

THE UNGRATEFULNESS OF THE ISRAELITES

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

LESSON 99 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and with heldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst" (Nehemiah 9:20).

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

1 The Complaints of the Israelites

1. The people's complaint, the subject of which we are not told, brought sudden judgment upon them, Numbers 11:1; Psalm 78:17;
Philippians 2:14 (KJV)
¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
Proverbs 19:3 (KJV)
³ The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.
Jude 1:16 (KJV)
¹⁶ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.
Hebrews 12:29 (KJV)
²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.
Hebrews 13:5 (KJV)
⁵ Let your conversation *be* without covetousness; and *be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
Deuteronomy 32:22 (KJV)
²² For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
2. Moses once more proved himself a faithful intercessor by praying for the people, Numbers 11:2, 3
3. Another complaint, started by the mixed multitude, caused them to abhor God's food and to lust for the food of Egypt, Numbers 11:4-9; Psalm 78:18-25;
Numbers 21:5 (KJV)
⁵ And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.
Psalm 74:14 (KJV)
¹⁴ Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to *be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
Psalm 106:1-48 (KJV)
¹ Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
² Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can shew forth all his praise?
³ Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.
⁴ Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto* thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;
⁵ That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.
⁶ We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
⁷ Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.
⁸ Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.
⁹ He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.
¹⁰ And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
¹¹ And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.
¹² Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.
¹³ They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:
¹⁴ But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God

displeased.

¹¹ And Moses said unto the LORD, 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

in the desert.

¹⁵ And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

¹⁶ They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD.

¹⁷ The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

¹⁸ And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

¹⁹ They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

²⁰ Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

²¹ They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea.

²³ Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.

²⁴ Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

²⁵ But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

²⁶ Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

²⁷ To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

²⁸ They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

²⁹ Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

³⁰ Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

³¹ And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

³² They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

³³ Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

³⁴ They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

³⁵ But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

³⁶ And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

³⁷ Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

³⁸ And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

³⁹ Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

⁴⁰ Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

⁴¹ And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.

⁴² Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

⁴³ Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

⁴⁴ Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:

⁴⁵ And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

⁴⁶ He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.

⁴⁷ Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise.

⁴⁸ Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

II Moses' Plea and God's Answer and Instructions

- 1 The sound of the complaint reached Heaven and caused God to be angry with the Israelites, Numbers 11:10;

Psalms 106:25-26 (KJV)

²⁵ But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the

two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

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

voice of the LORD.

²⁶ Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

Numbers 14:22-23 (KJV)

²² Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

²³ Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

Deuteronomy 9:22 (KJV)

²² And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibrothhattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

Hebrews 3:16 (KJV)

¹⁶ For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

Hebrews 3:19 (KJV)

¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

- 2 Moses' prayer showed his knowledge of both his own impotence and the need for God to carry the burden of the rebellious people, Numbers 11:11-15;

1 Kings 19:4 (KJV)

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

1 Kings 19:8 (KJV)

⁸ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

1 Kings 11:1-43 (KJV)

¹ But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, *and* Hittites;

² Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

⁴ For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

⁶ And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

⁷ Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

⁸ And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

⁹ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

¹⁰ And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

¹¹ Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

¹² Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

¹⁴ And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he *was* of the king's seed in Edom.

¹⁵ For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom;

¹⁶ (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:)

¹⁷ That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's

men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

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

servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad *being* yet a little child.

¹⁸ And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land.

¹⁹ And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.

²⁰ And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.

²¹ And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country.

²² Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise.

²³ And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah:

²⁴ And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them *of Zobah*: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus.

²⁵ And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad *did*: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

²⁶ And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king.

²⁷ And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, *and* repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.

²⁸ And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.

²⁹ And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two *were* alone in the field:

³⁰ And Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it *in* twelve pieces:

³¹ And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

³² (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

³³ Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do *that which* is right in mine eyes, and *to keep* my statutes and my judgments, as *did* David his father.

³⁴ Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes:

³⁵ But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, *even* ten tribes.

³⁶ And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

³⁷ And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

³⁸ And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

³⁹ And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.

⁴⁰ Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

⁴¹ And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

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.

⁴² And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel *was* forty years.

⁴³ And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings 20:12 (KJV)

¹² And it came to pass, when *Benhadad* heard this message, as he *was* drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

3 Moses was told to select 70 proven and tried men, not novices, to help him, Numbers 11:16,17;

1 Timothy 3:8-10 (KJV)

⁸ Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

⁹ Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

¹⁰ And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless.

4 God gave His message for the Israelites to Moses, who told God of the immensity of the request made by them, Numbers 11: 18-23

5 The 70 elders were especially anointed for their assigned tasks, a type, or earnest, of the baptism of the Holy Ghost which was to be given to anoint and empower Christians after Christ's death and ascension, Numbers 11:24-30

III The Results of the Israelites' Complaint

1 God sent quails, supernaturally, to satisfy the desire of the people, Numbers 11:31, 32; Psalm 78:25-29;

Psalm 105:40 (KJV)

⁴⁰ *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

Psalm 105:42 (KJV)

⁴² For he remembered his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant.

2 The ill-advised request, not being conditioned on God's will, brought evil consequences, Numbers 11:33-35; Psalm 78:30-33;

Psalm 106:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

Isaiah 10:15-16 (KJV)

¹⁵ Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up *itself*, as if it were no wood.

¹⁶ Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

Matthew 6:10 (KJV)

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

Matthew 26:39 (KJV)

³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

John 7:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.

1 John 2:17 (KJV)

¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 John 5:14-15 (KJV)

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

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.

- 3 Their repentance, when in trouble, was not the quality with which God is pleased, Psalm 78:34-37, 40, 41;
Psalm 95:8 (KJV)
⁸ Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
Psalm 95:11 (KJV)
¹¹ Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.
Psalm 11:1-7 (KJV)
¹ In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?
² For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
³ If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
⁴ The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
⁵ The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
⁶ Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.
⁷ For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.
Psalm 7:14 (KJV)
¹⁴ Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
Isaiah 55:7 (KJV)
⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
Joel 2:13 (KJV)
¹³ And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.
Psalm 66:13 (KJV)
¹³ I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,
Psalm 66:15 (KJV)
¹⁵ I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.
- 4 God, however, remembered that they were only flesh, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them in their sin, Psalm 78:38, 39;
Isaiah 40:6 (KJV)
⁶ The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:
Isaiah 40:8 (KJV)
⁸ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.
1 Peter 1:24 (KJV)
²⁴ For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

NOTES:

The All-too-familiar Habit of Complaint

Our lesson opens with a few words that might tend to discourage the reader, at first glance, but which rather encourage him as he ponders them, considering all that took place in and around the camp of the Israelites during this early period of their wanderings. "The people complained" against God and against His appointed men often - far too often - until their complaints almost resolved into a habit. But this one time, at least, quick judgment came upon them when they voiced their unbelieving complaint. "The fire of the LORD burnt among them" to show them their wrong attitude of bitterness.

Moses again went to God, as he had many times before, in behalf of the people. The Lord heard his prayer, and the

consuming fire was quenched, thereby sparing many lives. But that did not end the complaint or turn the hearts of the people wholly toward God, as one would think it would. A mixed multitude had come out of Egypt with them and these never wholly followed God, nor honored Him as they should. The mixed multitude "fell a lusting" and the Children of Israel were influenced by their example and wept a complaint against God because of the food they had to eat.

The Danger of Evil Associations

A Christian must carefully choose his companions and company. He lives in the world of sin, does business with its inhabitants, and, to a certain extent, lives among those who are ungodly. But a Christian must realize the danger of close association with any member of a "mixed multitude," lest he take on himself the sins of that group or be found unnecessarily in their company more than in the company of God's children. In our lesson the Children of Israel cried out for the food of Egypt instead of the bread of Heaven!

The mixed multitude's murmurings made the Israelites forget the distasteful things of Egypt. They thought of the fresh foods there, but forgot the privations they had experienced. Their needs had been fully supplied in the wilderness. God had never failed to give them the manna, as He had promised. He had given them flesh to eat also as He saw fit (Psalm 74:14). He had caused fountains of water to spring forth from a rock, and sweetened other bitter springs for their use. Their complaints were not those of a starving group without sufficient food for their daily needs. They were, instead, the expressions of carnality, of uncontrolled desire, of unbelief in the God of Heaven and earth, and of unthankfulness for all the God of Abraham had done for them.

No sin dishonors God like the sin of unbelief. It is so deeply rooted in the hearts of some people that even though God performs miracles of the greatest magnitude they still doubt His ability to provide for their smallest needs. The unbelieving heart will not allow itself to say that God is as interested in man as the heart of faith knows He is. One must frequently examine his heart to make sure the enemy of his soul has not sown the seeds of this terrible sin there.

The Israelites were favored above all other nations, and yet it seems that few people have ever lived who were less appreciative - until we visualize the condition of our own hearts except for the regenerating grace of God. Manna dropped from the heavens for them, and they returned murmurs and complaints. The rocks gave them rivers of life-giving water, and they replied with floods of wickedness. God never neglected them once, providing for them in many miraculous ways, but they doubted His ability to give them flesh to eat.

They had grown so weary of the bread of Heaven that they wanted something else - something that both they and God knew was not necessary for their existence. When they murmured for water at Massah there may have been a slight basis for an excuse for their conduct, as they were asking for something absolutely necessary to life. Their sin at that time was in murmuring instead of praying! But here they lusted for

something unnecessary. It is bad enough to mistrust God when the issue seems, to our temporarily dulled senses, as one of dire necessity; but it is infinitely worse when the issue at stake is nothing but a greedy rage for superfluities.

A dissatisfied spirit fancies it would find pleasure in things that are denied it; but that kind of spirit finds no pleasure for itself when its wish is fulfilled. On the contrary, faith never complains but is ever thankful and appreciative. Had the Israelites drawn near to God instead of to the mixed multitude, they would have found new freshness in God's provision of the manna for them as they ate it day by day. The minor key of their wall of complaint would have been, instead, the joyful major mode of a song of praise. Let us praise God for our blessings instead of complaining of our supposed needs.

Intercessory Prayer

Moses knew the secret of true success in God's work, intercessory prayer. He knew that the complaints, lustings, and rebellions, which would be the natural results of the people's sinful hearts, could never be coped with unless God Himself remained their Leader. He knew he was powerless to bear the responsibility of this people who continually, in their hearts, turned back toward Egypt.

We can learn a great lesson from Moses' conduct at this time. Some have chosen to condemn him for his attitude in prayer at this time. They would tell us that Moses should have been, in himself, a "pillar" that would never break under the load placed upon him, no matter what the conditions. But Moses was only a man, even if he was a type of the Great Intercessor that was to come. The burden of this people was too great for Moses, or any other man, to bear alone. He realized his inability to do so. There is no wrong in realizing that we are Incapable, in our own human strength, of doing what God would have us do. It is commendable for a person to realize that his sufficiency and strength is of God, that he must have help from God or fall under the load. Our help is not in ourselves. It must come from God.

There was only One who could bear the guilt of man, and He was more than a man. He was Christ Jesus. In this confessed helplessness of the great man, Moses, we can also learn somewhat of the true value of the mediation of Him who Himself bore "our sins in his own body on the tree," and of our need of God's help at all times.

Promise of God

The answer God gave covered all the needs and petitions of both Moses and the people. For Moses a council of 70 was to be selected from the elders of the people. God would then especially commission and anoint them for the work. The people were to receive their request and be enabled to eat their fill of the meat for which their souls lusted. This was a staggering promise, the execution of which would defy their wildest imaginations.

When Moses, impatient with the people, attempted to estimate what would have to be done to make this promise

possible, God reprovably asked him if the Lord's hand were short, testifying again of His power and ability to do even this that the people desired and lusted for. To say that a person's hand is short, in Hebrew conception, was to say that he was powerless or impotent. Even among the modern Arabs and Persians the expression a long hand denotes strength and a short hand, weakness.

God gave Moses the authority to select 70 men of the elders of Israel and to bring them to the Tabernacle. Moses was to be the sole human being to judge their fitness. God empowers His leader with wisdom for each responsibility that He gives them - then and now! (1 **Kings 3:4-14 (KJV)**) ⁴ And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. ⁵ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. ⁶ And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. ⁷ And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in. ⁸ And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. ⁹ Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? ¹⁰ And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; ¹² Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. ¹³ And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. ¹⁴ And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will *lengthen thy days*.) The people did not elect these men but they were placed in their position by God, through Moses, and instructed by God Himself. And there is no one more capable or qualified to select those who are to fill the places of responsibility in God's service than the leader, or overseer, that God has placed in charge of His work. That person is led by God as he serves God and the people. Moses, being a true shepherd and leader, acted as he felt God would have him act, and appointed those whom he knew and felt God would have him appoint. He was a faithful leader, faithful to God as well as to Israel.

Two of the appointed men were unable to appear at the Tabernacle for reasons unknown to us now but sufficient at that time. But that did not prevent the same power from filling them and anointing them that filled the 68 who stood before the Lord at the Tabernacle. God has commissioned and empowered His people, at all stages of the history of the world, with special gifts of His power and Spirit that they might carry on His work. In Old Testament times this energizing Spirit came for specific purposes and times and was not given as an abiding anointing as it has been since its

first outpouring in this dispensation of the Church. This manifestation in Israel's early history, we might say then, was an earnest, or type, of the outpouring that was to come in later times when not only a few specially called could receive its fullness, but also all those who meet the conditions, who pray "with one accord," having been already sanctified wholly (**Joel 2:21-32 (KJV)**) ²¹ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. ²² Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. ²³ Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*. ²⁴ And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. ²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. ²⁷ And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that* I *am* the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. ²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. ³⁰ And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. ³² And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. **Acts 2:1-21 (KJV)** ¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. ⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? ⁸ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ⁹ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. ¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? ¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: ²¹ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved).

The Reward of Lust and Wanton Desire

Soon there went forth a wind from the Lord which brought quails to the camp of Israel. God sent quails, a choice delicacy, when He might have sent fire and brimstone instead! But since their complaint was so phrased that it denied the fact that He had power to give them their heart's desire, God first showed them His power, to make their obnoxious unbelief the more plain to them and to us also. Then He sent the much deserved punishment.

Their pleasure was short-lived. While the meat was still in the teeth of some, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord struck them and they were smitten with a very great plague. Their festivities and gluttonous indulgences ended with a mass funeral.

They were not content with the provision that was sufficient for their needs of the day, as God would have us content ourselves, but in their lustful greed gathered great quantities of the birds and spread them upon the ground to dry. Their motive in so doing was, no doubt, to provide for their needs of the future. They had murmured when they had nothing in sight to eat, and God gave them their daily manna. They had complained about the manna, and God had now given this miraculous bounty of fresh quail for which we do not read that they thanked God even once.

They even had doubted that God could, or would, send them meat to eat when they complained about their lot. Now they doubted Him still further, showing in their actions that they did not believe He had given them the meat but that it was only a matter of chance or good fortune for them. They intimated by their greedy actions that it was an opportunity that must be taken advantage of while in their grasp, for it would probably never occur again.. It has been estimated by some that the least amount of quail gathered by any person was about 80 bushels.

The unbelief of these people was chronic and incurable, from all outward appearances. Miracles of both mercy and judgment were unavailing to change their doubting hearts. They might have been made to wonder in amazement when they saw the hand of God outstretched in their behalf, but they could not be made to believe! Someone has said that unbelief and a continuance in sin go together. The Israelites loved their sin and would not give it up, so they continued in their unbelief that they might retain their sin. Let us pray that God will keep in our hearts a love for heart cleanliness and a firm belief in His Holy Word.

The Psalmist tells us that they sought God in a measure and enquired after Him outwardly, but that their tongues spoke only lies and their prayers were only flatteries. Their heart. were not right with God. They did not have a desire for

Him above all other things. They were not eager to do His will nor to have His will done for them. They wanted their own way. But God was patient and long-suffering, and dealt with them in mercy, remembering that they were but dust and as the grass and flower of the field that passes away.

Oh, how great is God's mercy! It is from "everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 103:17); it "endureth for ever" (Psalm 106:1); it is "great above the heavens" (Psalm 108:4); and it is abundant in the earth (Psalm 119: 64).

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the judgment-fire of God burn in the camp of Israel?
2. What did Moses do when this fire came?
3. Where did the complaint against the manna, originate?
4. What lesson can we learn from this text regarding the selection of our associates and friends?
5. What did the Israelites want instead of the manna?
6. What would you say was their sin in wanting these things rather than the manna?
7. What other great man of God besides Moses prayed a prayer when in despair, similar to Moses' prayer at this time?
8. Did God hear Moses' prayer? What was the answer, if He did hear it?
9. What did God do in answer to the complaint of the Israelites?
10. What great attribute of God was displayed in all His dealings with the Israelites?