

Organizing the Camp (Num. 1-4)

I. An Earthly Host to Reflect the Heavenly

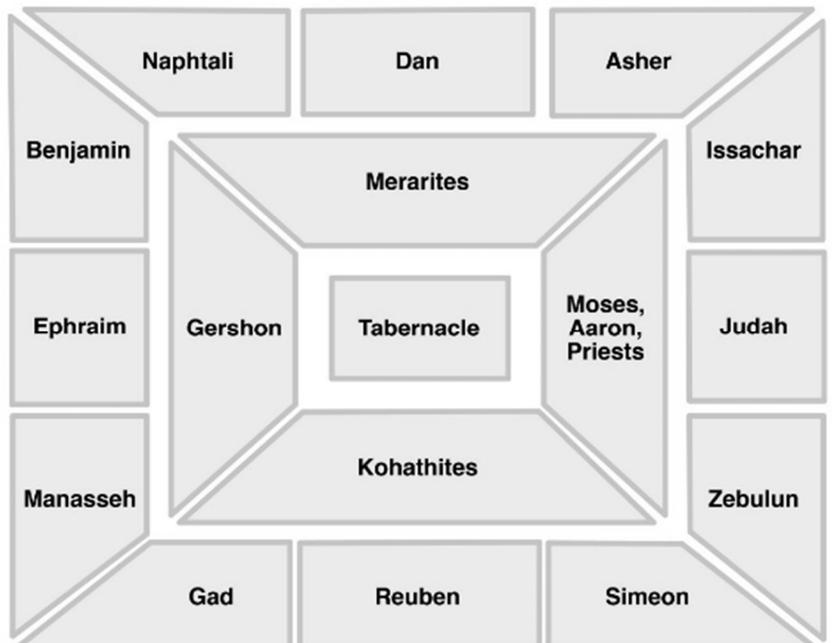
- A. God instructed Israel to build the tabernacle as a reflection of His heavenly temple. God’s desire is to make heaven a reality on earth in His people (think Lord’s Prayer).
- B. Not only the heavenly building was to be replicated but also those who worship the Lord in that place. The throne of God is surrounded by multitudes of angels and the souls of just men made perfect. They worship Him in perfect holiness and order around His throne.

Outline:

- 1 – Census constituting Israel as God’s earthly host
- 2 – Organizing the host around the tabernacle
- 3-4 – The special place of the Levites in the camp
- 5-6 – Purity laws for the camp
- 7 – The people provide for the tabernacle
- 8-9 – God provides to bless the people from the tabernacle
- 10 – Instructions for breaking camp

II. The Organization of the Camp

- A. The first way that God orders the camp is by commissioning a census of the people. They are to be divided by tribe and all the way down to by each family and so numbered. In doing this, the people of Israel are being enrolled into God’s earthly host. This is the roll call of God’s people on earth. If you would belong to God, you had to be represented in this census. Hence, even the Gentiles who came under the covenant from Egypt were enrolled into the 12 tribes (see Caleb: **Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6 & 14**).
- B. Having then set them apart by name, God organized them around the tabernacle. Three tribes were to dwell on each side, with one of those three tribes taking priority over the others, and on the inside of those tribes, the Levites were to be arranged as well. In the very center was the tabernacle. In this way, the camp itself became a reflection of the tabernacle, with three concentric realms of holiness.
 - 1. The innermost realm is set off as the dwelling of God (Holy of Holies, Tabernacle).
 - 2. The middle realm is the realm for the priests (Holy Place, Priestly Camps).
 - 3. The outer realm was the place for God’s people (Outer Court, People’s Camps).
 - 4. Outside the camp was the unclean realm of the nations that did not belong to God.



The Purity of the Camp (Num. 5-6:21)

I. *The Requirement of Holiness*

- A. As we saw in the latter part of Leviticus, God had called the people to reflect the holiness of the tabernacle in their lives and he has now enshrined that picture in their very makeup. God and His worship are to be at the center of their lives and is to inform how they live in the common things that they do as well.
- B. This requirement of holiness and the structure of the camp help inform the legislation that God gives in chapters 5-6. The different legislations relate specifically to the different realms of the camp, working from the outside in.

II. *The Purity Regulations*

- A. **5:1-4:** Leprosy removes the leprous person **outside the camp**.
- B. **5:5-10:** Sinning and restoring from sin among neighbors in the **common realm**.
- C. **5:11-31:** The case of the unfaithful wife is about purity, not adultery as such. We see this concern for purity and connection to the **realm of the priests** by her being brought to a priest to solve the issue. If the woman is guilty, she becomes a curse and barren. If innocent, she is free and fruitful.
- D. **6:1-21:** The Nazarite vow deals with a person's direct relationship to God. The individual abstains from some of the things of the world and cannot become unclean by a corpse in the same way that is reserved for the **high priest**. This culminates with the Nazarite coming before the Lord in **the tabernacle** for a special communion with the Lord.

The Blessing of the Tabernacle Coming to the Camp (Num. 6:22-9:23)

I. *The Benediction (6:22-27)*

The Lord places His name and His blessing on the people in the benediction. It is not a well-wishing but an infallible declaration of God's determination to bless His people. We can also see a three-fold progression in the blessing that relates to the realms of the camp. The Lord blessing and keeping the people would relate to their common life. The Lord's face shining upon the people and being gracious to them would refer to the ministry of the priests in the tabernacle. The Lord lifting up His countenance upon the people and giving them peace would refer to the fellowship they have with the Lord as He has brought them near and gives them peace and rest in this life and that which is to come.

II. *Blessing from the Tabernacle (7-9)*

Chapters 7-9 go back in time one month. In chapter 7, we see the freely offered gifts of the people to the Lord at the completion of the tabernacle. In chapters 8-9, we see how God will provide His blessing for His people from the tabernacle, working from the inside out. God pictures His blessing in the tabernacle, God ensuring blessing with the priesthood, God communicating blessing in the Passover, God leading His people out into the world in blessing by His presence.

The Camp Departs from Sinai (Num. 10)

The covenant has been enacted, the place for God's dwelling has been made, and the people have been fully constituted as God's earthly host. There is a tie to the vision that is given at the beginning of Ezekiel. The people with the throne of God, move only according to the leading of the Spirit, so we see the heavenly host doing in Ezekiel.