it is noted that the Levites were not numbered, according to the LORD's command. Again, the chapter ends with a statement that the children of Israel did everything according to the LORD's command.

I liked the observation David Guzik made concerning this chapter: "God orders things according to His wisdom, not ours. In the arrangement of the tribes, He did not place the largest tribes closest to the tabernacle (as if bigger was always better); Ephraim, the closest westward tribe, is the third smallest tribe. Nor did He place all the large tribes on the outward perimeter for greatest protection (Benjamin, the second smallest tribe, is on the outer perimeter). God always has order and organization, but it may not make sense to us."

I've been taught that the positioning of the tribes around the tabernacle when viewed from above would represent a cross. I found the following diagram of this perspective at www.biblestudytools.com.

