

Numbers 10:14-28

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-10/numbers-1014-28/>

Verses 14 – 28 describe the order by which the tribes were to leave Sinai. It was the same order as described in Numbers 2:2 – 31. It began with the tribe of Judah, then the tearing down of the tabernacle was done. The other tribes followed in the order established by the LORD. The arrangement of the tribes around the tabernacle was discussed in Numbers 3:3 – 31. Also, the leaders of the tribes are named for the fourth time in the book of Numbers in this section.

(See Map)

In the order of departure, *the standard of the camp of the sons of Judah, according to their armies, set out first* (v. 14). Judah would go first, perhaps because it was the prophetic tribe of the future ruler over Israel (Genesis 49:10). The “standard” was a banner on a pole that represented a tribe, or in this case a collection of tribes. What the banner looked like is unknown, but it must have had a design that uniquely identified the tribe of Judah. Given Jacob’s prophecy over Judah, perhaps it was a lion (Genesis 49:9).

When Judah departed, it did so *with Nahshon the son of Amminadab, over its army* (Numbers 2:3).

Next to leave was the tribe of Issachar with *Nethanel the son of Zuar, over the tribal army of the sons of Issachar* (v. 15). Following the tribe of Issachar was the tribe of Zebulun with *Eliab the son of Helon over the tribal army of the sons of Zebulun* (v. 16). These three tribes (Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun) were commanded to camp on the east side of the tabernacle (Numbers 2:3). So the eastern tribes moved out first, in order of north to south.

After the tribes on the east set out, *the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who were carrying the tabernacle, set out* (v. 17). Gershon and Merari were two sons of Levi (Numbers 3:17), and their families were responsible for carrying the pieces of the tabernacle assigned to them (Numbers 3:25, 36).

Then the southern tribes placed to the south side of the tabernacle departed. First, *the standard of the camp of Reuben, according to their armies, set out with Elizur the son of Shedeur, over its army* (v. 18). This was specified in Numbers 2:16. Along with the tribe Reuben was *Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai who was over the tribal army of the sons of Simeon* (v. 19). Also on the south side was *Eliasaph the son of Deuel who was over the tribal army of the sons of Gad* (v. 20).

Following the departure of the tribes on the south side, *the Kohathites set out* (v. 21). The *Kohathites*, like Gershon and Merari, were a family in the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:17) which was set apart for service to the tabernacle. They camped on the south side between the tabernacle and the other three tribes assigned to the south side (Numbers 3:29). Their task was *carrying the*

holy objects; and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. The task of carrying the holy objects was assigned to them in Numbers 4:15.

On the west side of the tabernacle was *the standard of the camp of the sons of Ephraim* (v. 22). This *standard*, arranged *according to their armies*, was set out. They departed with *Elishama the son of Ammihud over its army*.

Along with the tribe of Ephraim went *Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur over the tribal army of the sons of Manasseh* (v. 23), and the third tribe on the west side was led by *Abidan the son of Gideoni* (v. 24) who was *over the tribal army of the sons of Benjamin*. These three tribes were assigned to the west side of the tabernacle earlier in Numbers 2:18 – 23.

Finally, on the north side of the tabernacle was *the standard of the camp of the sons of Dan* (v. 25). They, like the others, broke camp *according to their armies*. The tribes associated with this standard *formed the rear guard for all the camps* and thus set out, with *Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai over its army*.

Setting out with the Danites were the other two tribes on the north side led by *Pagiel the son of Ochran over the tribal army of the sons of Asher* (v. 26) and *Ahira the son of Enan over the tribal army of the sons of Naphtali* (v. 27).

Verse 28 provides a summary of this section, saying that *this was the order of march of the sons of Israel by their armies as they set out* (v. 28). The *order of march* was given in Numbers 2, and the Israelites implemented it in detail. Their obedience here is in stark contrast to what they do in the next chapter and many other times in Numbers.

Biblical Text

¹⁴The standard of the camp of the sons of Judah, according to their armies, set out first, with Nahshon the son of Amminadab, over its army, ¹⁵and Nethanel the son of Zuar, over the tribal army of the sons of Issachar; ¹⁶and Eliab the son of Helon over the tribal army of the sons of Zebulun. ¹⁷Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who were carrying the tabernacle, set out. ¹⁸Next the standard of the camp of Reuben, according to their armies, set out with Elizur the son of Shedeur, over its army, ¹⁹and Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai over the tribal army of the sons of Simeon, ²⁰and Eliasaph the son of Deuel was over the tribal army of the sons of Gad. ²¹Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy *objects*; and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. ²²Next the standard of the camp of the sons of Ephraim, according to their armies, was set out, with Elishama the son of Ammihud over its army, ²³and Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur over the tribal army of the sons of Manasseh; ²⁴and Abidan the son of Gideoni over the tribal army of the sons of Benjamin. ²⁵Then the standard of the camp of the sons of Dan, according to their armies, *which formed* the rear guard for all the camps, set out, with Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai over its army, ²⁶and Pagiel the son of Ochran over the tribal army of the sons of Asher; ²⁷and Ahira the son of Enan over the tribal army of the sons of Naphtali. ²⁸This was the order of march of the sons of Israel by their armies as they set out.