

Biblical Math Proves *'eleph* is 1000

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The second chapter of the book of Numbers contains mathematical proof that the Hebrew word *'eleph* (plural *'elaphim*) really does mean “1000” — not some lesser number, as a few theologians claim. The chapter divides the army of Israel into four camps, lists the three tribes in each camp, enumerates the number of men from each tribe, and gives the total number in each camp.

The way God spelled out the numbers in Hebrew gives us a way to use simple algebra to determine the exact number He meant by the word *'eleph*. For example, Numbers 2:4 tells us the muster from the tribe of Judah was “four and seventy *'eleph* and six hundred.” Let x be the supposedly unknown number that *'eleph* represents. Then the number from the tribe of Judah would be $(74x + 600)$.

For the two other tribes in the camp of Judah, namely Issachar and Zebulun, verses 2:6 and 2:8 give us $(54x + 400)$ and $(57x + 400)$.

Finally, verse 2:9 gives us the total of all three tribes in the camp of Judah: “a hundred *'eleph* and eighty *'eleph* and six *'elaphim* and four hundred”, or $(186x + 400)$.

The following table helps us to evaluate the data:

Item	Verse	Tribes	Camp
Judah	4	$74x + 600$	
Issachar	6	$54x + 400$	
Zebulun	8	$57x + 400$	
3-tribe total		$185x + 1400$	
Camp of Judah	9		$186x + 400$

The “3-tribe total” is the algebraic sum of the three entries above it. The “Camp of Judah” is the total that verse 9 gives us. Those two totals must be equal:

$$185x + 1400 = 186x + 400$$

As my 10th grade algebra teacher back in the Antediluvian Age taught me, we can manipulate this to solve for x :

$$\begin{aligned} 185x - 186x &= 400 - 1400 \\ -x &= -1000 \end{aligned}$$

$$\boxed{x = 1000}$$

That means *no other number* besides 1000 for *'eleph* will allow the two totals to be the same. I leave it as an exercise for the theologians to convince themselves of what I found: that for the other three camps in the chapter also, *'eleph* means precisely one thousand.