NUMBERS
Chapter 10

The Silver Trumpets

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp. 3 And when both are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 4 But if they blow only one, then the chiefs, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you. 5 When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out. 6 And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. 7 But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow a long blast, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8 And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations. 9 And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. 10 On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God."

10:2 *trumpets.* Long, straight, slender metal tubes with flared ends. They were blown for order and discipline. (CSB)
Straight metal tubes, different from the curved ram's horn, which is also translated as "trumpet" (Ex 19:16, 19; 20:18; Lv 25:9). (TLSB)

breaking camp. Israel obeyed God's commands in an orderly fashion. Like a large military unit, it was summoned to action by prearranged signals given by two silver trumpets. (TLSB)

10:3 *both were blown.* Not only for assembling but also for marching (vv. 5–6), battle (v. 9) and festivals (v. 10). Since different signals were used (v. 7), a guild of priestly musicians was developed (v. 8). See Jos 6:4 for the use of seven trumpets of rams' horns (Hebrew *shophar*) in the battle of Jericho. (CSB)

all the congregation shall gather. Space for this large gathering must have been reserved east of the tabernacle. (TLSB)

10:5 *alarm*. Specified call, perhaps long used in military or community service. (TLSB)

10:8–9 Later, when Israel was in its land, trumpets were used in time of war and on days of gladness. (TLSB)

10:10 *at your … appointed feasts … sound the trumpets.* As an introit to prepare the people for communion with God. Later, David expanded the instruments to include the full orchestra in the worship of the Lord (see, e.g., 1Ch 25), but he maintained the playing of the silver trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant (1Ch 16:6). (CSB)

10:1–10 Blasts on the silver trumpets signal the time to move, but they also serve the purpose of calling leaders of the entire community to assemble at the tent of meeting. God ordains an Israelite theocracy with Himself as King. In mercy, God leads His people toward the land promised long ago (Gn 12:7). Scripture teaches that a trumpet blast will also signal our call to heaven on the Last Day (1Th 4:16). • "Today on weary nations The heav'nly manna falls; To holy convocations The silver trumpet calls, Where Gospel light is glowing With pure and radiant beams And living water flowing With soul-refreshing streams." Amen. (*LW* 203:3) (TLSB)

Israel Leaves Sinai

11 In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, 12 and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. 13 They set out for the first time at the command of the LORD by Moses. 14 The standard of the camp of the people of Judah set out first by their companies, and over their company was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 15 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Issachar was Nethanel the son of Zuar. 16 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon.17 And when the tabernacle was taken down, the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who carried the tabernacle, set out. 18 And the standard of the camp of Reuben set out by their companies, and over their company was Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 21 Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things, and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. 22 And the standard of the camp of the people of Ephraim set out by their companies, and over their company was Elishama the son of Ammihud. 23 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 24 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni. 25 Then the standard of the camp of the people of Dan, acting as the rear guard of all the camps, set out by their companies, and over their company was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ochran. 27 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. 28 This was the order of march of the people of Israel by their companies, when they set out. 29 And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel." 30 But he said to him, "I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred." 31 And he said, "Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. 32 And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you." 33 So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey. And the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them. 34 And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. 35 And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." 36 And when it rested, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

10:11–28 The structure of this section is: (1) v. 11, time frame; (2) vv. 12–13, introductory summary of setting out; (3) vv. 14–17, setting out of the tribes led by Judah (see 2:3–9); (4) vv. 18–21, setting out of the tribes led by Reuben (see 2:10–16); (5) vv. 22–24, setting out of the tribes led by Ephraim (see 2:18–24); (6) vv. 25–27, setting out of the tribes led by Dan (see 2:25–31); (7) v. 28, concluding summary of the line of march. (CSB)

10:11 *in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month.* After 11 months in the region of Mount Sinai, the people set out for the promised land, led by the cloud. This verse begins

the second great section of the book of Numbers (10:11–22:1). Israel leaves on a journey that in a few months should have led to the conquest of Canaan. (CSB)

10:12 *by stages*. Israel broke camp from Mount Sinai according to prearranged orders. By recording the sequence of the tribal groups and once more listing the leaders, Moses showed that the people followed God's commands. The next chapters (10:11–21:35) explain why it took 38 more years before Israel arrived in "the plains of Moab" (22:1), opposite the Jordan River. (CSB)

Paran. Wilderness where the tribes settled on signal, after moving in a northeasterly direction. Perhaps a name for the general Sinai Peninsula. The northern reaches of Paran are called the wilderness of Zin (cf 20:1). From there, the borders of the Promised Land could have been reached in a short time. (TLSB)

10:13 *first time*. Departing from Sinai. (TLSB)

10:14–27 The names of the leaders of the 12 tribes are given for the fourth time in the book (see 1:5–15; 2:3–31; 7:12–83). The order of the line of march is essentially the same as that in ch. 2. The new details are that the Gershonites and Merarites, who carry the tabernacle, follow the triad of the Judah tribes (v. 17), and the Kohathites, who carry the holy things, follow the triad of the Reuben tribes (v. 21) (see diagram of "Encampment of the Tribes of Israel"). (CSB)

10:14 *standard.* As in 2:3, 10, 18, 25, each of the four triads of tribes had a standard or banner for rallying and organization. (CSB)

the son of. The father's name was given as we use a surname to help identify families and to distinguish people with the same first name. (TLSB)

10:17–28 Levites who carried the structural parts of the tabernacle set out with the first contingent of three tribes. Kohathites, "carrying the holy things" (v 21) and thus constituting "the midst of the camps" (2:17), followed with the next three standards. (TLSB)

10:29 *Hobab son of Reuel.* Thus Hobab was Moses' brother-in-law. (CSB)

Reuel. Jethro. (CSB)

Hobab, Midianite brother-in-law of Moses, is called his "father-in-law" in Jgs 4:11. Perhaps Hobab had become the head of his family. Although God was directing the march of the Israelites, they could use help from an experienced man in the ordinary tasks of setting up a camp. (TLSB)

10:31 *serve as our eyes.* Jdg 1:16 indicates that Hobab acceded to Moses' request. (CSB)

10:33 *the ark … before them*. If taken literally, this sentence would say that the ark of the covenant was carried in advance of the entire marching group, contrary to the general rule that it was to be "in the midst of the camps" (2:17). It is possible that such a deviation from general practice was decreed for the first three days of the journey or for special occasions (cf Jsh 3:6). But the reference to the ark may merely emphasize the fact that the real guide of Israel was not Hobab but the Lord, who dwelled above the mercy seat of the ark. He directed the course of the march through the cloud (v 34). (TLSB)

three days. Because of the huge numbers of people in the tribes of Israel, and because this was their first organized march, it is not likely that this first journey covered much territory. (CSB)

10:35–36 Reinforces the portrayal of Israel as the Lord's army on the march, with the Lord in the vanguard. (CSB)

Liturgical responses to the Lord's leadership, expressed as prayers. The community would be more vulnerable during travel, but the Lord was ever vigilant in His care, as Moses confidently expresses. (TLSB)

10:35 Later used in the opening words of a psalm celebrating God's triumphal march from Sinai to Jerusalem (see Ps 68:1). (CSB)

10:11–36 The Israelites march to the Promised Land; the ark of the covenant leads the way (v 33). The Lord deals gently with His people by providing constant guidance and sound leadership. Today, pray for your leaders, that the Lord would bless and keep them and guide them in thoughtful service to His people, whom Christ redeemed with His precious blood. • "Arise, O LORD, and let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You" (v 35) Amen. (TLSB)