

Day 158 - WEDNESDAY: May 17th

Numbers 11

Numbers 11:1-35 NKJV

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. 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!" Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it. Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. So Moses said to the LORD, "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 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!" So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. 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. Then you shall say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt." 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?" ' " And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.' Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?" And the LORD said to Moses, "Has the LORD's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not." So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" Then Moses said to him, "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!" And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel. Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground. And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. 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 that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG Reading plan states: "The people were setting out for the Promised Land with high hopes and expectations. It is interesting to compare this episode with the departure of the Israelites from their great deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea. Only three days' journey into the wilderness from that point, the people turned to murmuring against God for lack of water (Exodus 15:22–24). And here, too, it is only three days from leaving Mount Sinai (Numbers 10:33) that the people again turn to complaining (Numbers 11:1–3). Again we see just how wrong it is to be ungrateful. After all God had done for them, they griped and complained. To teach them how sorely displeased He was, God struck the

outskirts of the camp with fire, possibly lightning, as a lesson to those who would be unappreciative. That lesson was meant for us today as well, for God hasn't changed the way He views things like ingratitude and rebellion. But despite the warning, ingratitude increased—to the point of the people weeping for what they didn't have (thus showing little regard for the extent to which God had incredibly blessed them). Amazingly, they even said they wanted to be back in Egypt, where they had been whipped and beaten as slave laborers!

The insanely needless moaning and crying takes its toll on Moses. Not only is he helpless to deal with the situation himself, but the people hold him personally responsible for the predicament they are in. It all gets to be more than Moses can deal with, so he pleads to God. He didn't father all these people; he doesn't have food for them; why does he have all the responsibility? Just to get a feel for the burden Moses thought he was carrying, consider the size of this encampment of people. For Moses to give every Israelite a quarter-pounder, just one hamburger each, it would have required 375 tons of fresh ground meat! Moses asked to be put out of his misery.

Indeed, Moses was so upset that he was actually blaming God of evildoing. The King James and New King James Versions, however, give only a hint of this—in verse 11, where Moses asks God, "Why have you afflicted your servant?," and in the first words of verse 15, "If you treat me like this...." This shows that Moses considered God responsible for His plight but not that Moses actually thought God morally wrong because of it. Yet of great interest in this regard are the last words of Moses in verse 15—"my wretchedness." This should literally be translated "my evil" (J.P. Green, *The Interlinear Bible*). Yet Moses is certainly not confessing His own faults in this passage. Rather, what he must be saying is, "the evil of my situation" or "the evil that has come upon me," which, in either case, by direct implication, means "the evil that You [God] are doing to me." To see this more clearly, notice how *The New English Bible* translates verse 15: "But if I have won thy favour, let me suffer this trouble at thy hands no longer." And even more poignantly, notice the same verse in the *Good News Bible*: "If you are going to treat me like this, have pity on me and kill me, so that I won't have to endure your cruelty any longer." So Moses was actually accusing God of evil—of deliberate cruelty.

Yet God, who knows the heart, was merciful to Moses. Remember always that God has promised that He will put no burden on us we can't bear (compare 1 Corinthians 10:13). In His lovingkindness, God responded to Moses' plea by calling for the appointment of 70 elders to help carry the burden of the people—men who would be helped by God's Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, God was sorely displeased with the ungrateful attitude of the people who were saying it was better back in Egypt. Did they consider it a small thing that God was giving them manna enough for all their needs? Evidently. And rather than be content with that—or at least pray to God to supply the desires of their hearts—the people just moaned and bellyached for the meat they didn't have. Moses had doubted whether it was possible to find enough meat for the whole congregation. To carry the previous analogy a little further, two Big Macs a day, for a month, would come to more than 30,000 tons of meat altogether! We can't imagine that much meat—and neither could Moses. Are there that many fish in the sea? Yet God was able to provide—and did. But angered by the voracious lust of such rebellious ingrates, God smote the people with a great plague, killing many. The place where this happened,

now named Kibroth Hataavah or "Graves of Lust," was a vast graveyard of needlessly ravenous, ungrateful people." [END]

Verse 3 – "Taberah" means "burning".

Verse 4 – It appears in this particular case that the mixed multitude that had come out of Egypt with the nation of Israel began to complain and lust after food and soon that complaining had spread to the nation of Israel.

Verse 16 – John Gill's commentary states: "out from among them, such as were not only men in years, but men of gravity, prudence, and wisdom; elders there were among the people in Egypt, Exo_3:16; and it was from among such as those the seventy men were to be taken; we read of seventy elders before this time, that went up to the mount with Moses, Exo_24:1; but they are supposed only to be selected for that purpose at that time, and did not continue as a separate body, or in any office: according to this number seventy, the great sanhedrim, or court of judicature the sat at Jerusalem in later times, consisted of seventy persons, with a prince or president at the head of them, as Moses was at the head of those: and so our Lord, besides

his twelve apostles, sent out seventy disciples to be assisting in his work and service, Luk_10:1,” [END]

Verse 17 – JFB commentary states: “The spirit” means the gifts and influences of the Spirit (Num_27:18; Joe_2:28; Joh_7:39; 1Co_14:12), and by “taking the spirit of Moses, and putting it upon them,” is not to be understood that the qualities of the great leader were to be in any degree impaired but that the elders would be endowed with a portion of the same gifts, especially of prophecy (Num_11:25) – that is, an extraordinary penetration in discovering hidden and settling difficult things.”

Verse 20 – God would give them so much meat to eat that they would become sick of eating it. It would become disgusting to them. While God wants us to come to Him and share our feelings, He does not want us to be complaining and unthankful. Their approach was wrong.

Verse 22 – It’s a little shocking that after all the miracles God has performed that Moses is doubting how God will accomplish this great feat of meat for this large group of

people for an entire month. Even people of great faith can have moments or situations of doubt.

Verse 25 – God will occasionally pour out His spirit in dramatic fashion to initially prove without a doubt that He is doing something spectacular (compare Acts 2:3 (Holy Spirit poured out on the Church) and Acts 10:44 (Holy Spirit poured out on Gentiles). Notice here in this verse, that after they prophesied at this time, they never did it again. It was for a specific purpose and that purpose was accomplished.

Verse 28 – There is a reason that all leaders first need a period of mentoring and preparation. Joshua's view here is shortsighted and off base. He is still growing as a leader.

Verse 29 – The NKJV states: “Are you zealous for my sake?” The Hebrew translated “zealous” means “to envy, be jealous, be envious, be zealous”. By Moses' response, it appears that Joshua was afraid that Moses authority would be diminished by others prophesying but Moses wasn't jealous or concerned but was happy that God was pouring out His Spirit on others. How would we have responded?

Verse 34 – Hebrew for “Kibrothhattaavah” means “Grave of lust”.