

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

GOD's Marvelous Revelations Concerning Sin and Death
and
The Divinely Provided Way of Salvation

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN -

THE ORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL, IN CAMP AND ON THE MARCH

It has been said that, when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, they constituted an unorganized rabble. The time while Israel was encamped before Mount Sinai, was used, not only in preparing the detailed requirements and varied articles of equipment for the Tabernacle; but during this period the unorganized multitude was assembled by tribes and given their proper locations in the camp and on the march. Before this could be done, a numbering, or census of the people had to be taken. This was done by families and, because of intermarriages among the tribes, doubtless, the gathering of the several tribes must have been in the lines of the heads of families. And, since thousands of people, not closely related, had accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt, it would be natural that they be attached to the Tribes whose families they were closest to, before leaving Goshen.

It is important to note that this census took account of males only, and THOSE 20 years old or older, who were able-bodied and capable of bearing arms. (Exodus 40:1; Numbers 1:1-2) In taking this census Aaron was associated with Moses, as also were the heads of the 12 tribes in Israel. (Numbers 1:1-16) It is surprising to learn that, when this census was completed it totaled 603,550 men able to bear arms. (Numbers 1:17-46)

THE TRIBE OF LEVI SET APART

It is very important to keep in mind that the tribe of Levi was set apart unto the service of GOD to care for, protect and transport everything pertaining to the Tabernacle from camp to camp. This required that these sons of Levi, and their families, the Gershonites (7,500 men); the Kohathites, (8,600 men) and the Merarites, (6,200 men) be camped around and close to the Tabernacle. GOD had accepted the tribe of Levi instead of the first born sons out of the families of ALL the tribes of Israel. They were given no allotment of land, but they were unto GOD as a separated and consecrated possession, and were to be provided for and supported by the offerings of all the people, through their contributions of every nature in connection with their worship at the Tabernacle.

HOW COME TWELVE TRIBES?

When the tribe of Levi was set apart without the designated inheritance, appointed to the other tribes, how is it that, Twelve tribes remained? Please turn to Genesis 48:5 and discover that father Jacob definitely decreed that Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were to receive their father's inheritance, and so, their names appear among the tribes of Israel, instead of the name of Joseph. Thus there still remained 12 tribes, after Levi was set apart for the service of the Lord.

These twelve tribes were assigned specific places in the camp, and on the march. In camp, three tribes were assigned places on each side of the court of the Tabernacle. Each of these three tribes encamped and marched under a divisional standard. Each tribe also had its ensign. Thus, whether in camp or on the march, each tribe could be instantly located. We deem it important to indicate these divisional standards and the location of the tribes in each division, with the number of men in each tribe and division. We name them in relation to their position around the Tabernacle.

First Standard, On The East - A Lion

Issachar (54,400) ----- Judah (74,600) ----- Zebulun (57,400)

Second Standard, On The West - A Calf

Manasseh (32,200)----- Ephraim (40,500)----- Benjamin (35,400)

Third Standard, On The South - A Man's Head

Gad (45,650) ----- Rueben (46,500) ----- Simeon (59,300)

Fourth Standard, On The North - An Eagle

Naphtali (53,400)----- Dan (62,700) ----- Asher (41,500)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STANDARDS

It will be rewarding to devote a paragraph to the significance of the emblems on the four divisional standards which we have mentioned. That on the standard of Judah was a LION. That on the standard of Ephraim was a CALF, or bullock. The emblem on the standard of Rueben was A MAN. While the emblem on the standard of Dan was an EAGLE. Here is a remarkable correspondence with the meanings of the four colors, appearing on the gate of the Court, the Door of the Tabernacle, and the Veil before the Holy of Holies. These colors were purple, scarlet, white and sky-blue.

Purple is the color of royalty. It speaks of the Kingdom and of the King. So does the Lion, "**the Lion of the tribe of Judah.**" Thus the character and mission of JESUS CHRIST, set forth in the Gospel of Matthew.

Scarlet symbolizes the sacrifice of the suffering Savior and of His humble service obediently rendered to His Heavenly Father. So do the head of a Calf, or bullock. The calf was the

sacrificial offering. The bullock was the beast of burden, rendering silent and faithful service. Thus the Gospel of Mark.

Pure White symbolized the perfect, sinless manhood of the Man CHRIST JESUS, so beautifully presented in the Gospel of Luke. Thus the head of a Man on the third standard.

Last was the blue of the sky, the home of the Eagle: symbolizing the Son of GOD, who came down from GOD out of Heaven, not to do His own will, but that of the Father; presented in the Gospel of John.

How wonderful these revelations are! Who dares to say that these things are mere Hebrew "folklore!" In this connection, please read Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7 and be convinced of the Divine inspiration of the Word of GOD.

THE ORDER OF MARCH

When the camp broke up and the tribes moved out on the march, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon headed the line, under the standard of the Lion. Then came, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, under the standard of a Man. Next, is indicated the position of the Levites, bearing everything pertaining to the Tabernacle and its worship. Following the Levites, came Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, under the standard of the Calf; while fourth, and last, came Dan, Asher and Naphtali, under the standard of the Eagle.

Immediately in front of the Gate of the Court on the East were the tents of Moses and Aaron. Aaron was the older, hence was mentioned first. Aaron was the first high priest and his four sons were priests. Two of them, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange fire on the altar and died instantly. (Leviticus 10:1-2) This left Eleazar and Ithamar to minister to and with their father. Moses and Aaron, and all the priests, were Levites, although many Levites were not called to the priesthood; but ministered in all the duties necessary to the care and transportation of the Tabernacle. For an outsider to presume to undertake any duty of the Levites merited death.

The Gershonites located on the West side of the court of the Tabernacle, were the "tent-men." They cared for the coverings, hangings, and cords, necessary for the Tabernacle. The Kohathites, located on the South side of the court, cared for the furniture in the Tabernacle, together with all vessels and instruments used in the Tabernacle.

The Merarites, located on the North of the court, were custodians and carriers of the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, pins and cords of the Tabernacle. While Aaron, his sons and the priests had general charge and oversight of everything, whether in camp or on the march from camp to camp.

In the fourth chapter of Numbers, we learn that there was a second census of the Levites to discover men from 30 to 50 years to enroll for the arduous task of carrying the heavy parts of the Tabernacle and the furniture and implements used in its service. It should be noted that only the priests were allowed within the doors or walls of the Tabernacle. Not until the golden lampstand, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant had been carefully covered with their various coverings, were the Kohathites allowed to enter the Tabernacle to take

up their burdens for the march.

REAL SACRIFICE AND SERVICE

Only as we remember the weight of the Altar of Burnt-offering, and of the many brass and silver sockets, and of the boards and pillars, and the bulk weight of the curtain of the court and those which covered the tabernacle proper can we realize the collective heavy labor and service rendered by the Levites in their complete consecration and dedication to the service of their GOD. What boasted service, by the average Christian today, can begin to compare with it? Way back there, under law, those Levites surely fulfilled the injunction of the Apostle, "**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**" (Romans 12:2) How humbling, as well as edifying, and uplifting, are some of the things which we Christians have discovered while we have studied these wonderful things, unfolded to us in these chapters concerning the Tabernacle in the Wilderness!

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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