

Historical Context: Numbers tells the story of how God led His people from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land. And though the journey should have only taken eleven days, it took them 40 years because of their doubt and disobedience. Numbers is the book that describes the “wilderness wanderings” of the people as a whole generation would die because of their lack of faith (see Num 13-14).

Numbers 11 begins with the murmuring of the people about their food situation. They grew tired of eating manna and began to complain about it. This resulted in God becoming angry and Moses feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of leading such a great and needy multitude. God in His mercy provided additional leaders to share the load and in His providence supplied quail for meat, but not without retribution for the rebellion.

Numbers 11:1-9

The People Complain

Fire From the LORD

¹ Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. ² When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down. ³ So that place was called Taberah, ^[a] because fire from the LORD had burned among them.

Quail from the LORD

⁴ The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!" ⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. ⁶ But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

⁷ The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. ⁸ The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a handmill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into cakes. And it tasted like

something made with olive oil. ⁹ When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

QUESTIONS:

Why does vs 1 emphasize that the people’s complaints were “in the hearing of the LORD” and that He “heard” them?

Do you often think that the LORD hears whatever you say? Describe times that you might say things that the LORD would not like?

Why did the LORD get so angry that He allowed fire to consume them?

When did the fire die down? What does this teach about the power of prayer?

The word “rabble” in vs 4 probably refers to the foreigners who came with the Israelites out of Egypt. Why would someone who doesn’t share the same faith in the LORD be quicker to complain? How does vs 4 demonstrate that complaining is contagious?

In vs 5-6 the complainers had selective memories, because they remembered the food from Egypt but seemed to forget that they were slaves there. How can remembering what God has rescued you from help in coping with the problems that you endure today?

Numbers 11:10-15

Moses Complains

¹⁰ Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. ¹¹ He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?" ¹² Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? ¹³

Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴ I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

QUESTIONS:

Moses suddenly develops an “I” problem. He focuses on himself and his insufficiencies and becomes so depressed that he almost wanted to die. What had Moses and the people of Israel already experienced that should have kept Moses from becoming so stressed? What should we focus on during difficult times?

Though Moses is having a “pity party” he does one thing right -- he takes his needs to the LORD. What needs do you have right now? Take them to the LORD in prayer.

Numbers 11:1-9

The LORD’s Answer

¹⁶ The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.

¹⁸ "Tell the people: 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The LORD heard you when you wailed, "If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it. ¹⁹ You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, ²⁰ but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—

because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" ' "

²¹ But Moses said, "Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!' ²² Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?"

²³ The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

QUESTIONS:

What did God decide to do in order to alleviate the sense of overwhelming stress that Moses felt? What was Moses instructed to do?

God also said that He would provide meat for the people, but what did He tell them to do first (see vs 18)?

How do you “consecrate” yourself?

How does vs 18-20 illustrate the truth that getting what you WANT is not always the best thing for you?

When Moses questioned the seemingly impossible task of feeding such a great multitude in the wilderness, how did God respond?

Numbers 11:24-30

The LORD’s Solution

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. ^[b]

²⁶ However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

²⁸ Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!"

²⁹ But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" ³⁰ Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

QUESTIONS:

The Holy Spirit did not "indwell" believers until after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. In this passage God's Spirit "rested on" the elders and they prophesied (which means they spoke obvious messages from the LORD in a miraculous manner).

When it was discovered that Eldad and Medad had missed the meeting but were still given the gift of prophesying, how did Joshua respond and why?

How did Moses respond?

Read Peter's description of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel in Acts 2:14-21. How do believers today fulfill the wish that Moses spoke of in vs 29?

Numbers 11:31-35

Graves of Craving

³¹ Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them ^[c] down all around the camp to about three feet ^[d] above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. ³² All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. ^[e] Then they spread them out all around the camp. ³³ But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the

LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. ³⁴

Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, ^[f] because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

³⁵ From Kibroth Hattaavah the people traveled to Hazereth and stayed there.

QUESTIONS:

The description of the people gathering and "consuming" the quail seems to indicate they were gorging themselves (and possibly without even preparing the birds properly). How did God respond to their greed and gluttony?

APPLICATION

Are you content or are you a complainer? Philippians 2:14 says to "do everything without complaining or arguing." How well do you keep that command?

Pray that God would bring contentment to your life and that you would be satisfied with His provisions. If you are in need, call out to Him in prayer and follow His directions. Pray for His will and not your wants to be done.

God told Moses that He would delegate his leadership to other Spiritual leaders. If you are overwhelmed by your responsibilities consider asking God to provide other Spirit-filled leaders to share the load.

Pray the LORD of the harvest to send more laborers into our church's mission field. (see Matthew 9:37-38)

Footnotes:

- [Numbers 11:3](#) Taberah means burning .
- [Numbers 11:25](#) Or prophesied and continued to do so
- [Numbers 11:34](#) Kibroth Hattaavah means graves of craving .

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FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL

LESSON

February 14, 2010

The Cure for Complaints

Focal Passage: Numbers 11

Cross References: Acts 2:14-21;
Philippians 2:14; Matthew 9:37-38

Key Vs: Num 11:23 *The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."*

Central Idea: The people complained about their food situation, and God punished the rabble but provided for the faithful.

Lesson Idea: We should not complain about the LORD's provisions, but it is okay to pray and seek His help.

NOTE FROM BRO STAN:

We begin reading Numbers this week, a book that is very dear to my heart, because I spent all of last year writing my dissertation on it. I was fascinated by the many times the phrase "And the LORD spoke to Moses" occurred, as it usually led off each new section of the book. People usually say that Moses led the people through the wilderness, but if you look closer you realize that God Himself led the people and Moses just obeyed the LORD's commands and instructions. As the LORD spoke and Moses and the people obeyed, they were blessed and continued to move toward their goal. Only when they disobeyed or doubted did they end up wandering in the wilderness or

worse. My paper was called: *THEN THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES: THE LISTENING LEADER IN NUMBERS AS A MODEL FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP*. If anyone would like to read it, let me know and I'll get you a copy.

Bible in a Year Daily Readings

February 7-14, 2009

Feb 7 Numbers 1 - 2
Feb 8 Numbers 3 - 4
Feb 9 Numbers 5 - 6
Feb 10 Numbers 7 - 8
Feb 11 Numbers 9 - 10
Feb 12 Numbers 11 - 13
Feb 13 Numbers 14 - 15
Feb 14 Numbers 16 - 18

Read the Bible Through Highlights of the Week: February 7-14, 2010

Num 1: Census of the army
Num 2: Arrangement of the camp
Num 3-4: Duties of the Levites
Num 6:24-26: A blessing
Num 7: Offerings of the leaders
Num 9: The Passover
Num 10: Trumpets and traveling
Num 11: Complaints, punishment & Spiritual solutions
Num 12: Jealousy in the family
Num 13: Spies in the Promised Land
Num 14: The Biggest Mistake
Num 15: Seriousness of Sabbath sin
Num 16: Korah's rebellion
Num 17: Budding of Aaron's rod