

THE UNGRATEFULNESS OF THE ISRAELITES

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 11:1-35; Psalm 78:17-41

LESSON 99 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 11:1-35 (KJV)

¹ And *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

² And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

³ And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

⁴ And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

⁵ We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

⁶ But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

⁷ And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

⁸ And the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

⁹ And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

¹⁰ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

¹¹ And Moses said unto the LORD,

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Angels' Food

The Children of Israel had camped about a year at Mount Sinai, during which time God had given Moses the Law, and the Tabernacle had been built. All during that time God had sent manna for them to eat. Every morning - except on the Sabbath - when the dew lifted, the ground was white with food from Heaven. It was good food - the Psalmist called it "angels' food" - and supplied all the vitamins they needed to keep them strong and healthy. Yet the Children of Israel loathed "this light bread."

The Children of Israel would have starved in the wilderness if God had not provided food. Because of the strange nature of the manna no one could say that it just happened to be there. The people would gather it and grind it into meal, and bake it in ovens; yet that which remained on the ground would melt when the sun came up, though the heat from the sun was not nearly as great as that of their ovens. Then, too, God told them to gather only enough for one day at a time. If it remained until the next day, it bred worms and stank. Yet the day before the Sabbath they could gather enough for two days, and it never spoiled. Truly it was food from Heaven, given by God for each day as they needed it.

God had also given the people water from a rock when they would have famished from thirst without it. And another time bitter water was made sweet so they could drink. All this God had done for the Children of Israel from day to day. Their life every day was a miracle, proving that they were God's children and He was taking care of them. Yet they murmured against God!

Contentment

If a person is a complainer, he finds something to murmur about no matter how well things are going for him. God wants His people to be content with what He gives them. He sees our need and has promised to provide for us according to His riches in Glory (**Philippians 4:19 (KJV)** ¹⁹ But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus). "Godliness with contentment is great gain.... And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:6, 8). That is what God expects of His children. When we complain about the things in life which come to us we are not only murmuring to ourselves or our friends, but we are murmuring against God. Even if we never say a word, God knows our every thought. And He knows why He has withheld things from us that we thought we should have. If we grumble about it, and demand those things from the Lord, He will not be able to work out His purpose in us, and in the end we will suffer His judgment.

Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

¹² Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

¹³ Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

¹⁴ I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me.

¹⁵ And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

¹⁶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

¹⁷ And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

¹⁸ And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was* well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

¹⁹ Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

Fire in the Camp

We shall see what happened to the Children of Israel when they murmured in the midst of everything they needed. They had been travelling only three days from Sinai, where they had rested for a year, and could not have been very tired. And yet they complained of the way.

There were some people, who had come from Egypt with the Israelites, who were called the mixed multitude. They were not really God's chosen people, but they had stayed with them during the past year and their tents were at the borders of the camp. It seems that the trouble this time began among them. When God heard their murmurings He sent fire which consumed many of them.

The fire frightened the Children of Israel and they ran to Moses for help. Moses prayed, and the fire was put out. But that was not the end of the murmuring. They were like the people who pray when there is an electric storm. They are afraid they will be struck by lightning and die; but as soon as the storm passes they go on sinning. The people who do not repent now will not have the opportunity when Jesus comes in judgment, but will be punished by burning just as these people were - only that will be everlasting fire.

Murmuring for Flesh

Again the mixed multitude wanted something God was not giving them, and again the Children of Israel caught the spirit of complaint, and they cried for meat. They remembered the fish they had had for food in Egypt; and the cucumbers and the onions and the garlic. It had only been a year since they had escaped the cruel taskmasters, but they did 'not remember the long hours they **had toiled under the lash of the whip**; they did not remember the days and nights they **had cried bitterly unto** the Lord to deliver them from the wicked land. Instead of being grateful to God for delivering them from Egypt and giving them food to eat, they murmured for meat.

When we begin to feel sorry for ourselves and wonder why other people seem to get more out of life than we do, we should count our blessings. We shall soon find we have so many things to be thankful for that the spirit of murmuring will disappear entirely. The Lord expects us to rejoice evermore, and in everything to give thanks.

Moses' Discouragement

Several times God wanted to destroy the Children of Israel for their disobedience; and Moses had prayed earnestly for them, and their lives had been spared. But finally Moses, too, became tired of their complaining, and asked God why he had to carry the burden of leading such an ungrateful people. We remember that there were about three million people, and Moses alone had to take care of their problems. The Israelites were certainly no help to him when they kept murmuring against the God whom Moses loved and wanted to obey. Moses was so tired in the work God had given him to do that he wanted to die.

²⁰ But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

²¹ And Moses said, The people, among whom I *am*, *are* six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

²² Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?

²³ And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

²⁴ And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

²⁵ And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

²⁶ But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

²⁷ And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

²⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

Although it was not right for Moses to speak against the high calling God had given him, yet the Lord did not condemn him. God Himself many times had been grieved because of the disobedience of the Israelites, and had wanted to cut them off.

The Seventy Elders

God told Moses to number 70 of the elders of Israel to help him. The Spirit of God would come upon them and they would have wisdom and understanding to do in a measure what Moses was doing. The Jews believe this was the beginning of the Sanhedrin, which was their governing body in the time of Christ.

When the elders had gathered at the Tabernacle to do the will of God, His Spirit came upon them and they: preached and praised the Lord. How much better was the favor of God upon those who pleased Him, than the divine displeasure upon those who murmured. Moses did not lose any of his power when the elders were given the same spirit that was upon him. God's grace is abundant, and no man gets any less because it is also given to others. Rather, the more of the Spirit of God that people can pray into their own hearts, the more it will spread to others, and all will grow in grace.

Two of the men Moses had chosen as elders did not go up to the Tabernacle, but the Spirit of God came upon them where they were in the camp, and they prophesied, too. Joshua was afraid Moses would not like it, that it would seem as if the anointing of God were becoming too common. But Moses was not jealous. He said he wished the Spirit of God would come upon all the people, and they would all be worthy to minister unto the Lord. God's ministers are not jealous when God blesses other people and puts His Spirit upon them. They wish that all men would **consecrate their** lives in so great a measure that God could make them all good workers in His harvest field.

Meat Sent

While God was giving Moses instructions for choosing the seventy elders to help him, He also promised to send meat into the camp. **God had mercy upon Moses** in his great need, and sent help; He also gave the murmuring Israelites their desire, but their reward was judgment. He promised to send them meat to eat, enough to last them for a month - so much that it would be loathsome to them, and would come out of their nose.

It seems strange that Moses wondered where that much meat would come from. If God said He would send it, surely enough miracles had already been performed that he should have realized that God could do anything. But even men of strong faith may doubt if they stop to reason how God can provide. With God all things are possible, and He wants us to trust Him even though things look impossible.

Soon the wind began to blow, and great flocks of quail came around the camp. The people gathered the fowls for two days and a night, and spread them out to dry so they would have meat for a long time. But God's judgment was in those

²⁹ And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

³⁰ And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

³¹ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth.

³² And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

³³ And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

³⁴ And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

³⁵ *And* the people journeyed from Kibrothhattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

Psalm 78:17-41 (KJV)

¹⁷ And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.

¹⁸ And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

¹⁹ Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

²⁰ Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

quails. Those greedy, murmuring Israelites were killed by a plague that God sent among them. And there they were buried. They never saw the Promised Land because they murmured against God.

QUESTIONS

- 1 **How** long had the Children of Israel been away from Egypt?
- 2 What caused fire to break out in the outskirts of the camp?
- 3 Who were the mixed multitude?
- 4 About what did the Israelites murmur next?
- 5 Did God give them what they wanted?
- 6 What happened then?
- 7 What does the Bible say about contentment?

²¹ Therefore the LORD heard *this*,
and was wroth: so a fire was
kindled against Jacob, and anger
also came up against Israel;
²² Because they believed not in
God, and trusted not in his
salvation:
²³ Though he had commanded the
clouds from above, and opened
the doors of heaven,
²⁴ And had rained down manna
upon them to eat, and had given
them of the corn of heaven.
²⁵ Man did eat angels' food: he
sent them meat to the full.
²⁶ He caused an east wind to blow
in the heaven: and by his power
he brought in the south wind.
²⁷ He rained flesh also upon them
as dust, and feathered fowls like
as the sand of the sea:
²⁸ And he let *it* fall in the midst of
their camp, round about their
habitations.
²⁹ So they did eat, and were well
filled: for he gave them their own
desire;
³⁰ They were not estranged from
their lust. But while their meat *was*
yet in their mouths,
³¹ The wrath of God came upon
them, and slew the fattest of
them, and smote down the chosen
men of Israel.
³² For all this they sinned still, and
believed not for his wondrous
works.
³³ Therefore their days did he
consume in vanity, and their years
in trouble.
³⁴ When he slew them, then they
sought him: and they returned and
enquired early after God.
³⁵ And they remembered that God
was their rock, and the high God
their redeemer.
³⁶ Nevertheless they did flatter him
with their mouth, and they lied
unto him with their tongues.
³⁷ For their heart was not right
with him, neither were they

stedfast in his covenant.

³⁸ But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

³⁹ For he remembered that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

⁴⁰ How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!

⁴¹ Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.