

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#942- THE WANDERING CAMP: God's Portable Nation

Search the Word... When Balaam agreed to "curse" Israel he apparently came only understanding this nation by reputation. What would anyone naturally expect of a group 600,000 released slave-men (with their accompanying wives, sisters, children, grandmothers, goats, and sheep)?

Logic would dictate that one would expect chaos. But that is not the record of what Balaam discovered.

Let's speculate by paraphrasing Balaam's prayer/prophecy (recorded in Numbers 23) to ascertain what he *did* see...

- v. 7- A king of some reputation brought me to curse this rag-tag crew.
- v. 8- How can you speak against a group so obviously blessed by God?
- v. 9- This is not what I expected! This is a nation that will have to be reckoned with!
- v. 10- What an impressive nation this is... Oh that I might end up like this!
- v. 19- God made a promise to this people and it's evident He's kept His promise.
- v. 20- The truth compels me to say that this is not an vagabond people.
- v. 21- God has seen qualities in this group the world ignored... and He's acted on that.
- v. 22- The might of Egypt was of no consequence to their God.
- v. 23- No power can curse this nation as long as their God stands with them.
- v. 24- These slaves have become noble!

In Conclusion: Please note that Balaam makes no physical or visual reference to what he saw, rather, he spoke from the conviction of what he felt. Whatever he saw was so overwhelming, so contrary to his expectation that the truth was forced from him- much against his greedy desires.

This is not unlike Moses' experience of Exodus 32-34. Moses longed to "see" God, but even being given a sliver of a glimpse caused Him not to record the color of hair, the texture of skin, the size of the Hand- but rather He was compelled to speak of the character and nature of the Divine. The physical reality forced a realization of the supreme aspects.

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**The Order of Transport:** If you desired to move up to 2.5 million people from one location to another you would quickly recognize the need for organization, otherwise you'd be asking for absolute chaos. The Lord resolved this by giving specific command regarding the order of moving the camp in Numbers 10.

Let's take an overview look at that passage to capture the sense of the Lord's desire for order over chaos...

- v. 2- Make two silver trumpets for perpetual ritual.
- v. 3- Two horns in one long blast calls the whole nation to assembly at the Sanctuary.
- v. 4- One horn blown is a call only for the tribal leaders to assemble.
- v. 5- Short blasts of the horn will call the people on the east side to move forward.
- v. 6- The second series of short blasts will set those who dwell on the south to move.
- v. 8- The horns are to be sounded by the priests.
- v. 9- When an aggressor attacks you the sound of the trumpet will remind you that I have fought for your people in the past and deliverance is assured.
- v. 10- When you have festivals the sound of the trumpets will again remind you of Me.

- v. 11- When the shrouded Presence lifted from the Sanctuary the nation moved.
- v. 12- When the cloud came to rest the nation settled in that location.
- v. 14- Judah led the way of the procession.
- v. 15/16- Then Issachar, then Zebulun.
- v. 17- The Gershonites and Merarites (of Levi) then carried the Sanctuary in procession.
- v. 18/19/20- Then came Reuben, Simeon, and Gad.
- v. 21- The Kohanim then bore the sacred implements and furniture.
- v. 22/23/24- Then came Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.
- v. 25/26/27- Dan headed the last quadrant, then Asher, with Naphtali in the rear.

Now, let's compare that listing to the organization of the camp at rest (taken from Numbers 2 and 3)...

**North-Fourth Division, Quadrant of Dan (157,600)**

Asher (41,500) Naphtali (53,400)  
 Dan (62,700)  
 Merarites (3,200)

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 \* *Temple Court* \*  
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Kohathites (2,750)  
 Reuben (46,500)  
 Gad (45,650) Simeon (59,300)

**South-Second Division, Quadrant of Reuben (151,490)**

**West-Third Division, Quadrant of Ephraim**

Manasseh( 32,300) Benjamin (35,400)  
 Ephraim (40,500)  
 Gershonites (2,650)

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 \* *Temple Court* \*  
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Moses, Aaron, Priests  
 Judah (74,600)  
 Issachar (54,400) Zebulun (57,400)

**East- First Division, Quadrant of Judah (186,400)**

**In conclusion:** Can you see the logic of the ordered moves? Judah would lead the way with the other two tribes in his quadrant (Issachar and Zebulun) following in procession. This then would create a path for the structure pieces of the Sanctuary to be dismantled and borne away.

Reuben (and his accompanying quadrant tribes (Simeon and Gad) would then fall in line and provide a preceding escort for the Priests to carry the sacred implements and furniture.

Then the serpentine pattern would conclude with the Ephraim's quadrant following and Dan's quadrant bringing up the rear.