



Now, almost everything is ready for the Israelites to leave Mt. Sinai and begin what they think is a relatively short trek to the Promised Land. There is only one more detail that God needs to give them—the method of communication for all the camp—for it is estimated the camp was about 10 miles long! So no amount of shouting would help. Thus, God gave them the means to transmit orders—through the shrill sound of trumpets.

He said, “Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them *for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps*. When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; *they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys*. And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance. The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.

“When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, *then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God*, and you will be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, *in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months*, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God” (Numbers 10:1-10).

Josephus, the Jewish historian, explains how the trumpet looked: “In length it was little less than a cubit. It was composed of a narrow tube, somewhat thicker than a flute, but with so much breadth as was sufficient for admission of the breath of a man's mouth: it ended in the form of a bell, like common trumpets. They [the priests] also made use of these trumpets in their sacred ministrations, when they were bringing their sacrifices to the altar as well on the Sabbaths as on the rest of the [feast] days; and it

was that Moses offered that sacrifice which was called the Passover in the Wilderness, as the first he had offered after the departure out of Egypt.”

So there were three main purposes to sound the trumpets:

- 1) When both trumpets sounded it was to gather the whole camp for an assembly. This included for Sabbath services, for Feast days, for the beginning of the Jubilee year and for the arrival of the first day of the lunar month.
- 2) When only one trumpet was sounded, it was to gather only the leaders of Israel, much as we have a general conference of elders once a year.
- 3) When both sounded it was a warning of impending danger to mobilize the camp and have them go to their assigned positions.

Only the priests were authorized to sound these trumpets and God promised He would hear the sound and act.

Today, the church keeps the fifth Feast in commemoration of the sound of these trumpets, that is called the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24). Just as there are three purposes to sound the trumpets then, so there are three applications in our lives--one daily, one collectively and one prophetically.

The daily application is when we are in need of God and cry out to him in prayer. Paul said, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplications, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6).

The second application is collectively, when we gather each Sabbath or Feast day. This is a reminder to us, for we have a summons from God every Sabbath to assemble together—and God's holy spirit urges us to go. That is why Paul said, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, as is the manner of some*, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

He later adds, “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched...and the sound of a trumpet...But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,

to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Heb. 10:24-25; 12:18-23). Yes, it is a great responsibility to attend services!

The third application is prophetically, when we as a church sound to an ailing world the trumpet of God’s truth, that includes a message of hope, warning, repentance and good news of the coming kingdom of God. God said, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice *like a trumpet*; tell my people *their transgression*, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). Included in this is what Christ said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world *as a witness* to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Mt. 24:14).

Our work of sounding the trumpets to the world of hope, warning and the coming of Christ will one day be superseded by the two witnesses of Rev. 11 and even by angels (Rev. 8-19).

Once this last detail is given by God, the Israelites leave Mt. Sinai. “Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran...The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according to their armies...So they departed from the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days” (Num. 10:14, 31).

Everything looked so promising on the first day, but by the third day, the Israelite were again complaining. “Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched. So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.” (11:1-3).

Before judging them too harshly and maybe feeling self-righteous, thinking we would never complain like this, let’s examine their difficult circumstances and ask how would we react.

Josephus explains, “The country was a great trouble to them, for it was entirely a desert, and without sustenance for them; and also had exceeding little water, so it was not at all sufficient for the men or to feed any of the cattle. It was

parched up, and had no moisture that might afford nutriment to the vegetation. They had indeed carried water along with them from the land over which they had traveled before, as their conductor had bidden them; but when that was spent, they were obliged to draw water out of wells, with pain, by reason of the hardness of the soil. There, they were afflicted both by the tediousness of their journey, and by their want of food.

“When Moses saw how much the people were cast down, and that the occasion of it could not be contradicted, for the people were not an army of men, who might would have a manly fortitude toward the necessity that distressed them. Instead, the multitude was also composed of children, women and the elderly. And they, being of too weak capacities to be persuaded by reason, blunted the courage of the men themselves. Moses was therefore in great difficulties, and made everybody’s calamity his own; for they all ran to him and begged of him. The women begged for their infants, and the men for the women, that he would not overlook them, but procure some way or other for their deliverance...Now when they departed Mt. Sinai, they wandered in their miserable condition, being already in want of water and if the manna should happen to fail, they would utterly perish. So they spoke many and sore things against Moses. One exhorted them to disregard Moses. Moses took great pains to calm them and not to despair of the assistance from God. But the multitude became still more unruly and mutinous against Moses. Hereupon Moses, although he was so basely abused by them encouraged them in their despairing conditioned and promised that he would procure them a quantity of flesh-meat, and that not for a few days only, but for many days. This they did not believe.”

The Bible says, “Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (Numbers 11:4-6). This complaint represents one of the 10 major murmurings of the Israelites against God and Moses (Numbers 14:22).

Moses went bitterly before God--and not without some sarcasm. It shows God’s servants can

argue with Him about the commission and trials they receive, but they are not to give up. He said, “Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,’ to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get the meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—If I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness” (11:11-15).

God recognized Moses’ despair and decided to first give Moses some help, so He asked Moses to pick seventy men from the elders of Israel and then said, “I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone” (11:17).

Moses was highly pleased and there wasn’t an envious bone in his body. When Joshua complained to Moses about some of these men prophesying in the camp without permission, Moses replied, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (11:29). That’s a sign of Moses’ meekness.

God then decided to give the people what they asked for: “Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?’” (Numbers 11:18-20).

So the next day, quail descended on the Israelite camp to a depth of 12 inches! These fowl were common in biblical times and remain so in the Middle East. They are migratory birds that fly at the end of the European summer to the Sinai peninsula, where they remain for six months.

“The old world quail...a small, mottled brown game bird about 18 cm. (7 in.) long, is the only member of the [pheasant] subfamily...that is

migratory. The routes of migration run from southern Europe, along the eastern Mediterranean coast, the Sinai Peninsula, to Arabia or West Africa. The quails travel southward in the late summer and northward in early spring (the time of the Israelite exodus from Egypt)...As recently as the early decades of the 20th century, migrating quails were killed by Egyptians at the rate of two million annually; in 1920 a kill of *three million* was recorded” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1988, Vol. 4, pp. 4-5).

The miracle of God was to bring these quail to the Israelite camp and deposit them in huge numbers in that precise location.

Yet, there were some in the camp that were very greedy and didn’t even give God thanks for this great miracle. So they were punished. “But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of the place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving” (11:33-34).

This should be a reminder to us about praying before a meal, giving thanks for it, knowing many times God produced some type of miracle unbeknown to us, whether through our jobs or of purifying it so we didn’t get sick.