

Three important facts might be pointed out regarding this army: it was made up of Israelites only, and included none of the "mixed multitude" who would offer severe problems later; it was made up of the able-bodied only; and, all able-bodied men were included. There is much to be learned from each of them.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

27. Compute the increase of the Israelites, tribe by tribe, since their ancestors first went to Egypt (See Gen. 46:5-27).
28. Why would this census not include any of the "mixed multitude" among the children of Israel?
29. How could such a multitude find sustenance in a wilderness?
30. Why would the Lord not want the Levites to be included in the army?

III. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES (1:47-54)

TEXT

Chapter 1:47. But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. 48. For the Lord had spoken unto Moses, saying, 49. Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50. But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. 51. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 52. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. 53. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of

the tabernacle of testimony, 54. And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they.

PARAPHRASE

47. However, the Levites were not numbered among them after the tribes of their fathers, 48. for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying, 49. "Only the tribe of Levi is not to be counted; you shall not take their census among the children of Israel. 50. But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furniture and over all things which belong to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furniture, and they shall take care of it; they shall also camp around the tabernacle. 51. Therefore, when the tabernacle is to move forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the Tabernacle camps, the Levites shall erect it. But the common man who approaches too near will be put to death. 52. And the children of Israel shall camp, each man in his own camp, and each by his own standard, throughout their groups. 53. But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel. In this way the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony."

54. And the children of Israel did so; according to everything the Lord had commanded Moses, that is what they did.

COMMENTARY

The specialized work of the Levites required specific instructions, which begin here, and are dispersed throughout the book. They are to camp beside the Tabernacle, serve in it, dismantle, move, and erect it, and guard it against intrusion by any unauthorized individuals. First among their concerns, however, were the spiritual requirements of the tribes. The Levites were servants in behalf of the people and Jehovah; they were to be zealous in His behalf. Such a zeal they had shown when Moses' wrath was stirred up against the makers of the golden calf at Sinai: the Levites had slain the worshipers of the calf, and their appointment may have stemmed in part from this

deed (Ex. 32:26-29).

Care should be exercised to distinguish between the Levites and the priests, who were descendants of Aaron and his sons. Any priest was necessarily a Levite; but by no means were all Levites priests. The difference helps us remember the distinction between the tribe and the family. To further remember the distinctions, we should note that the priests were consecrated (Ex. 29:1-37); the Levites were purified (8:5-22). The Levites were considered a gift unto Aaron and his sons (3:5-13; 8:19; 18:1-7). Only the priests had the privilege of ministering at the altar and entering into the holy place, or the most holy place (Ex. 28:1; 29:9; Num. 3:10, 38; 4:15ff; 18:1-7; 25:10-13). Aaron had been chosen for his position by the sign of the budding almond rod (Num. 17:1-11). Korah, of the family of Kohath, accentuated the distinction between the priest and the Levite when, rebelling against Aaron, he was quickly subdued and punished (Num. 16).

The organization prescribed for each tribe's location while encamped is to be given in chapter 2. Reasons for such a plan are logical: it makes for orderliness in camping, and for ease of marching: it preserved their tribal identity, while retaining their place in the unity of the people as a whole; it facilitated the matter of keeping genealogical details in mind.

Tribal standards, which will be discussed later, doubtless aided the multitude in locating their relative positions quickly and inerrantly. Erected high on poles, they might be seen at some distance. When the positions of encampment were given to the tribes, they formed a tight square about the Tent; the Levites were within this square as if to symbolize their central duties. There was a further practical consideration—such a position gave the Levites immediate access to their stations of labor. Also, this tightly knit method of surrounding the Tabernacle would make it all but impossible for a stranger to approach the sacred area accidentally. There was every precaution to preserve the sanctity of this symbol of divine presence.

ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING 2:1-34

Failure to follow the exactly detailed instructions in setting up camp would bring about the wrath of God, as would deviations in serving the Tabernacle. It was a grave matter to adhere to the clear, often rigid assignments of God. On this occasion, the nation responded exactly as God had commanded.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

31. Were the Levites always numbered separately from the other tribes? Explain and justify your answer.
32. How does the camping assignment of the Levites harmonize with the assignments given all others?
33. Describe the duties of the Levites.
34. How are the priests distinguished from the Levites? What did they have in common?
35. Who were the "strangers" to be kept from the Tabernacle?
36. What purposes did the tribal standards serve?
37. Why would the entire congregation of Israel be punished if the Levites failed to camp near the Tabernacle?
38. Is there a reason that no other tribes might assist in erecting, transporting or taking down the Tent of Meeting?
39. Why should death come upon any "stranger" who drew near the Tent?

IV. ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING (2:1-34)

TEXT

Chapter 2:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 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. 3. And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be captain of the children