

# Numbers 11 Commentary

PREVIOUS Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere ( <a href="#">Wilderness</a> )			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

**Numbers 11:1** Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.

BGT Numbers 11:1 κα ν λα ς γογγ ζων πονηρ ναντι κυρ ου κα κουσεν κ ριος κα θυμ θη ργ κα ξεκα θη ν α το ς π ρ παρ κυρ ου κα κατ φαγεν μ ρος τι τ ς παρεμβολ ς

NET Numbers 11:1 When the people complained, it displeased the LORD. When the LORD heard it, his anger burned, and so the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outer parts of the camp.

NLT Numbers 11:1 Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the LORD heard everything they said. Then the LORD's anger blazed against them, and he sent a fire to rage among them, and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.

ESV Numbers 11:1 And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.

NIV Numbers 11:1 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.

KJV Numbers 11:1 And when the people <05971> complained <0596> (08693), it displeased <07451> <0241> the LORD <03068>: and the LORD <03068> heard <08085> (08799) it; and his anger <0639> was

kindled <02734> (08799); and the fire <0784> of the LORD <03068> burnt <01197> (08799) among them, and consumed <0398> (08799) them that were in the uttermost parts <07097> of the camp <04264>.

YLT Numbers 11:1 And the people is evil, as those sighing habitually in the ears of Jehovah, and Jehovah heareth, and His anger burneth, and the fire of Jehovah burneth among them, and consumeth in the extremity of the camp.

LXE Numbers 11:1 And the people murmured sinfully before the Lord; and the Lord heard them and was very angry; and fire was kindled among them from the Lord, and devoured a part of the camp.

- **Now the people became:** Nu 10:33 20:2-5 21:5 Ex 15:23,24 16:2,3,7,9 17:2,3 De 9:22 La 3:39 1Co 10:10 Jude 1:16
- it displeased the Lord: Heb. it was evil in the ears of the Lord, Ge 38:10 2Sa 11:27 \*marg: Jas 5:4
- **and the fire:** Nu 16:35 Lev 10:2 De 32:22 2Ki 1:12 Job 1:16 Ps 78:21 106:18 Isa 30:33 33:14 Na 1:5 Mk 9:43-49 Heb 12:29
- **consumed some of the outskirts of the camp** De 25:18
- **[Numbers 11 Resources](#)** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **OBEDIENT ISRAEL ABRUPTLY CHANGES TO COMPLAINING ISRAEL!**

**David Guzik** gives a good summation - Israel, having been ordered, organized, cleansed, separated, blessed, taught how to give, reminded of God's deliverance, given God's presence, and the tools to advance to the Promised Land, is now on the march to Canaan—and immediately, the people complained. How can it be that a nation so blessed can still complain? God had done so much in and for Israel; yet they still murmur against Him. Of course, their circumstances were not easy—but what sin it is for them to complain against God, wiping out the spirit of gratitude in their hearts!

**NET Note** - The chapter includes the initial general complaints (vv. 1–3), the complaints about food (vv. 4–9), Moses' own complaint to the LORD (vv. 10–15), God's response to Moses (vv. 16–25), Eldad and Medad (vv. 26–29), and the quail (vv. 30–35). The first part records the burning of the camp, named Taberah. Here is one of the several naming narratives in the wilderness experience. The occasion for divine judgment is the complaining of the people. The passages serve to warn believers of all ages not to murmur as the Israelites did, for such complaining reveals a lack of faith in the power and goodness of God.

### **Irving Jensen's Outline of "The Journey" Numbers 10:11-22:1**

#### **I. Sinai to Kadesh—Unbelief (Numbers 10:11–14:45)**

- A. A Good Start (Numbers 10:11–36)
- B. First Casualties (Numbers 11:1–35)
- C. Rebellion of Two Leaders (Numbers 12:1–15)
- D. Reconnaissance and Report (Numbers 12:16–13:33)
- E. People's Decision and God's Judgment (Numbers 14:1–45)

#### **II. Desert Wanderings—Divine Chastening Numbers (Numbers 15:1–19:22)**

- A. God's Legislation Reaffirmed (Numbers 15:1–41)
- B. God's Leaders Challenged (Numbers 16:1–50)
- C. God's High Priest Vindicated (Numbers 17:1–13)
- D. God's Priests and Levites Provided For (Numbers 18:1–32)
- E. God's People Offered Cleansing for Mass Defilement (Numbers 19:1–22)

#### **III. Kadesh to Moab—A New Generation and a New Start (Numbers 20:1–22:1)**

- A. First Signs of Retiring Leadership (Numbers 20:1–29)
- B. Successful Advances to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 21:1–22:1)

### **Brian Bell's Outline for [Numbers 11](#)**

- Complaints against Bread! - Numbers 11:1-9
- Complaints against Burdens! - Numbers 11:10-25
- Complaints against Blessings! - Numbers 11:26-35

**Ronald Allen** makes an excellent point - Chapters 11–20 present a dismal record of their acts of ingratitude and of God's consequent judgments on his ungrateful people. Yet within these chapters are innumerable instances of his continuing grace. The

reader of these texts goes astray if he or she focuses solely on God's wrath or on the constant provocations to his anger by his meandering people. The more impressive feature in this text is God's continuing mercy against continuing, obdurate rebellion.(EBC-Nu)

**Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD**- It is interesting that here Moses does not say specifically what they were complaining about. It makes you think they were grumbling about a number of things -- this desert is so hot, the food is so bland, etc, etc. (Aren't we all a lot like Israel at times in our Christian lives? Just wondering.) Greek has "the people murmured sinfully before the Lord." There are only 3 days into the march. The revert from complete obedience to rebellious complainers! In the Septuagint the phrase in the **hearing of the LORD** is conveyed by a single word **enanti** which means in the presence of, in front of, before, over against, in the sight of. It was not before Moses that they complained (although they did that also), but literally before Yahweh Himself! Wow!

The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues.  
What they at first silently wished for,  
they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.  
-- C H Spurgeon

KJV says "**the people complained and it displeased the LORD**" about which Guzik comments "This was a simple case of cause-and-effect. Our complaining hearts displease God, because it shows so little gratitude for what He has done in the past, and faith for what He can do right now."

**Complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD**- More literally they were complaining of evil! The Hebrew says "it was evil in the ears of the LORD." The word (for adversity) is נָצַח (ra') a much stronger word than "**adversity**" would suggest. "The bold anthropomorphism shows that what the LORD heard was painful to him." ([NET Note](#) = NN).

**Complain (0596)(anan)** to complain, to murmur, to find fault. "It describes the response of the people of Israel who **found fault with** the food supply they had in the wilderness (Num. 11:1). **Complaining** is ruled out because of humanity's sins (Lam. 3:39) in the case of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon." (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

The Septuagint translates **anan** with [gogguzo](#) which means to express satisfaction and is in the imperfect tense indicating that they expressed their complaints over and over, again and again before the LORD! is used in Ex 17:3; Nu 11:1; Nu 14:27; Nu 14:29; Nu 16:41; Nu 17:5; Jdg. 1:14; Ps. 59:15; Ps. 106:25; Isa. 29:24; Isa. 30:12; Lam. 3:39

**NIVSB** - They had expressed the same complaints a year earlier, only **three days** after their deliverance at the waters of the Red Sea (Ex 15:22–27), and had subsequently complained about manna (Ex 16) and a lack of water (Ex 17:1–7).

The gift of grumbling is largely dispensed among those who have no other talents.  
-- C H Spurgeon

**THOUGHT** - The sin of murmuring is a sin made up of the two ingredients of **unbelief** and **ingratitude**. **Unbelief**, because the people were beginning to doubt whether God would really fulfill His promises. **Ingratitude**, for they had already forgotten what a favored people they were and how many blessings were daily coming their way. **How soon in the life of a believer do such sins arise!** - Irving Jensen

**NET Note** - With this blunt introduction the constant emphasis of obedience to the word of the LORD found throughout the first ten chapters suddenly comes to an end. It is probable that the people were tired of moving for several days, the excitement of the new beginning died out quickly in the "great and terrible wilderness." Resentment, frustration, discomfort—whatever it all involved—led to complaining and not gratitude.

**Brian Bell** - Complaining or grumbling was evidence of the unbelief that would keep them out of the promise land. Let's learn how to be Grateful for God's Goodness, & Governable to God's Guidance. ([Numbers 11](#))

**Merrill** - So far in Numbers we have seen nothing but expressions of agreement with God's direction, obedience, and a high sense of expectancy. But the first three verses of chapter 11 introduce elements that were to become regular features of the subsequent wilderness experience: (1) complaint (Nu 11:4–5; 12:1–2; 14:1–4; 16:1–3, 41; 20:3–5; 21:5); (2) divine punishment (Nu 11:33; 12:9–10; 14:20–37; 16:32, 45–49; 17:10–13; 21:6); (3) Moses's intercession, which brings a measure of relief (Nu 11:2; 12:13; 16:22, 46–49; 21:7); and (4) memorializing the incident by giving a name to the site (Nu 11:34; 20:13; cf. Ex 15:23; 17:7). Complaints had been tolerated earlier (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3), but henceforth God would judge it (Nu 11:4, 19, 33; 14:2; 16:3; 20:3; 21:5), and that would require Moses's intercession. (Cornerstone Bible Commentary)

**And when the LORD heard it** Their complaining was not just in their hearts but came out of their mouths. But it could have even remained unspoken but infecting their heart and the omniscient LORD would have heard it! The account does not say that Moses heard the people's first murmuring as he did on a later occasion (Nu 11:10). But Jehovah **heard** it and in His righteous anger, without announcement to Moses or the people, sent fire

Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath;

And a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also mounted against Israel

--- Psalm 78:21±

As **Spurgeon** says "He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. The fire of his anger which was also attended with literal burnings. Whether he viewed them in the lower or higher light, as Jacob or as Israel, he was angry with them: even as mere men they ought to have believed him; and as chosen tribes, their wicked unbelief was without excuse. The Lord doeth well to be angry at so ungrateful, gratuitous and dastardly an insult as the questioning of his power.

**His anger was kindled** - He "burned in the nose" so to speak (as explained more below)! The Septuagint is **thumoo** (aorist passive) and means be provoked to angry, become angry, become enraged (used in Mt 2:16+), the related word **thumos** (from **thúo** = move impetuously, particularly as the air or wind, a violent motion or passion of the mind; move violently, rush along) describes **passion** (as if breathing hard) and so speaks of an agitated or "heated" anger that rushes along (impulse toward a thing). This presents a frightening picture of Yahweh, as if His anger explodes forth against His chosen people who are complaining.

**APPLICATION** - Be wary of complaining or grumbling against the LORD!

**Anger** (nose, nostril, wrath) (0639) (**aph** from **anaph** = to breathe hard, to be angry) is a masculine noun meaning nose, nostril, snout (pigs - Pr 11:22), face (2Sa 25:23) and anger, wrath, resentment, formally, nose, i.e., have a strong feeling of displeasure over a person or a situation, as a figurative extension of the nose as an area that can change color when blood rushes to it while one is angry (Ge 27:45). Both senses are found in Proverbs 30:22 - "For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the **nose** (aph) brings forth blood; so the churning of **anger** (aph) produces strife." In the first use God "breathed into (man's) nostrils the breath of life." (Ge 2:7) **Aph** sometimes refers to the entire whole face (Ge 3:19), especially in the expression, *to bow one's face to the ground* (Ge 19:1; 1Sa 24:8). To have *length of nose* is to be *slow to wrath* (Pr 14:29, 16:32). To have *shortness of nose* is to be *quick tempered* (Pr. 14:17; Jer. 15:14, 15). Aph is used in a phrase (goba aph) which means pride, arrogance, formally, high of nose, an improper haughtiness and self-confidence (Ps 10:4). Often speaks of divine anger or wrath (Ps 2:5, 2:12, 6:1, 30:5, 74:1, 77:9, 78:21) and thankfully is "Slow to **anger**." (Ps 103:8; 145:8, both Lxx = makrothumos = long-suffering)

It is interesting that in the OT the nose plays a certain role in the description of anger: Ezek. 38:18, "my anger will rise up in my nose" (text uncertain); and Ps. 18:8f. (Eng. v. 7f.), "for he was angry; smoke rose up in his nose" (charah lo 'alah 'ashan be'appo). Moreover, there is a clear connection between anger and snorting, e.g., in Ex. 15:8; Ps. 18:15; Job 4:9.

**Kindled (or burned)** (02734) (**charah**) means to burn or be kindled with anger, and in the Hithpael, **charah** is used 4x (Ps 37:1, 7,8, Pr 24:19) always meaning "to worry" and describing the agitation, irritation or vexation resulting from active worry. **Charah** is used in reference to the anger of both man and God.

**NET Note** - The common Hebrew expression uses the verb חָרָה (**charah**, "to be hot, to burn, to be kindled"). The subject is אַפּוֹ (**aph**, "his anger" or more literally, his nose, which in this anthropomorphic expression flares in rage (ED: WE'VE ALL SEEN PEOPLE'S NOSES FLARE WHEN THEY BECOME ANGRY!). The emphasis is superlative—"his anger raged."

**And the fire of the LORD burned among them**- Is this not a bit ironic? For 11 plus months the fire of God had been a source of protection for Israel at night ("pillar of fire by night" Ex 13:21-22+) and here divine fire instead of protecting, purges so to speak! "With such a response to the complaining, one must conclude that it was unreasonable. There had been no long deprivation or endured suffering; the complaining was early and showed a rebellious spirit. The "**fire of the LORD**" is supernatural, for it is said to come from the LORD and not from a natural source. God gave them something to complain about—something to fear. The other significant place where this "fire of the LORD" destroyed was in the case of Nadab and Abihu who brought strange fire to the altar (Lev 10:2)." (NET)

**Bush** - The current of commentators here favor the idea of some literal and visible bursting forth of fire, either from the cloudy pillar or in a flash of lightning, which instantly consumed the offenders, as Nadab and Abihu were consumed by a similar stroke of the divine indignation....By this we are simply to understand that he is terrible in his judgments towards his adversaries. (cf Ps 78:62-63).

**And consumed some of the outskirts of the camp**- This is a reflection of God's great mercy that the fire was only at the outskirts of the camp! The verb **consumed** (akal [0398](#)) literally means to eat or devour (as when eating all of something and swallowing it down), and is here in a metaphorical sense describing the activity of fire that consumes or devours as when the burnt offering was consumed by fire into ashes (Lev. 6:10). Moses used this same verb [akal](#) later when he declared "the LORD your God is a **consuming** fire, a jealous God." (Dt 4:24). Oh, how we ALL need to **HEAR** and **HEED** this truth about God!

**Bush** suggests and may be correct that the outskirts of the camp would have been more likely location of the rabble rousing "mixed multitude."

**Believer's Study Bible** - The remainder of the account of Israel's trip to **Kadesh** (Nu 10:11-12:16) focuses on **three incidents of complaining**: at Taberah (Nu 11:1-3), at Kibroth Hattaavah (Nu 11:4-35), and at Hazeroth (Nu 12:1-16). These accounts serve as a prelude to the rejection to come in Numbers 13; 14. Israel's stay at Sinai was also preceded by **three incidents of complaining**: at Marah (Ex. 15:22-26+), in the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:1-36+), and at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-7+). **Israel's overall spiritual character does not appear to have been altered by the revelation of God at Sinai.** (THAT IS AN AMAZING STATEMENT - IT MAKES ME THINK OF FOLKS WHO HAVE SET UNDER BIBLICAL PREACHING FOR YEARS AND ARE STILL NOT SAVED! THEY WILL SUFFER A GREATER CONDEMNATION BECAUSE OF THEIR GREATER LIGHT!) Also, the two balancing sets of incidents is evidence for unity of authorship in Exodus and Numbers (Nu 14:22). The complaint of the people at Taberah, which was prompted by their ingratitude and lack of faith, displeased the Lord, and the fire of His judgment consumed some of them. Fire is a sign of God's presence and judgment (Ex. 19:18; Dt. 4:11; 1 Ki. 18:38; Ps. 11:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 1:13; 2 Pe. 3:12).

**Mattoon** - Complaining is catching! Like dogs barking in the neighborhood, or frogs croaking on the pond, one person complaining can infect an entire group of people and turn them from being positive to being pessimistic. Some folks complain all the time. I have known some folks in my lifetime that consistently complain. They never have anything good to say. To them, everything is bad or no good. The trip to the Promised Land was an eleven day journey (Deut. 1:2). The trip ended up taking just under 40 years before they enter the Promised Land. Why? The complaining and griping of the people poisoned their faith in the Lord. Beloved, God hates our griping. The book of Numbers is a chronicle of complaining.

- In chapter 11—It is over misfortunes and the menu.
- In chapter 14—It is over men who are gigantic and meaningful memories of Egypt.
- In chapter 16—It is over Moses and Aaron's authority.
- In chapter 20—It is over minimal water supplies.
- In chapter 21—It is over the migration through the wilderness.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**V. 1. And (when) the people complained, it displeased the Lord.** Or, according to Ainsworth, "And the people as complaining (i. e. murmuring, fretting themselves) was evil in the ears of Jehovah." It may otherwise be rendered, "And the people were (became) as murmuring evil in the ears of Jehovah." Thus the Gr. "The people murmured evil things before the Lord." This is favored by Horsley, who says, "The passage would be better rendered, 'And the people murmured wickedly in the ears of Jehovah.' " So also Geddes, "Meanwhile the people began to mutter evil in the hearing of the Lord." Or, finally, "And the people were as murmurers, (which was) evil in the ears of the Lord." The original, kemithonenim, here rendered complained (lit. "were as complainers"), is in a reflexive conjugation implying, as Luther has it, that they "made themselves impatient." They allowed their feelings to act inwardly upon themselves, working their own minds into a restless, discontented, murmuring state, which, however, was not vented so much in open complaints, as in a certain half-suppressed, obscure, and secret repining and fretting, which is conveyed by the force of the original particle, כ, k, as it were. It seems to be implied that this fretfulness did not so much express itself in the ears of men as in those of the Lord himself, and though it was, as it were, but whispered or buzzed in his ear, yet "he heard it," heard it as though most audibly and distinctly uttered. All this is in effect comprised in the idea intended to be conveyed by the original, but it is obvious how inadequate must be any translation that does not run into a paraphrase. No special reason is given by the sacred writer for the murmuring on this occasion, but one is assigned by the Vulg., "There arose a murmuring of the people against the Lord, as it were repining at their fatigue." It may have been that their hearts were discouraged at being obliged to take somewhat long and tiresome stages at the outset; but whatever were the causes of their discontent, we know that they had a thousandfold more occasion for thanksgiving and praise than for disaffection and complaint. But such is human nature, of which we all partake more or less, and to which we are prone to give way. Let us remember, however, that the Lord sees and takes account of these secret murmurs which are not openly uttered, and may visit them openly as truly as he hears in secret and rewards openly the prayers of the humble and penitent.

**The fire of the Lord burnt among them.** Chald. "A fire from before the Lord." Heb. tibar, burned, from whence was derived the name of the place, "Taberah," burning, where this visitation occurred, v. 3. The current of commentators here favor the idea of some literal and visible bursting forth of fire, either from the cloudy pillar or in a flash of lightning, which instantly consumed the offenders,

as Nadab and Abihu were consumed by a similar stroke of the divine indignation. Any fire sent by the Lord, is a fire of the Lord, and though some think it was a fire wholly supernatural; others that it was lightning; others that it was the simoom, or hot wind of the desert, yet we incline to a different opinion, and take the judgment here mentioned to be not external, but internal; supposing the fire spoken of to be what Job terms “a fire not blown,” or but another term for any kind of wasting effect of the Lord’s displeasure. In what particular form this was manifested it is now impossible to say, but it was such as to carry with it a conviction of its origin, and to lead to implore earnestly its abatement. The Psalmist, in allusion to this judgment, says, Ps. 78:21, “So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel,” where we do not recognize the import of literal fire, any more than when we read in the language of the apostle that “Our God is a consuming fire.” By this we are simply to understand that he is terrible in his judgments towards his adversaries. This view is confirmed, if we mistake not, by general usage. Thus, Ps. 78:62, 63, “He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given in marriage.” Ps. 66:12, “Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire, and through water.” Ps. 97:3, “A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.” In all these cases fire is but another term for divine judgments.

**Consumed (them that were) in the uttermost parts of the camp** Heb. tokēl, ate, devoured. So also the Gr. “Devoured a part of the camp.” The extremity of the camp may be mentioned as the part of it occupied more especially by the “mixt multitude,” v. 4, with whom it is probable the murmuring more particularly prevailed. Bochart, however, has adduced considerable evidence that the original word here rendered “the uttermost parts” does not always signify an extremity, but any part, every part, in all, throughout. Probably the true idea is, therefore, that the fire consumed some in every part of the camp.

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### Are You A Complainer?

When the people complained, it displeased the Lord. —Numbers 11:1

Today’s Scripture: Numbers 11:1-10

There’s a story about a farmer who was known for his negative attitude. One day a neighbor stopped by and commented on the farmer’s wonderful crop. “You must be extremely happy with this year’s harvest,” he said. The farmer grudgingly replied, “Well, yes, it looks like a pretty good one, but a bumper crop is awfully hard on the soil.”

The people of Israel had the same kind of complaining attitude. God had miraculously taken care of them during their wilderness wanderings, yet they constantly complained. For example, they griped about the manna that God had so graciously provided. Remembering the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt, they whined, “There is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!” (Numbers 11:6). What ingratitude!

We too sometimes tend to focus on the negatives rather than the positives of life. We murmur against the Lord when we should be praising Him for His countless blessings. We let ourselves be distracted by the disappointments and deprivations that God allows for our spiritual good.

Whenever we are tempted to grumble, let’s remember Numbers 11:1, “When the people complained, it displeased the Lord.”  
Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Every time you want to grumble,  
Think of others who have less;  
Ask the Lord to keep you humble,  
Grateful for each happiness.  
—Marye

Some people go through life standing at the complaint counter.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Years ago, Russell Conwell told of an ancient Persian, Ali Hafed, who owned a very large farm that had orchards, grain fields, and gardens... and was a wealthy contented man. One day a wise man from the East told the farmer all about diamonds and how wealthy he would be if he owned a diamond mine. Ali Hafed went to bed that night a poor man—poor because he was discontented. Craving a mine of diamonds, he sold his farm to search for the rare stones. He traveled the world over, finally becoming so poor, broken, and defeated, that he committed suicide. One day the man who purchased Ali Hafed’s farm led his camel into the garden to drink. As his camel put its nose into the brook, the man saw a flash of light from the sands of the stream. He pulled out a stone that reflected all the hues of the rainbow. The man had discovered the diamond mine of Golconda, the most magnificent mine in all history. Had Ali Hafed remained at home and dug in his own garden, he would have had acres of diamonds instead of death in a strange land. Beloved, be content with what you have. God has given you wonderful treasures if you will only open your eyes.

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**ILLUSTRATION** Julius Caesar once threw a party for a large group of his nobility and royalty. For days before and during the feast the rains fell in Rome. Many of the people complained about the weather. Caesar told his archers to go out and shoot their arrows at the god Jupiter. They did but the arrows came down upon the many heads of the complainers who suffered from those arrows. Complaints do hurt people.

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**ILLUSTRATION OF ISRAEL'S COMPLAINING** - Illustration: A monk joined a monastery and took a vow of silence. After the first 10 yrs his superior called him in and asked, "Do you have anything to say?" The monk replied, "Food bad." - After another 10 years the monk again had opportunity to voice his thoughts. He said, "Bed hard." - Another 10 years went by and again he was called in before his superior. When asked if he had anything to say, he responded, "I quit." "It doesn't surprise me a bit. You've done nothing but complain ever since you got here."

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## C H Spurgeon - Sermon Notes -

Num. 11:1—"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."

Rehearse the historical fact. Observe how the mischief began in the outskirts among the mixed multitude, and how the fire of the Lord burned in the uttermost parts of the camp. The great danger of the church lies in her camp-followers or hangers-on: they infect the true Israel. Hence the need of guarding the entrance of the church, and keeping up discipline within it. Grumbling, discontent, ungrateful complaining,—these are grievous offences against our gracious God.

We shall consider the subject in a series of observations.

### I. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT CAUSES DISPLEASURE TO THE LORD.

1. This we might infer from our own feelings, when dependents, children, servants, or receivers of alms are always grumbling. We grow weary of them, and angry with them.
2. In the case of men towards God it is much worse for them to murmur, since they deserve no good at his hands, but the very reverse. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Lam. 3:39; Ps. 103:10.
3. In that case also it is a reflection upon the Lord's goodness, wisdom, truth, and power. See the complaint in verses 4, 5, 6.
4. The evil lusting which attends the complaining proves its injurious character. We are ready for anything when we quarrel with God. 1 Cor. 10:5–12.
5. God thinks so ill of it that his wrath burns, and chastisement is not long withheld. See verse 33 of this chapter, and other parts of Scripture.

### II. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FANCIES IT WOULD FIND PLEASURE IN THINGS DENIED IT.

Israel had manna, but sighed for fish, cucumbers, melons, onions, &c.

But to set an imaginary value upon that which we have not—

1. Is foolish, childish, pettish.
2. Is injurious to ourselves, for it prevents our enjoying what we already have. It leads men to slander angels' food and call it "this light bread." It led Haman to think nothing of his prosperity because a single person refused him reverence. Esth. 5:13.
3. Is slanderous towards God, and ungrateful to him.
4. Leads to rebellion, falsehood, envy, and all manner of sins.

### III. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FINDS NO PLEASURE FOR ITSELF EVEN WHEN ITS WISH IS FULFILLED.

The Israelites had flesh in superabundance in answer to their foolish prayers, but,—

1. It was attended with leanness of soul. Ps. 106:15.
2. It brought satiety;—"until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you" (verse 20).
3. It caused death. He "slew the fattest of them": Ps. 78:31.
4. It thus led to mourning on all sides. Kibroth Hattaavah, or, "the graves of lust," was the name of this station: verse 34.

### IV. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT SHOWS THAT THE MIND NEEDS REGULATING.

Grace would put our desires in order, and keep our thoughts and affections in their proper places, thus:—

1. Content with such things as we have. Heb. 13:5.
2. Towards other things moderate in desire. "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Prov. 30:8.
3. Concerning earthly things which may be lacking, fully resigned. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matt. 26:39.
4. First, and most eagerly, desiring God. "My soul thirsteth for God," &c. Ps. 42:2.
5. Next, coveting earnestly the best gifts. 1 Cor. 12:31.

6. Following ever in love the more excellent way. 1 Cor. 12:31.

## HELPFUL NOTES

I have read of Cæsar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it fell out that the day appointed was so extremely foul that nothing could be done to the honour of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all them that had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very sorely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are so many arrows shot at God himself, will return upon our own pates, or hearts; they reach not him, but they will hit us; they hurt not him, but they will wound us therefore, it is better to be mute than to murmur; it is dangerous to contend with one who is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29.—Thomas Brooks.

God hath much ado with us. Either we lack health, or quietness, or children, or wealth, or company, or ourselves in all these. It is a wonder the Israelites found not fault with the want of sauce to their quails, or with their old clothes, or their solitary way. Nature is moderate in her desires; but conceit is insatiable.—Bp. Hall

Murmuring is a quarrelling with God, and inveighing against him. "They spake against God." Num. 21:5. The murmurer saith interpretatively that God hath not dealt well with him, and that he hath deserved better from him. The murmurer chargeth God with folly. This is the language, or rather blasphemy, of a murmuring spirit,—God might have been a wiser and a better God. The murmurer is a mutineer. The Israelites are called in the same text "murmurers" and "rebels" (Num. 17:10); and is not rebellion as the sin of witchcraft? 1 Sam. 15:23. Thou that art a murmurer art in the account of God as a witch, a sorcerer, as one that deals with the devil. This is a sin of the first magnitude. Murmuring often ends in cursing: Micah's mother fell to cursing when the talents of silver were taken away. Judges 17:2. So doth the murmurer when a part of his estate is taken away. Our murmuring is the devil's music; this is that sin which God cannot bear: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?" Num. 14:27. It is a sin which whets the sword against a people; it is a land-destroying sin: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." 1 Cor. 10:10.—T. Watson.

Losing our temper with God is a more common thing in the spiritual life than many suppose.—F. W. Faber.

Life is a field of nettles to some men. Their fretful, worrying tempers are always pricking out through the tender skin of their uneasiness. Why, if they were set down in Paradise, carrying their bad mind with them, they would fret at the good angels, and the climate, and the colours even of the roses.—Dr. Bushnell.

I dare no more fret than curse or swear.—John Wesley.

A child was crying in passion, and I heard its mother say, "If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for." From the sound of her hand, I gathered the moral that those who cry about nothing are making a rod for their own backs, and will probably be made to smart under it.

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## Numbers 11:1-10 Goodbye

When the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. —  
Numbers 11:1

When Max Lucado participated in a half-Ironman triathlon, he experienced the negative power of complaint. He said, "After the 1.2-mile swim and the 56-mile bike ride, I didn't have much energy left for the 13.1-mile run. Neither did the fellow jogging next to me. He said, 'This stinks. This race is the dumbest decision I've ever made.' I said, 'Goodbye.'" Max knew that if he listened too long, he would start agreeing with him. So he said goodbye and kept running.

Among the Israelites, too many people listened too long to complaints and began to agree with them. This displeased God, and for good reason. God had delivered the Israelites from slavery, and agreed to live in their midst, but they still complained. Beyond the hardship of the desert, they were dissatisfied with God's provision of manna. In their complaint, Israel forgot that the manna was a gift to them from God's loving hand ([Num. 11:6](#)). Because complaining poisons the heart with ingratitude and can be a contagion, God had to judge it.

This is a sure way to say "goodbye" to complaining and ingratitude: Each day, let's rehearse the faithfulness and goodness of God to us.

Lord, You have given us so much. Forgive us for our short memories and bad attitudes. Help us to remember and be grateful for all that You have provided. And help us to tell others of the good things You have done for us. Proclaiming God's faithfulness silences discontentment.



**INSIGHT:** When they faced difficulties, the Israelites often complained against Moses (see Ex. 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:41; 20:3). Their first complaint was made just 3 days out of Egypt (Ex. 15:22-24). Paul warned us not to follow their critical spirit (1 Cor. 10:1-10), for they were sinning against the Lord (Ex. 16:8). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## Numbers 11:2 The people therefore cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD and the fire died out.

BGT Numbers 11:2 κα κ κραξεν λα ς πρ ς Μωυσ ν κα η ξατο Μωυσ ς πρ ς κ ριον κα κ πασεν τ π ρ

NET Numbers 11:2 When the people cried to Moses, he prayed to the LORD, and the fire died out.

NLT Numbers 11:2 Then the people screamed to Moses for help, and when he prayed to the LORD, the fire stopped.

ESV Numbers 11:2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down.

NIV Numbers 11:2 When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down.

KJV Numbers 11:2 And the people <05971> cried <06817> (08799) unto Moses <04872>; and when Moses <04872> prayed <06419> (08691) unto the LORD <03068>, the fire <0784> was quenched <08257> (08799).

YLT Numbers 11:2 And the people cry unto Moses, and Moses prayeth unto Jehovah, and the fire is quenched;

LXE Numbers 11:2 And the people cried to Moses: and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire was quenched.

ASV Numbers 11:2 And the people cried unto Moses; and Moses prayed unto Jehovah, and the fire abated.

CSB Numbers 11:2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down.

- **cried:** Nu 21:7 Ps 78:34,35 Jer 37:3 42:2 Ac 8:24
- **prayed:** Nu 14:13-20 Ge 18:23-33 Ex 32:10-14,31,32 34:9 De 9:19,20 Ps 106:23 Isa 37:4 Jer 15:1 Am 7:2-6 Jas 5:16 1Jn 5:16
- **the fire:** Nu 16:45-48 Heb 7:26 1Jn 2:1,2
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## COMPLAINTS TURN TO CRYING OUT!

**The people therefore cried out to Moses** - First they cry out against God but when God responds in anger, they cry out to Moses the mediator. **Guzik** adds that "Ideally, they would have cried out to God Himself; but with their low walk with God, they feel more comfortable with Moses."

**Cried out** (06817)(**tsaaq**) means to cry out, and refers to shouting, complaining loudly, pleading for relief, calling for help. The verb occurs nearly fifty times in the Qal with the sense of crying out for help and consolation from suffering. Moses used this verb in Nu 12:13+ when he cried out to the LORD for his sister Miriam. The last use in Numbers is Nu 20:16+ "But when we **cried out** to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt; now behold, we are at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory." The Lxx translates **tsaaq** here with the verb **krazo** which refers to a loud cry and is a strong word expressing deep emotion.

**And Moses prayed to the LORD and the fire died out** - Moses interceded for divine mercy and an end to the consuming fire God sent as punishment. This episode reminds of the Golden Calf debacle where God would have destroyed Israel entirely had Moses not interceded in their behalf (Ex 32:10-14+, Ex 32:31,32+) The Septuagint translates **palal** (used of Moses praying for Aaron and Israel - Dt 9:20, 26) with the verb **euchomai** which speaks of petitionary prayer, expressing a strong desire for something (as in Ro 9:3).

**Prayed** (06419)(**palal**) means "to pray, intervene, meditate, judge." **W E Vine** writes **palal** is "Found in both biblical and modern Hebrew, this word occurs 84 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. The word is used 4 times in the intensive verbal form (**piel**); the remaining 80 times are found in the reflexive or reciprocal form

([Hithpael](#)), in which the action generally points back to the subject. In the intensive form pālal expresses the idea of "to mediate, to come between two parties," always between human beings. Thus, "if a man sins against a man, God will mediate for him..." (1 Sa. 2:25RSV). "To mediate" requires "making a judgment," as in Ezek. 16:52: "Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters...." In the remaining 2 references in which the intensive form is used, pālal expresses "making a judgment" in Ge. 48:11 and "coming between" ("Phinehas stood up and interposed,") in Ps. 106:30<sup>±</sup>. The first occurrence of **pālal** in the Old Testament is in Ge 20:7, where the reflexive or reciprocal form of the verb expresses the idea of "interceding for, prayer in behalf of": "He shall pray for thee." Such intercessory praying is frequent in the Old Testament: **Moses** "prays" for the people's deliverance from the fiery serpents (Nu 21:7); he "prays" for Aaron Num. (Deut.9:20); and Samuel "intercedes" continually for Israel (1 Sam. 12:23). Prayer is directed not only toward Yahweh but toward pagan idols as well (Isa. 44:17). Sometimes prayer is made to Yahweh that He would act against an enemy: "That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard" (2 Kings 19:20). **Just why this verb form ([Hithpael](#)) is used to express the act of praying is not completely clear. Since this verb form ([Hithpael](#)) points back to the subject, in a reflexive sense, perhaps it emphasizes the part which the person praying has in his prayers.** Also, since the verb form can have a reciprocal meaning between subject and object, it may emphasize the fact that prayer is basically communication, which always has to be two-way in order to be real. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Ronald Allen** - "In the midst of his wrath, the Lord remembers mercy. This is one of the ongoing themes of Scripture and is a particular truism in the Book of Numbers." (EBC)

**Bush on fire died out** - Heb. yishka, sunk, subsided, went out, from a root usually signifying to drown, or be drowned, which implies, of course, a sinking into the water.

**NET Note** - Here is the pattern that will become in the wilderness experience so common—the complaining turns to a cry to Moses, which is then interpreted as a prayer to the LORD, and there is healing. The sequence presents a symbolic lesson, an illustration of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. The NT will say that in times of suffering Christians do not know how to pray, but the Spirit intercedes for them, changing their cries into the proper prayers (Rom 8).

**Numbers 11:3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.**

GT Numbers 11:3 κα κληθη τ νομα το τ που κε νου μπιρισμ ς τι ξεκαθη ν α το ς π ρ παρ κυρ ου

NET Numbers 11:3 So he called the name of that place Taberah because there the fire of the LORD burned among them.

NLT Numbers 11:3 After that, the area was known as Taberah (which means "the place of burning"), because fire from the LORD had burned among them there.

ESV Numbers 11:3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.

NIV Numbers 11:3 So that place was called Taberah, because fire from the LORD had burned among them.

KJV Numbers 11:3 And he called <07121> (08799) the name <08034> of the <01931> place <04725> Taberah <08404>: because the fire <0784> of the LORD <03068> burnt <01197> (08804) among them.

YLT Numbers 11:3 and he calleth the name of that place Taberah, for the fire of Jehovah hath 'burned' among them.

LXE Numbers 11:3 And the name of that place was called Burning; for a fire was kindled among them from the Lord.

ASV Numbers 11:3 And the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of Jehovah burnt among them.

CSB Numbers 11:3 So that place was named Taberah, because the LORD's fire had blazed among them.

- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Deuteronomy 9:22 “Again at **Taberah** and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. De 9:22

## **TABERAH** **PLACE OF BURNING**

**So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.** One writer says the people named this place Taberah, but the text indicates that Moses named the place - "So he called the name of that place Taberah" (NET). The Septuagint has

**Bell** quips that "This incident made such an impact on them they named the place "Burning". But...amazingly, it didn't make enough of an impact to stop the complaining!" ([Numbers 11](#))

Divine burning did not stop the complaining against God!

**NET Note on Taberah** - The name תַּבְּעָרָה (tav'erah) is given to the spot as a commemorative of the wilderness experience. It is explained by the formula using the same verbal root, "to burn." Such naming narratives are found dozens of times in the OT, and most frequently in the Pentateuch. The explanation is seldom an exact etymology, and so in the literature is called a popular etymology. It is best to explain the connection as a figure of speech, a paronomasia, which is a phonetic wordplay that may or may not be etymologically connected. Usually the name is connected to the explanation by a play on the verbal root—here the preterite explaining the noun. The significance of commemorating the place by such a device is to "burn" it into the memory of Israel. The narrative itself would be remembered more easily by the name and its motif. The namings in the wilderness wanderings remind the faithful of unbelief, and warn us all not to murmur as they murmured. See

The Roman philosopher Lucretius once wrote, "So it is more useful to watch a man in times of peril, and in adversity to discern what kind of man he is; for then at last words of truth are drawn from the depths of his heart, and the mask is torn off, reality remains." In today's passage, the mask of works is torn off the face of Israel, and beneath it is revealed the ugliness of disbelief and greed.

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### **George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)**

**And he called the name of the place Taberah** Or, "and one called." Gr. "And the name of that place was called." The station in this case had probably no particular name before the occurrence of the incident here recorded. And so in numerous other instances.

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### **Numbers 11 Prone to Wander**

The book of Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch. Appropriately, the Hebrew title, Ba-midbar is translated "in the desert." The book journals the desert wanderings of Israel from the beginning in Sinai to the arrival in the Promised Land.

The nation of Israel spent 40 years "wandering" in the wilderness. Their venture into the desert is often depicted as a type of banishment. They were living in-between—no longer existing day-to-day in the bondage of Egypt, yet 40 years away from their arrival in Moab.

When we think of "wandering," we mean aimlessness or, perhaps, lostness. Yet the Israelites were not really wandering in that sense. They indeed had a destination. God knew where they were going, and He knew where they had started.

After all, it was God who had miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt. After staff turned into serpent, and water turned to blood, they walked free from Ramses's land after more than four centuries of increasing servitude.

Under Moses' leadership, the nation headed toward the Promised Land—assured of God's guidance. God led them by dramatic and supernatural means: by cloud, by fire, with the manna falling from the sky.

Although we say the Israelites "wandered." God was clearly leading them. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that, during these years, God's people wandered from Him. Again and again, the Israelites failed to trust God. Numbers 11:1 says, "Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard [it], His anger was kindled."

The wandering of their hearts is uncomfortably familiar. How often we, too, doubt God's leading. Although we have seen His work in our lives, we distrust His provision for our future.

Hymn writer Robert Robinson penned the hymn, "[Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing](#)," which depicts the struggle of the sinner. He writes:

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

The Israelites did arrive at the Promised Land, but not without many years of wandering. As we journey, may we be reminded of God's guiding hand in our own lives. May we follow close and not be prone to wander away.

### **Numbers 11:4 The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"**

BGT Numbers 11:4 κα π μικτος ν ατο ς πεθ μησαν πιθυμ αν κα καθ σαντες κλαιον κα ο υ ο Ισραηλ  
κα ε παν τ ς μ ς ψωμιε κρ α

NET Numbers 11:4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them craved more desirable foods, and so the Israelites wept again and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"

NLT Numbers 11:4 Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. And the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed.

ESV Numbers 11:4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat!"

NIV Numbers 11:4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"

KJV Numbers 11:4 And the mixt multitude <0628> that was among <07130> them fell a lusting <0183> (08694) <08378>: and the children <01121> of Israel <03478> also wept <01058> (08799) again <07725> (08799), and said <0559> (08799), Who shall give us flesh <01320> to eat <0398> (08686)?

YLT Numbers 11:4 And the rabble who are in its midst have lusted greatly, and the sons of Israel also turn back and weep, and say, 'Who doth give us flesh?'

LXE Numbers 11:4 And the mixed multitude among them lusted exceedingly; and they and the children of Israel sat down and wept and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

ASV Numbers 11:4 And the mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceedingly: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

- **rabble:** Ex 12:38 Lev 24:10,11 Ne 13:3
- **sons of Israel:** 1Co 15:33
- **Who will:** Ps 78:18-20 Ps 106:14 Ro 13:14 1Co 10:6
- **[Numbers 11 Resources](#)** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

1 Corinthians 10:6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

## **GREEDY GRUMBLERS "RABBLE ROUSERS"**

**The rabble** ("[riff-raff](#)", "troublemakers") **who were among them had greedy desires** - The Hebrew is more literally ".lusted a lusting" (cf Lxx = [epithumeo epithumia](#)) meaning lusted greatly, exceedingly and/or inordinately! **NET** = "Now the mixed multitude who were among them craved more desirable foods" It is notable that the word **greedy** (taavah) is same word used in Genesis 3:6+

"it was a **DELIGHT** to the eyes." (Same word taavah used in Ps 10:3+). The **rabble** probably correspond to the "**mixed multitude** also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock." (Ex 12:38+). Thus they were non-Israelites who left Egypt with Israel in the Exodus.

**Do not be deceived** ([pres imp w/ neg](#)-see [need for Holy Spirit](#))

**"Bad company corrupts good morals."**

-- 1 Corinthians 15:33

In regard to the warning from Paul, I would seriously question whether one could honestly attribute "good morals" to the sons of Israel!

**Rabble** (asaphsoph from asap - to gather) is a word used only here meaning a disorderly collection, is opposite to deliberate and purposeful collecting. This word implies something inferior and thus rabble is a good rendering. The Septuagint uses the adjective epimiktos which means mixed, so the KJV is a good translation as a "mixed multitude." This group sadly had the effect of human "catalysts" which like a chemical reaction energized the Israelites. Their greedy desires were like leaven in the camp.

**Bush** on "**mixed multitude**" in Ex 12:38 - Heb. ערב רב ereb rab, a great mixture; a multitude composed of strangers, partly Egyptians, and partly natives of other countries, who had been prevailed upon by the miracles wrought in behalf of the Israelites, and from other motives, to embark with them in the present enterprise of leaving Egypt. Self-interest was, no doubt, the moving spring with the great mass. Some of them were probably Egyptians of the poorer class, who were in hopes to better their condition in some way, or had other good reasons for leaving Egypt. Others were perhaps foreign slaves belonging both to the Hebrews and Egyptians, who were glad to take the opportunity of escaping with the Israelites. Others again were a mere rude restless mob, a company of hangers-on, that followed the crowd they scarcely knew why, perhaps made up of such vagabonds, adventurers, and debtors, as could no longer stay safely in Egypt. Whoever or whatever they were, the Israelites were no better for their presence, and like thousands in all ages that turn their faces towards Zion, and run well for a time when they came to experience a little of the hardships of the way, they quitted the people of God and returned to Egypt.

**Guzik** points out that "There is a sense also in which Israel was a mixed multitude spiritually—not all had a genuine, real relationship with God. This is true of the visible church as well, which Jesus said would contain good and bad until the final harvest (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43)."

**Wiersbe** on **rabble** - Why they left Egypt isn't explained. Some of them may have been afraid that more judgments were coming and the safest course was to go with the Jews (9:20). Some servants and slaves may have seen in Israel's departure an opportunity to get out of Egypt while people were busy burying their dead. Others may have had good intentions, but because they had no faith in the Lord, their hearts were never changed (Heb. 4:1–2). Whatever their origin, the "mixed multitude" caused Moses and the people of Israel a great deal of trouble, and a similar group is creating problems for God's servants and people today. In the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43), Jesus taught that wherever the Lord "plants" His true children, the devil comes along and plants counterfeits. Satan is an imitator and an infiltrator (Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:1–2), which explains why Paul warned the church about "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:26), false ministers (v. 13ff), and a false gospel (Gal. 1:6–9). Over these many years of ministry, I've learned that it isn't enemies outside the local church who do the damage but counterfeiters who get inside the church fellowship (Acts 20:28–30; 3 John 9–11). These intruders might march with the church crowd and act like they are God's people, but they don't have an appetite for spiritual things; and eventually their true allegiance is revealed (1 John 2:18–19). (Be Counted)

**NET Note** on **rabble** - The mixed multitude (or "**rabble**," so NASB, NIV, NRSV; NLT "foreign rabble") is the translation of an unusual word, חַסְפֻּסִים (ha'safuf). It occurs in the Hebrew Bible only here. It may mean "a gathering of people" from the verb חָסַף ('asaf), yielding the idea of a mixed multitude (in line with Exod 12:38). But the root is different, and so no clear connection can be established. Many commentators therefore think the word is stronger, showing contempt through a word that would be equivalent to "riff-raff." "Here it is asaphsooph, the collected or gathered people, the force of which can only be conveyed by such strictly analogous terms as riff-raff, or ruff-scuff. The doubling of word-forms in the Heb., as in other Eastern languages, intensifies the meaning, and makes them equivalent to superlatives. Thus adam signifies red, but in Lev. 13:19 adamdameth signifies exceeding red. So here asaphsooph implies a very large collection of what Bochart calls "populi colluvies undecunque collecta," the dregs or scum of the people from every quarter. One of the older English versions (Rogers') renders the clause, "And the rascal people that was among them fell a lusting." The word denotes a mongrel horde of retainers or hangers-on, who from various motives had followed the sojourning host from Egypt, and who, having little knowledge of God or interest in his promises, were the first to feel the difficulties and privations of the way, and thence to fret and murmur." (Bush)

Complaining is a communicable disease! - the Israelites joined in.

-- Brian Bell ([Numbers 11](#))

**George MacDonald**, "The slaves of sin rarely grumble at that slavery; it is slavery to God they grumble at."

**Matthew Henry** - "A few factious, discontented, ill-natured people, may do a great deal of mischief in the best societies, if great care be not taken to discountenance it. This Egyptian rabble were the disordered sheep that infected the flock, the leaven that leavened the whole lump."

**FSB** says "The Hebrew word (translated **rabble**) occurs only this one time in the OT, making its meaning uncertain. It appears to be related to a word for gathering, so it probably designates a smaller group who had gathered together to complain."

**NET Note** on **had greedy desires**; - "they craved a craving" (הִצְטַוּ וַחֲבָה, hit'avvu ta'vah), but the context shows that they had this strong craving for food. The verb describes a strong desire, which is not always negative (Ps 132:13–14). But the word is a significant one in the Torah; it was used in the garden story for Eve's desire for the tree, and it is used in the Decalogue in the warning against coveting (Deut 5:21).

**Greedy** ([08378](#)) (**taavah** from **awah** = to incline, to be beautiful, to be desirable) indicating a longing, a desire. It indicates an intense hunger for something. In Numbers 11:4 the KJV says they "fell a-lusting." Compare other negative desires (Ge 3:6, Ps 10:3, Ps 106:14, Ps 112:10, Pr 18:1, Pr 21:25, 26). Positive desires (Ps 10:17, Ps 21:2, Ps 38:9, Pr 10:24, Pr 11:23, Pr 13:19, Pr 19:22)

**Desires** (cravings, longings) ([0183](#)) **awah**

**And also the sons of Israel wept again** (Heb.= returned and wept) - Bush writes that "The import of "**returned**" in this connection is undoubtedly that of changed their mind, relapsed. That is, they were wrought upon by the contagious example of the mixed multitude to such a degree as to fall away from a previous state of mind, and involve themselves in the rebellious conduct here spoken of." Wept again implies they had wept before, but there is no record in Exodus, Leviticus or the previous chapters in Numbers. The Septuagint is translated "the children of Israel sat down and wept."

**Guzik** - Tears of repentance or sorrow over sin or joy in the LORD can be beautiful before God; but many tears shed, even by believers, are shed over childish disappointments. Israel could have provided meat for themselves. God did not prohibit them to hunt whatever animals they could in the wilderness; and they had their flocks, which could be slaughtered for meat. They don't want to do anything about their desire for meat, except cry about it.

**NN** - "It literally reads "and they returned and they wept," which means they wept again. Here the weeping is put for the complaint, showing how emotionally stirred up the people had become by the craving. The words throughout here are metonymies. The craving is a metonymy of cause, for it would have then led to expressions (otherwise the desires would not have been known). And the weeping is either a metonymy of effect, or of adjunct, for the actual complaints follow."

**Wept** ([01058](#)) (**bakah**) means to weep, bemoan, lament or wail, because of grief, pain, humiliation or even joy (Ge. 42:24; 43:30; Dt 21:13, Joel 1:5).

**And said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"** - A year of manna was too much for their palates! Food from Heaven did not curtail their craving for food from earth. Let's face it, the earth does have attractions which our fallen flesh uses to lure us away from our heavenly provisions in Christ. We must continually remain vigilant lest we too fall into the snare of the world (cf 1 Cor 10:12).

**NET Note** - The story of the sending of the quail is a good example of poetic justice, or talionic justice. God had provided for the people, but even in that provision they were not satisfied, for they remembered other foods they had in Egypt. No doubt there was not the variety of foods in the Sinai that might have been available in Egypt, but their life had been bitter bondage there as well. They had cried to the LORD for salvation, but now they forget, as they remember things they used to have. God will give them what they crave, but it will not do for them what they desire.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And he called the name of the place Taberah** Or, "and one called." Gr. "And the name of that place was called." The station in this case had probably no particular name before the occurrence of the incident here recorded. And so in numerous other instances.

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Psalm 78:18-20<sup>±</sup> And in their heart they put God to the test By asking food according to their desire. 19 Then they spoke against God; They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? 20 "**Behold**, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? **Will He provide meat for His people?"**

**Spurgeon on in their heart they put God to the test** - He was not tempted, for he cannot be tempted by any, but they acted in a manner calculated to tempt him, and it always just to charge that upon men which is the obvious tendency of their conduct. Christ cannot die again, and yet many crucify him afresh, because such would be the legitimate result of their behaviour if its effects were not prevented by other forces. The sinners in the wilderness would have had the Lord change his wise proceedings to humour their whims, hence they are said to tempt him.

**By asking meat for their lust.** Would they have God become purveyor for their greediness? Was there nothing for it but that he must give them whatever their diseased appetites might crave? The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues. What they at first silently wished for, they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.

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**G Campbell Morgan** - Nu 11:4KJV The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting.-

The **mixed multitude** was a perpetual source of trouble to Israel. For an explanation of this multitude we must refer to Exodus 12:38+. There the statement is simply made that such a multitude accompanied them on their journeys. They were merely camp-followers. The fact of their presence was apparently innocent and harmless. The issue proves that it was far otherwise. The influence on the children of Israel of these people was that of making them dissatisfied. The statement in Exodus shows that they were wealthy, having "flocks and herds, even very much cattle." Perhaps that accounted for the willingness of the people of God to permit them to accompany them. The fact that they had such possessions would seem also to suggest that they were more than adventurers. They had a certain interest in the migration—one of curiosity, perhaps. The only thing that is certain is that they were not of the Theocracy; and not having true part or lot in the Divine movement, they fell a-lusting after the things of Egypt, and infected the people of God with the same unholy desire. What significant teaching there is in this story for the Church of God! How often she has been defiled and weakened by the influence of camp-followers! The mixed multitude which have no vital relation with Christ, but who follow out of curiosity and interest that is less than absolute, are a perpetual menace to the people of God. Better far, a fellowship of souls all actually sharing the life of Christ, and loyal to His enterprise, though it be small in numbers, than a crowd of those who follow outwardly, but in whose heart there is yet the lusting for the things of evil.

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### **Tired Of Manna?**

The children of Israel also wept again and said: ". . . There is nothing at all except this manna!" —Numbers 11:4,6

A young couple moved to Banff. This vacation paradise located in the heart of the Canadian Rockies is surrounded by majestic mountain peaks. The awesome beauty of the slopes changes with the seasons—glistening snow, bright wildflowers, golden autumn leaves.

For the first year or so, every time the couple walked outside they stopped to admire the beauty of their mountain setting. They were sure they would never tire of the glorious sights that surrounded them. But they did. They began to ignore all that beauty. It wasn't long until it had become familiar and didn't excite them anymore.

This reminds me of the Israelites. After escaping from Egypt into the wilderness, they ran out of food. But God heard their cry and fed them supernaturally with a daily supply of manna. At first they must have been awed by God's incredible provision. After a while they grew tired of the same food day after day. The familiar had lost its appeal.

Do you ever find yourself becoming apathetic with all the blessings God showers on you each day? Don't take them for granted. Remember to thank God for your daily manna: life and strength, and the countless good things He provides each day. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What once was filled with wonder  
Lies cold within my heart;  
Return, O Lord, that wonder,  
And may it not depart. —Sper

We add to our problems when we fail to count our blessings.

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**Numbers 11:5 "We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic,**

BGT Numbers 11:5 μν σθημεν το ς χθ ας ο ς σθημεν ν Α γ πτ δωρε ν κα το ς σικ ας κα το ς π πονας κα τ πρ σα κα τ κρ μμια κα τ σκ ρδα

NET Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish we used to eat freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

NLT Numbers 11:5 "We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted.

ESV Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

NIV Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost--also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

KJV Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

YLT Numbers 11:5 We have remembered the fish which we do eat in Egypt for nought, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick;

LXE Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt freely; and the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions.

ASV Numbers 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

- **fish:** Ex 16:3 Ps 17:14 Php 3:19
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Psalm 106:14 But craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert.

**Spurgeon** - Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long, but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. For a meal of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey. What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly, In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon him and were everyday fed by his direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke their God. They would have him change the plans of his wisdom, supply their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their wicked unbelief: these things the Lord would not do, but they went as far as they could in trying to induce him to do so. They failed not in their wicked attempt because of any goodness in themselves, but because God "cannot be tempted, "â€"temptation has no power over him, he yields not to man's threats or promises.

### BAD MEMORY

Recall they were slaves, so it is unlikely their fare was fantastic even in Egypt. But when the lusts of the flesh "kicks in" memories of past experiences can often be a bit distorted or garbled.

I like how **Guzik** phrases it "Israel here is engaging in "creative memory," choosing to remember certain things about Egypt, and exaggerating those things, while at the same time choosing to forget other things. We often think of our memory as a mechanical "photographing" process, which impartially records the facts and then impartially retrieves those records. It isn't like that at all! Memory, both in recording and retrieving, is a creative process—and "memories" can be created of events that never happened. This is much to the pain of families that have been wounded by "False Memory Syndrome," where childhood memories of abuse and such are created. Memory often romanticizes the past; one may long for a return to the spiritual environment of one's youth, when everyone seemed more right with God and more on fire. Yet, this is often confused with a simple longing for our youth—when things seemed so much more simple, our responsibilities were fewer, and everything was newer. Israel fell in love with an illusion from the past (how great Egypt was), instead of looking for what God had for them in the future—the Promised Land, which was truly a land of milk and honey—all the great food they could ever want! God's best for us is always ahead, never behind us."



God's best for us is always ahead, never behind us!

-- David Guzik

**Bush** - There was in reality no lack of food or water for them; but they had become dainty; they had taken [asurfeit](#) of the manna; their soul loathed "this light food," as they slightly call it on another occasion, and they longed for the fish, the flesh, and the vegetables of Egypt.

**We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic** - The remembered the good but forgot the bad. As **George Bush** says "They stirred up and inflamed their lust by studiously calling to mind the dainties they formerly enjoyed in Egypt. But even in this they imposed upon themselves, for, as Henry remarks, "they did not remember the brick-kilns, and the task-masters, the voice of the oppressor, and the smart of the whip. These are forgotten by the ungrateful people."

**THOUGHT** - They presumed to tell their divine Provider what His gracious provision must taste like: fish, cucumbers, leeks, onions, garlic (11:5). God's food was sweet bread from heaven; they wanted some of the sharp and the sour. **How much like the sinful heart of man which, without a nature from above, does not enjoy the taste of the food of God's Word.** - Irving Jensen

**NET Note** - As with all who complain in such situations, their memory was selective. It was their **bitter cries** to the LORD from the suffering in bondage that God heard and answered (ED: SEE Ex 1:14+). And now, shortly after being set free, their memory of Egypt is for things they do not now have. It is also somewhat unlikely that they as slaves had such abundant foods in Egypt.

**Bush on eat free** - (For nothing). i. e. which cost them nothing but the trouble of taking. As to the great use of fish as an article of food by the Egyptians, the fact is repeatedly affirmed by Herodotus. They ate them either salted or dried in the sun without any other preparation. Indeed, the Egyptians are the first people whom history mentions as curing any kind of meat with salt for preservation. The salt they used was fossil salt, obtained from the African deserts. Sea salt was abhorred by them, probably from some religious consideration, just as the priests abstained entirely from fish, the reason of which is doubtless to be sought from some ancient idea that the spiritual correspondence of fish rendered them unsuitable as an article of diet to the priesthood.

**NET Note on free** - The adverb "freely" is from the word קָחַן (khanan, "to be gracious"), from which is derived the noun "grace." The word underscores the idea of "free, without cost, for no reason, gratis." Here the simple sense is "freely," without any cost. But there may be more significance in the choice of the words in this passage, showing the ingratitude of the Israelites to God for His deliverance from bondage. To them now the bondage is preferable to the salvation—this is what angered the LORD.

**LASB** - Dissatisfaction comes when our attention shifts from what we have to what we don't have. The people of Israel didn't seem to notice what God was doing for them—setting them free, making them a nation, giving them a new land—because they were so wrapped up in what God wasn't doing for them. They could think of nothing but the delicious Egyptian food they had left behind. Somehow they forgot that the brutal whip of Egyptian slavery was the cost of eating that food. Before we judge the Israelites too harshly, it's helpful to think about what occupies our attention most of the time. Are we grateful for what God has given us, or are we always thinking about what we would like to have? We should not allow our unfulfilled desires to cause us to forget God's gifts of life, food, health, work, and friends.

**Rod Mattoon** - When you get carnal and critical, your priorities get out of wack. Important matters tend to be forgotten and the menial, unimportant things capture our focus. The people said, "We remember the fish, vegetables, spices, water melons, and cucumbers. All we have is this manna!" They were moaning about the menu. Did they not remember the whips, slavery, and Pharaoh's army? Did they not remember the plagues or the death of the firstborn? Did they forget about the parting of the Red Sea? These people had become ungrateful and hard-hearted toward God's provisions. This happens today even among God's people. They moan about the menu of their lives. God's "daily bread" is not good enough for them. They want more in this life. A Christian, if not careful, can become hard-hearted, insensitive, unfeeling, indifferent, uncaring, and apathetic. The corrosion from lust and carnality on a person's character is like rust or acid on metal. The strength and durability of spiritual desire and growth are eaten away. We cannot avoid growing old, but we can avoid growing cold. We don't have to get cold or hard-hearted like these people did in this chapter. God commands us to not get hard-hearted. Israel had changed from a contented crowd to a murmuring mob that moaned about the menu. They were not happy campers at all. They were not suffering from empty bellies, but from empty heads and hearts.

- Gratefulness gave way to griping.
- Contentment changed to criticizing and complaining.
- Instead of focusing on the blessings of God, they were focusing on what they did not have.

**We remember the fish, etc.** They stirred up and inflamed their lust by studiously calling to mind the dainties they formerly enjoyed in Egypt. But even in this they imposed upon themselves, for, as Henry remarks, “they did not remember the brick-kilns, and the task-masters, the voice of the oppressor, and the smart of the whip. These are forgotten by the ungrateful people.”

**For nothing.** Heb. hinnom, gratis, i. e. which cost them nothing but the trouble of taking. As to the great use of fish as an article of food by the Egyptians, the fact is repeatedly affirmed by Herodotus. They ate them either salted or dried in the sun without any other preparation. Indeed, the Egyptians are the first people whom history mentions as curing any kind of meat with salt for preservation. The salt they used was fossil salt, obtained from the African deserts. Sea salt was abhorred by them, probably from some religious consideration, just as the priests abstained entirely from fish, the reason of which is doubtless to be sought from some ancient idea that the spiritual correspondence of fish rendered them unsuitable as an article of diet to the priesthood.

**The cucumbers.** Arabia and Egypt produce abundance of cucumbers, which, owing to the mellowing effects of the sun’s rays, are softer than those with us, and of more easy digestion. It is said by travellers that they are eaten in the East in almost incredible quantities.

**Melons.** The water-melon is no doubt intended. This fruit grows abundantly in the Levant and Egypt. It is about the size, and somewhat of the appearance of a pumpkin. The interior is a pulp of blooming red, and rich in juice. “A traveller in the East who recollects the intense gratitude which the gift of a slice of melon inspired while journeying over the hot and dry plains—or one who remembers the consciousness of wealth and security which he derived from the possession of a melon while prepared for a day’s journey over the same plains—he will readily comprehend the regret with which the Hebrews in the Arabian desert looked back upon the melons of Egypt.” The following account of the uses of melons in Egypt is from Hasselquist. “By melons we are probably to understand the water-melon, which the Arabians call batech. It is cultivated on the banks of the Nile, in the rich clayey earth which subsides during the inundation. This serves the Egyptians for meat, drink, and physic. It is eaten in abundance during the season, even by the richer sort of people; but the common people, on whom Providence has bestowed nothing but poverty and patience, scarcely eat any thing but these, and account this the best time of the year, as they are obliged to put up with worse fare at other seasons. This fruit likewise serves them for drink, the juice refreshing these poor creatures, and they have less occasion for water than if they were to live on more substantial food in this burning climate.”

**Leeks.** The original word occurs sixteen times, but is nowhere rendered “leek” but here. In one instance it is translated “herb,” in another “hay,” and in another “a court;” but in all the other instances it is translated “grass.” As grass, however, could not have been what the Israelites desired, it is supposed by some commentators that “greens,” implying lettuce, succory, endive, or salads in general, is what is meant. In the uncertainty that obtains on this point we give the following extract from Roberts. “To an Englishman the loss of these articles would not give much concern, and he is almost surprised at the Israelites repining at their loss, as at the loss of great delicacies. The people of the East do not in general eat flesh, nor even fish, so that when they can procure it they consider it a delicacy. Cucumbers are eaten in abundance in hot weather, and melons are most delicious and plentiful. I have never seen leeks in the East, and I am doubtful whether they are to be found; but whether or not, there is much difference of opinion as to the translation of the word. D’Oyly and Mant have a quotation to this effect:—‘Whether the following word, rendered leeks, have that signification, may be doubted. Some think it was the lotus, which is a water plant, a kind of water-lily, which the Egyptians used to eat during the heats of summer.’ In the Universal History, (vol. i. p. 486,) it is said, that those ‘Egyptians who dwelt in the marshes, fed on several plants which annually grow, particularly the lotus, of which they made a sort of bread.’ Of the Arabs also, (in the same work,) it is recorded—‘They make a drink of the Egyptian lotus, which is very good for inward heat.’ It has a bulbous root, and is highly esteemed as an article of food. As it grows in tanks, it can only be had in the hottest weather, when the water is dried up; and in this we see a most gracious provision, in allowing it to be taken when most required. Its cooling qualities are celebrated all over India, and the Materia Medica says of it, ‘This is an excellent root, and is also prescribed medicinally, as cooling and demulcent.’ The natives eat it boiled, or in curry, or make it into flour for gruels. I am, therefore, of opinion, that it was the lotus of Egypt respecting which the Israelites were murmuring.” In this opinion Mr. Kitto is inclined to concur, conceding at the same time, that the authority of the Septuagint, which renders it by prasa, looks, is not easily disposed of. He refers to Scheuchzer and others, “who think that the word here denotes a plant of the lotus kind, which grows very abundantly in the low lands of Egypt, and which was of very delicate taste, and held in great estimation. They ate its root, and also made a kind of bread with it. Homer describes the lotus as the first of the plants that grew for the pleasure of the gods. The Arabs, when they can get it, make with it a drink which they highly relish. In India, also, the natives eat it boiled, or in curry, or make it into flour for gruels.”—Pict. Bible.

**Onions.** “Whoever has tasted onions in Egypt must allow that none can be had better in any part of the universe. Here they are sweet, in other countries they are nauseous and strong; here they are soft, whereas in the north, and other parts, they are hard of digestion. Hence they cannot in any place be eaten with less prejudice and more satisfaction than in Egypt. They eat them roasted, cut into four pieces, with some bits of roasted meat, which the Turks in Egypt call kobab, and with this dish they are so delighted, that I have heard them wish they might enjoy it in paradise. They likewise make soup of them in Egypt, cutting the onions in small pieces; this I think one of the best dishes I ever ate.”—Hasselquist. This is confirmed by Mr. Kitto. “In warm countries the onion often

constitutes a staple article of diet. The sun has the same mellowing effect upon it as upon the cucumber, so that its savor is more bland than when grown in this country, and its use far less likely to affect the stomach with any disagreeable consequences. Most of the people of Western Asia are remarkably fond of onions. We have known poor Arabs wait for more than an hour, till the refuse of onions employed in cooking should be thrown away.”

**Garlic.** “The original word occurs but this once in the Scriptures, where it is undoubtedly correctly rendered. Its botanical character is too well known to require description. It is now usually distinguished in the kitchen-garden by the name of ‘eschalot’ or ‘shallot.’ A variety of this plant cultivated in France is called ‘the onion of Egypt.’ They are eaten like onions, and are peculiarly agreeable to the palate. Garlic was so much in request among the ancients, that Homer makes it a part of the entertainment which Nestor served up to his guest Machaon. It formed a favorite viand to the common people among the Greeks and Romans.”—Pict. Bible.

## Keith Green Song

**PLAY:** [So You Want to Go Back to Egypt](#)

So you wanna go back to Egypt  
Where it's warm and secure  
Are you sorry you bought the one way ticket  
When you thought you were sure?  
You wanted to live in the land of promise  
But now it's getting so hard  
Are you sorry you're out here in the desert  
Instead of your own back yard?

Eating leaks and onions by the Nile  
Ooh, what breath for dining-out in style  
Ooh, my life's on the skids  
Building the pyramids

Well, there's nothing to do but travel  
And we sure travel a lot  
'Cause it's hard to keep your feet from moving  
When the sand gets so hot  
And in the morning it's manna hotcakes  
We snack on manna all day  
And we sure had a winner last night for dinner  
Flaming manna souffle

Well, we once complained for something new to munch  
The ground opened up and had some of us for lunch  
Ooh, such fire and smoke  
Can't God even take a joke? Huh? (No!)

So you wanna to back to Egypt  
Where your friends wait for you  
You can throw a big party and tell the whole gang  
Of what they said was all true  
And this Moses acts like a big shot  
Who does he think he is?  
Well it's true that God works lots of miracles  
But Moses thinks they're all his

Oh we're having so much trouble even now  
Why'd he get so mad about that c-c-cow, that golden calf?  
Moses seems rather idle  
He just sits around, he just sits around and writes the Bible!

Oh, Moses, put down your pen

What? Oh no, manna again?  
Oh, manna waffles  
Manna burgers  
Manna bagels?  
Fillet of manna  
Manna patty?  
Bamanna bread

**Numbers 11:6 but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna."**

BGT Numbers 11:6 νυν ὁ ψυχὴ μὴ κατ' ἕρηρος ὁ δὲ πλὴν ἐστὶ μαννα ὁ φθαλμοῦ μὴ

NET Numbers 11:6 But now we are dried up, and there is nothing at all before us except this manna!"

NLT Numbers 11:6 But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!"

ESV Numbers 11:6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

NIV Numbers 11:6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

KJV Numbers 11:6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

YLT Numbers 11:6 and now our soul is dry, there is not anything, save the manna, before our eyes.'

LXE Numbers 11:6 But now our soul is dried up; our eyes turn to nothing but to the manna.

ASV Numbers 11:6 but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all save this manna to look upon.

CSB Numbers 11:6 But now our appetite is gone; there's nothing to look at but this manna!"

- Nu 21:5 2Sa 13:4
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MONOTONOUS MANNA!

**but now our appetite is gone** - NET = "But now we are dried up." This is a lame excuse. Sometimes my dog does not like his dry food, but if I refuse to give him anything else, eventually his appetite returns! It was not their appetite for food which had gone, but their hunger and thirst for righteousness!

The complaining heart romanticizes the past  
but it also exaggerates the problems of the present.

-- David Guzik

**Bush** - We see nothing else, we expect nothing else, but this same monotonous manna, of which we have become sick of the sight.

**There is nothing at all to look at except this manna** - "All we ever see is this manna!" (NLT) Well, this was true, but it was nutritious, did not spoil, was free and was food in the will of God, which flesh of quails would prove not to be to Israel's chagrin. They despised the LORD's provision and in so doing rejected the LORD (see Nu 11:20±). As Guzik says "God is our provider; to despise what He provides is to despise Him. It is not God's job to entertain us, and we should be more than children who demand to be entertained and excited."

**Bush on nothing at all to look at except this manna** - "The form of the expression is very peculiar, and evidently carries with it the import of contempt towards the Lord's kind provision for their wants.

When you stop counting your blessings,  
you forget about them.

- Rod Mattoon

**Brian Bell** - Ate freely in Egypt - Freely? It only cost them the lives of their baby boys, who were thrown into the Nile by Pharaoh's servants; - the lives of their husbands & brothers, who collapsed under the whips of the taskmaster's! Can you imagine preferring slavery & oppression to bread from heaven? What were they complaining about? The Menu; they were tired of Manna! Blandness compared to the spicy food of Egypt. Never mind that manna was God's miraculous, daily provision for them.

Never mind that it kept them alive in the desert, where there were no fish or animals, & few edible plants growing. Never mind that it was delivered to their camp fresh daily every morning. It just seems natural...when our religious life is low, we tire of angel's food & our hearts turn back to the world from which we came! [Egypt's table consisted of 6 dishes; Canaan 7 = Dt.8:8] ([Numbers 11](#))

**Allen** - "To spurn a regularly occurring, abundant and nutritious food only because it is boring is understandably human—a pitiable mark of our tendency toward ingratitude. (EBC)

**NET Note** - The Hebrews were complaining both about the bland taste of the manna and dehydration—they were parched in the wilderness.

**Believer's Study Bible** - On the manna, see Ex. 16:13-15, note. The provision of daily manna should have taught Israel about the goodness and faithfulness of God, that He should be trusted, and that He should be obeyed. But most of them refused to learn (Ps. 78:17-33). In the N.T., Jesus used the manna as an illustration of the Living Bread, identified with Himself (John 6:31-35, 48-58).

**Adam Clarke** - They could never be satisfied; even God himself could not please them, because they were ever preferring their own wisdom to his. God will save us in his own way, or not at all; because that way, being the plan of infinite wisdom, it is impossible that we can be saved in any other."

**Currid** applies this section - Why did they grumble? Verses 4–6 of our passage tell us that they were complaining about deficiencies in their lives. Oh how like them we are! We say, 'If only I had a different job things would be better,' or 'If I had a different spouse things would be better,' or 'If we had more money things would be better.' In that regard, we are like the disobedient Israelites by refusing to accept our lot in life, which God has given to us, and to live our lives to his glory and honour despite our circumstances. ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

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### **George Bush** [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**But now our soul is dried away.** The soul is often used for the body, or the whole man, and as denoting that principle which is the seat of the appetite or desire of meat, drink, and other things. See "Bush on the Soul" passim. Comp. Ps. 102:4, where the same original word is rendered "withered." Also for the soul's requiring food, etc. Ps. 78:18. "In great hunger or thirst the people say, 'Our soul is withered.' 'More than this, sir, I cannot do; my spirit is withered within me.' 'What! when a man's soul is withered, is he not to complain?' "—Roberts.

**There is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes.** Heb. "There is nothing at all; only our eyes are unto the manna." We see nothing else, we expect nothing else, but this same monotonous manna, of which we have become sick of the sight. For the eyes to "be unto any one" is to cherish hope and expectation, as Ps. 25:15, 141:8. The form of the expression is very peculiar, and evidently carries with it the import of contempt towards the Lord's kind provision for their wants. The manna thus furnished was a corporeal nourishment representing that which was spiritual, and thus serving as a type of our Lord himself according to his own declaration, John 6:32, 33, confirmed by Paul, 1 Cor. 10:3, who calls the manna "spiritual bread" because it represented such bread. The loathing the manna, therefore, and longing for the luxuries of Egypt, denoted the rejection of Christ and the benefits of his salvation, the true substance of these Old Testament symbols.

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### **Numbers 11:6 Boring?**

Our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes! —Numbers 11:6

Many of our recurring complaints focus not on what we don't have, but on what we do have and find uninteresting. Whether it's our work, our church, our house, or our spouse, boredom grumbles that it's not what we want or need. This frustration with sameness has been true of the human spirit since the beginning.

Notice the protest of God's people about their menu in the wilderness. Recalling the variety of food they ate as slaves in Egypt, they despised the monotony of God's current provision: "Our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:6).

God provided exactly what they needed each day, but they wanted something more exciting. Are we tempted to do the same? Oswald Chambers said: "Drudgery is the touchstone of character. There are times when there is no illumination and no thrill, but just the daily round, the common task. Routine is God's way of saving us between our times of inspiration. Do not expect God always to give you His thrilling minutes, but learn to live in the domain of drudgery by the power of God."

During the boring times of life, God is working to instill His character in us. Drudgery is our opportunity to experience the presence of the Lord. —David McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights](#)

[reserved](#)

Steadfast, then, in our endeavor,  
Heavenly Father, may we be;  
And forever, and forever,  
We will give the praise to Thee.  
—MacKellar

### **Blessing is found along the pathway of duty**

**Numbers 11:7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium.**

BGT Numbers 11:7 τ ὁ μαννα σε σπ ρμα κορ ου στ ν κα τ ε ὄς α το ε ὄς κρυστ λλου

NET Numbers 11:7 (Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium.

NLT Numbers 11:7 The manna looked like small coriander seeds, and it was pale yellow like gum resin.

ESV Numbers 11:7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium.

NIV Numbers 11:7 The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin.

KJV Numbers 11:7 And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

YLT Numbers 11:7 And the manna is as coriander seed, and its aspect as the aspect of bdolach;

LXE Numbers 11:7 And the manna is as coriander seed, and the appearance of it the appearance of hoarfrost.

ASV Numbers 11:7 And the manna was like coriander seed, and the appearance thereof as the appearance of bdellium.

CSB Numbers 11:7 The manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of bdellium.

- **manna:** Ex 16:14,15,31 1Co 1:23,24 Rev 2:17
- **bdellium:** Ge 2:12
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **REVIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF MANNA**

**Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium-** Exodus 16:14-15+ "When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

**LASB** - Every morning the Israelites drew back their tent doors and witnessed a miracle. Covering the ground was pale yellow, fluffy manna-food from heaven. But soon that wasn't enough. Feeling it was their right to have more, they forgot what they already had. They didn't ask God to fill their need; instead, they demanded meat, and they stopped trusting God to care for them. "Give us meat to eat!" (Nu 11:13) they complained to Moses as they reminisced about the good food they had in Egypt. God gave them what they asked for, but they paid dearly for it when a plague struck the camp (see Nu 11:18-20, 31-34). When you ask God for something, he may grant your request. But if you approach him with a sinful attitude, getting what you want may prove costly.

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George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And the manna was as coriander-seed.** Not in color, but in size and shape. See Notes on Ex. 16:14, 31. The coriander is cultivated mostly in the south of Europe, and in some parts of England, on account of its seeds, which are required in large quantities by confectioners, druggists, and distillers. It is reared also in gardens on account of its leaves, which are used in soups and salads. The seeds are globular, grayish-colored, and about the size of pepper-corn. The taste and smell are both agreeable, depending on the presence of a volatile oil, which is separated by distillation.—This and the two following verses are evidently parenthetical, being designed to give such an account of the various properties and modes of preparation of the manna, as to

evince its great value as an article of diet, and thus to rebuke the people for their light esteem of it.

And the color thereof. Heb. "And the eye thereof," i. e. the aspect or appearance, as it is rendered by the Chald. and the Gr. For a similar usage in regard to "eye," see Ex. 10:5, with the explanatory Note. It is there rendered "face,"—"the face of the earth," meaning the visible surface of the earth. Lev. 13:55, Ezek. 1:16, 8:2, 10:9.

**Bdellium.** Heb. "Bedolach," on which see Note on Gen. 2:12, where we have endeavored to show that the substance meant is the pearl. The Gr. however, here renders it crystal.

**Numbers 11:8 The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar, and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil.**

BGT Numbers 11:8 κα διεπορευετο λαος κα συνλεγον κα ληθον ατ ν τ μ λ κα τριβον ν τ θυ κα ψουν ατ ν τ χ τ ρ κα ποουν ατ γκρυφας κα ν δον ατο σε γε μα γκρ ς ξ λα ου

NET Numbers 11:8 And the people went about and gathered it, and ground it with mills or pounded it in mortars; they baked it in pans and made cakes of it. It tasted like fresh olive oil.

NLT Numbers 11:8 The people would go out and gather it from the ground. They made flour by grinding it with hand mills or pounding it in mortars. Then they boiled it in a pot and made it into flat cakes. These cakes tasted like pastries baked with olive oil.

ESV Numbers 11:8 The people went about and gathered it and ground it in handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil.

NIV Numbers 11:8 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.

KJV Numbers 11:8 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.

YLT Numbers 11:8 the people have turned aside and gathered it, and ground it with millstones, or beat it in a mortar, and boiled it in a pan, and made it cakes, and its taste hath been as the taste of the moisture of oil.

LXE Numbers 11:8 And the people went through the field, and gathered, and ground it in the mill, or pounded it in a mortar, and baked it in a pan, and made cakes of it; and the sweetness of it was as the taste of wafer made with oil.

ASV Numbers 11:8 The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

- **the people:** Ex 16:16-18 Joh 6:27,33-58
- **boil it:** Ex 16:23
- **taste** Ex 16:31
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MANNA IN THE MORNING!

## DESCRIPTION OF GATHERING AND COOKING OF MANNA

**The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar, and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil** - "Heb "And its taste was like the taste of fresh olive oil."

**Mattoon** - God was patient with them in the very beginning of their way when they left Egypt. At this time, when they had been under training for a longer period, they were severely punished. This was their first judgment since the golden calf incident. God made merciful allowances in the beginning. He knew they were ignorant and in a difficult situation. He gave them time to mature and grow up. God is longsuffering, yet, He does deal with sin too as this chapter reveals. There is a point where the Lord more or less says, "Enough is enough!" They were complaining about the manna.

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## George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And the people went about, etc.** Heb. “Went to and fro,” i. e. in the way of search and espial. The term is applied in some cases to the act of the eyes in looking and exploring on one side and the other, and in Dan. 12:4, to the perusal of a book, though rendered “run to and fro.” But the true idea is probably that of turning over pages back and forth, and thus passing to and fro through a volume. See 2 Chr. 10:9, Zech. 4:10.

**Ground it in mills, etc.** “The eastern mill consists of two circular stones, about eighteen inches in diameter, and three inches thick. The top stone has a handle in it, and works round a pivot, which has a hole connected with it to admit the corn. The mortar also is much used to make rice flour. It is a block of wood, about twenty inches high and ten inches in diameter, having a hole scooped out in the centre. The pestle is a stick of about four feet long, made of iron-wood, having an iron hoop fixed to the end.”—Roberts. If the manna, as we are expressly informed, pointed typically to our Lord, we see nothing absurd or unreasonable in the idea that the grinding and beating it, and subjecting it to the various processes here mentioned, shadowed forth the afflictions through which he was called to pass in being prepared to become to us the bread of life, John 6:48–51, Heb. 2:9, 10, 1 Pet. 3:18. Nor is it to be overlooked that the word here rendered “beat”—“beat it in a mortar”—is the same with that which is applied, Is. 53:5, to the sufferings of our Lord when he is said to have been “bruised for our iniquities.” It is remarkable, in regard to the manna, that while it was so hard that it could be ground in a mill, yet it was at the same time of such a consistence that it would melt in the morning rays of the sun if not seasonably gathered.

**Baked it in pans.** Or, boiled or cooked it. The original is used to signify baking in 2 Sam. 13:8, but for the most part it denotes boiling.

**Made cakes of it.** Or, as Geddes and Boothroyd, “made hearth-cakes.” (Rosen, *placentas sub cineritis*, cakes baked in the ashes.)

**The taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.** Heb. “As the taste of the best moisture of oil.” That is, fresh oil which has no rank savor. The Heb. term *leshad* denotes the choicest oily humor in man’s body, Ps. 32:4, and so here it implies the best and sweetest moisture of oil. It had also, we learn, the taste of “wafers with honey,” Ex. 16:31. The Gr. here translates it “wafers of oil,” and the Chald. “paste or oil-cakes.” It was therefore pleasant and wholesome food, and the taste of oil and honey points to that sweet spiritual relish which the soul perceives in feeding upon Christ as the true manna from heaven.

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### Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask -

NUMBERS 11:8—Did the manna taste like a honey wafer or like fresh oil?

PROBLEM: Here the manna’s “taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.” But in Exodus 16:31 asserts that the “taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”

SOLUTION: The latter description may have been what the manna tasted like in its natural state; the former, after it was cooked. Notice that in the same verse it speaks of the people who “ground it on millstones” and “cooked it in pans.” But even granting the two passages are speaking about the manna in the same condition, they are not mutually exclusive.

### Numbers 11:9 When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it.

- Ex 16:13,14 De 32:2 Ps 78:23-25 105:40
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Exodus 16:13; 14 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground.

Psalms 78:23-25 Yet He commanded the clouds above And opened the doors of heaven; 24 He rained down manna upon them to eat And gave them food from heaven. 25 Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance.

**Spurgeon** - Such a marvel ought to have rendered unbelief impossible: when **clouds** become granaries, seeing should be believing, and doubts should dissolve.

**opened the doors of heaven.** The great storehouse doors were set wide open, and the corn of heaven



poured out in heaps. Those who would not believe in such a case were hardened indeed; and yet our own position is very similar, for the Lord has wrought for us great deliverances, quite as memorable and undeniable, and yet suspicions and forebodings haunt us. He might have shut the gates of hell upon us, instead of which he has opened the **doors of heaven**; shall we not both believe in him and magnify him for this?

**rained down manna upon them to eat.** There was so much of it, the skies poured with food, the clouds burst with provender. It was fit food, proper not for looking at but for eating; they could eat it as they gathered it. Mysterious though it was, so that they called it manna, or "what is it?" yet it was eminently adapted for human nourishment; and it was both abundant and adapted, so also was it available! They had not far to fetch it, it was nigh them, and they had only to gather it up. O Lord Jesus, thou blessed manna of heaven, how all this agrees with Thee! We will even now feed on Thee as our spiritual meat, and will pray Thee to chase away all wicked unbelief from us. Our fathers ate manna and doubted; we feed upon Thee and are filled with assurance.

**And gave them food from heaven.** It was all a gift without money and without price. Food which dropped from above, and was of the best quality, so as to be called heavenly corn, was freely granted them. The manna was round, like a coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the verse are literally accurate. **The point to be noted is that this wonder of wonders left the beholders, and the feasters, as prone as ever to mistrust their Lord.**

**Man did eat angel's food.** The delicacies of kings were outdone, for the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble man. Those who are lower than the angels fared as well. It was not for the priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the nation, for every man, woman, and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all,

**He sent them food in abundance.** God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and preeminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angel's food; for

**When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it-** See Spurgeon's description above.

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#### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And when the dew fell upon the camp, etc.** Heb. "Descended." Pool and Ainsworth, by comparing Ex. 16:13, 14, suppose there was a double fall of dew, and that the manna was imbedded, as it were, between the two layers, whence it is called, Rev. 2:17, "hidden manna." But this suggestion takes for granted that the final clause, "the manna fell upon it," implies the falling of the manna upon the dew, whereas, it may as properly mean that it fell upon the camp, which, it must be remembered, covered a vast extent of ground—ten or twelve miles square at least. It is probable that the true idea is conveyed by the Vulg. which renders the verse, "And when the dew fell in the night upon the camp, the manna also fell with it." In the morning, when the sun's rays began to act, the dew would naturally be exhaled, and the manna, as a residuum, would remain spread over the surface of the earth. It is indeed said in the parallel account in Exodus (16:13) that "in the morning the dew lay round about the host," but in the nature of the case this must be understood with some kind of qualification, as otherwise, those whose tents were pitched near the centre of the camp would have had several miles to travel every morning to obtain it. We may reasonably suppose that in a region so broken and rocky, the host would encamp more or less in groups, and the manna might fall "round about" the camping ground of these several groups, and yet at the same time fall over the whole extent of the camp, just as it is evident the quails did when they were sent in such numbers by the Lord previous to the first fall of the manna, Ex. 16:13.

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#### C. H. MacINTOSH. **And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it**

The manna was so pure and delicate that it could not bear contact with earth. It fell upon the dew, and had to be gathered ere the sun was up. Each one, therefore, had to rise early and seek his daily portion. So it is with the people of God now. The heavenly manna must be gathered fresh every morning. Yesterday's manna will not do for to-day, or to-day's for to-morrow. We must feed upon Christ every day, with fresh energy of the spirit, else we shall cease to grow. Moreover, we must make Christ our primary object. We must seek Him "early."

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**Numbers 11:10 Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased.**

NET Numbers 11:10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and when the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, Moses was also displeased.

NLT Numbers 11:10 Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated.

ESV Numbers 11:10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased.

NIV Numbers 11:10 Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.

- **weeping throughout:** Nu 14:1,2 16:27 21:5 Ps 106:25
- the anger: Nu 11:1 De 32:22 Ps 78:21,59 Isa 5:25 Jer 17:4
- Moses: Nu 12:3 20:10-13 Ps 106:32,33 139:21 Mk 3:5 10:14
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### WHINING INGRATES ANGER GOD AND DISPLEASE MOSES

**Whining** is a good description for this verb describes a sustained, high pitched, plaintive sound, as when one is complaining, which they clearly were doing! They were like a bunch of whining brats!

**Jensen** - From doorway to doorway of the tents throughout the camps Moses heard the cries of complaint over the diet of manna cakes.

**Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent** - NLT = "Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining." Two million people continually wailing over God's provision of manna, moaning about the menu!

**Weeping** (01058) see note on [bakah](#). The Septuagint has [klaio](#) which expresses strong inner emotion, to the point of bewailing and the present tense indicates the people expressed this emotional response continually throughout the entire camp!

**And the anger** (see [word study above](#)) **of the LORD was kindled greatly** - God was furious with His people's ungratefulness and griping. Our griping still anger's Him today. This is the second time Yahweh's **anger** had been **kindled** (see [comments](#) on Nu 11:1) but here Moses adds "greatly!" The first kindling resulted in consuming on the outskirts of the camp. This kindling would also have severe consequences as explained in the [comments](#) on Numbers 11:33.

**and Moses was displeased** - Heb "it was evil in the eyes of Moses." The Septuagint has [poneros](#) which speaks of active evil, evil that does harm.

**NET Note** - Moses begins to feel the burden of caring for this people, a stubborn and rebellious people. His complaint shows how contagious their complaining has been. It is one thing to cry out to God about the load of ministry, but it is quite another to do it in such a way as to reflect a lack of faith in God's provision. God has to remind the leader Moses that he, the LORD, can do anything. This is a variation on the theme from Exodus—"who am I that I should lead...."

**Rod Mattoon** - On one uncharacteristically awful afternoon during the 1950's, the Yankee superstar, Mickey Mantle, struck out three times in a row, and he was deeply depressed. Mantle said, "When I got back to the clubhouse, I sat down on my stool and held my head in my hands as if I was going to weep. I heard someone come up to me. It was little Tommy Berra, Yogi's boy, who stood next to me. Tommy tapped me on the knee, nice and soft, and I figured he was going to say something nice to me like, 'Hang in there' or something like that. But all he did was look at me and then he said in his little kid's voice, 'You stink!'" As we begin this portion of Scripture, we find Moses and Israel suffering from a bout of "Stinkin Thinkin." Life was stinking for Moses. We will find him discouraged, depressed, and in despair.

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George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Moses heard the people weep throughout their families.** Heb. "By, or according to, their families;" from which it would appear

that the spirit of disaffection had spread very extensively among the people.

**Every man in the door of his tent.** Therefore openly, and not covertly, as would have been the case had they indulged their murmurs within doors.

**Moses also was displeased.** Heb. "And in the eyes of Moses (it was) evil." He had done for the people the best in his power, and as he could do nothing without the divine appointment, he could not but feel extremely vexed in view of the ungrateful conduct of the people. Acting all along for the Lord, he would naturally feel with him in the present provocation.

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### Help for a Heavy Load

[The men] shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. —Numbers 11:17

Today's Scripture: Numbers 11:4-17

It's amazing what you can haul with a bicycle. An average adult with a specialized trailer (and a bit of determination) can use a bicycle to tow up to 300 pounds at 10 mph. There's just one problem: Hauling a heavier load means moving more slowly. A person hauling 600 pounds of work equipment or personal possessions would only be able to move at a pace of 8 miles in one hour.

Moses carried another kind of weight in the wilderness—an emotional weight that kept him at a standstill. The Israelites' intense craving for meat instead of manna had reduced them to tears. Hearing their ongoing lament, an exasperated Moses said to God, "I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14).

On his own, Moses lacked the resources necessary to fix the problem. God responded by telling him to select 70 men to stand with him and share his load. God told Moses, "[The men] shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (v. 17).

As followers of Jesus, we don't have to handle our burdens alone either. We have Jesus Himself, who is always willing and able to help us. And He has given us brothers and sisters in Christ to share the load. When we give Him the things that weigh us down, He gives us wisdom and support in return. Jennifer Benson Schuldt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Who has come alongside you? Have you thanked them?

God's help is only a prayer away.

**Numbers 11:11 So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?"**

NET Numbers 11:11 And Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you afflicted your servant? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of this entire people on me?"

NLT Numbers 11:11 And Moses said to the LORD, "Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people?"

ESV Numbers 11:11 Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me?"

NIV Numbers 11:11 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?"

KJV Numbers 11:11 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?

- Nu 11:15 Ex 17:4 De 1:12 Jer 15:10,18 20:7-9,14-18 Mal 3:14 2Co 11:28
- **why have:** Job 10:2 Ps 130:3 143:2 La 3:22,23,39,40
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### MOSES OVERWHELMED

**So** - Moses is the mediator and here he is caught in the middle between a grumbling greedy people and the great anger of the

LORD!

**Bell** - "Moses was displeased at the self-pity bawling he heard out of every tent!" ([Numbers 11](#))

**Rod Mattoon** - The complaining of the people was very stressful for Moses. Complaining and griping exerts great pressure on leaders. A church can destroy a pastor with harshness, ingratitude, griping, complaining, criticizing, or putting expectations upon him that he cannot fulfill. Good men, very good men, have left the pastorate because the griping of the people burned them out on pastoring. Those people will be held accountable.

**Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant?"**-Even though Moses is angry and very frustrated, he remains respectful to the LORD by referring to himself indirectly as **Your servant**. **ESV** = "Why have you dealt ill with your servant?" **NLT** = "Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly?" "The word **hard** means "to break into pieces" or "to make good for nothing." Moses was asking the Lord, "Why are you shattering me? I feel good for nothing." Can you relate to him? Have you ever felt this way?" (Mattoon)

**Jensen** - That Moses' despair was not a sin of murmuring like his people's is clearly indicated by the Lord's immediate response, which was not a rebuke but an offer of help.

**Bush** - on the literal rendering "Why hast Thou done evil to Thy servant? (Nu 11:11YLT)" - Though we can sympathize in the grievances of Moses, we cannot justify the tone of his remonstrances in what follows. It is to be observed that the literal rendering of this clause is, "Why hast thou done evil to thy servant?" The evil, however, which is to be attributed to the Lord, is not the evil of sin, but merely the evil of trouble and affliction with which he sees fit to exercise the graces of his people. Cp. Jer. 18:8, Is. 45:7, Amos 3:6.

**Guzik** - **Why have You afflicted Your servant?** Moses responded to God the way many of us do in a time of trial. He essentially said, "God, here I am serving You. Why did You bring this upon me?" It's easy to say God did not bring this upon Moses—a carnal and ungrateful people did. Yet, though God did not directly afflict Moses with this, He ultimately allowed it.. God allowed this for the same reason God allows any affliction in our lives—to compel us to trust in Him all the more, to partner with Him in overcoming obstacles, and to love and praise Him all the more through our increased dependence on Him and the greater deliverance He brings.. That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this (1 Thessalonians 3:3). Of course, it is very hard to see this in the midst of the affliction; we feel like Moses did: Why have I not found favor in Your sight? "If You really loved me LORD, why would You bring all this upon me?" God's response is ever the same: "It's because I do love you that I am training you, building you up in faith."

**Wiersbe** - Moses had been singing triumphantly about the Lord (10:35–36), but now he is lamenting bitterly the work God called him to do. Few things discourage God's servants more than people criticizing them unjustly and complaining about the blessings the Lord has given. This is the first of two occasions when the attitude of the people caused Moses to sin (see 20:1–13). Knowing as we do how ungrateful and hardhearted the people of Israel were, we wonder that Moses wasn't discouraged more often!

**And why have I not found favor** ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace) **in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me** - NLT renders it as a strong statement, saying "Have mercy on me!" He is implying that the LORD had not shown him grace in regard to the grumbling Israelites. This sounds a bit like what I call a "pity party." It is as if Moses feels that he is being mistreated or punished by God. This is the effect of the complaining by the people. Beware of the effect of ingratitude towards others because it can have devastating effects on them.

(NIRV) on **You have laid the burden of all this people on me** has "Why have you loaded me down with the troubles of all these people?"

**Bush** takes this as allusion toward his initial hesitation at his calling in Exodus - Why heardest thou not my prayer of deprecation when I so earnestly besought thee to excuse me from being placed at the head of this people? Ex. 3:11, 4:10.

**UBSH-Numbers** adds - Moses had not wanted the leadership of the Israelites (Ex 4:10, 13) and never ceased to see it as a burden, especially at times like this when the people themselves made life difficult for him.

**THOUGHT** - "Do you leave people elevated or devastated after you leave their presence? Do you lift them up or tear them down? Do you build up others or blow them up with your tongue? THINK, before you shoot your mouth off! Get all the facts before you say anything. How many times have we made fools of ourselves because we spoke or formed opinions of people without having all the facts." (Mattoon)

**Bell** - **Why have You afflicted Your servant?** (same question Naomi ask in Ru 1:21+). - Be honest, we've all asked this! Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles to try our faith. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. Gold paint is afraid of the fire, but gold is not! Costume jewelry dreads the diamond wheel, but a true jewel fears no test. We'd never know the music of

the harp if the strings were left untouched; Nor enjoy the juice of the grape, if it were not trodden in the winepress; Nor discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed & beaten Nor feel the warmth of the fire if the coals were not utterly consumed. [Spurgeon] "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him!" (Job 13:15) ([Numbers 11](#))

**FSB** - Moses sees their complaint as a punishment from Yahweh. In Ex 5:22, he asks Yahweh the same question but with reference to the treatment of the people. Moses is upset about how he is being treated, and the impossibility of satisfying those who complain

**NIVSB** calls Nu 11:11-15 "A prayer of distress and complaint, filled with urgency, irony and passion."

**NET** - What Moses is claiming is that because he has been given this burden God did not show him favor.

**Burden** (04853) (**massa'** from **nasa'** = lift up to carry or to bear) means that which is carried and thus a burden or load, focusing on the effort needed to transport something. Used also in Numbers 11:17.

**LASB** - The Israelites complained, and then Moses complained. But God responded positively to Moses and negatively to the rest of the people. Why? The people complained to one another, and nothing was accomplished. Moses took his complaint to God, who could solve any problem. Many of us are good at complaining to each other. We need to learn to take our problems to the One who can do something about them.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?** That is, wherefore hast thou suffered thy servant to be afflicted?—recognizing a providential permission, which is the only way that the Lord ever afflicts any. He is often said in Scripture to do what he does not prevent being done, what he wisely allows. Still, though we can sympathize in the grievances of Moses, we cannot justify the tone of his remonstrances in what follows. It is to be observed that the literal rendering of this clause is, "Why hast thou done evil to thy servant?" The evil, however, which is to be attributed to the Lord, is not the evil of sin, but merely the evil of trouble and affliction with which he sees fit to exercise the graces of his people. Comp. Jer. 18:8, Is. 45:7, Amos 3:6.

**Wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, etc.** Why hearest thou not my prayer of deprecation when I so earnestly besought thee to excuse me from being placed at the head of this people? Ex. 3:11, 4:10.

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### October 7 — Morning Troubles! Trials! Afflictions! (by Spurgeon)

"Why have You afflicted Your servant?" Numbers 11:11

Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles—to test our faith. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilding is afraid of fire—but gold is not. The plastic gem dreads to be touched by the diamond—but the true jewel fears no test.

It is a false faith—which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable. That alone is true faith—which clings to the Lord when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden. A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, "Though He slays me—yet will I trust in Him," is heaven-born faith.

The Lord afflicts His servants—to glorify Himself, for He is greatly glorified in the graces of His people, which are His own handiwork. "We rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope!" The Lord is honored by these growing virtues.

We would never know the music of the harp—if the strings were left untouched. We would never enjoy the juice of the grape—if it were not trodden in the winepress. We would never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon—if it were not pressed and beaten. We would never feel the warmth of fire—if the coals were not utterly consumed. The wisdom and power of the great Workman are revealed by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Present afflictions tend also to heighten future joy. There must be dark shadows in the picture—to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven—if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Will not peace be sweeter—after conflict? Will not rest be more welcome—after toil? Will not the bliss of the glorified—be enhanced the recollection of past sufferings?

There are many other comfortable answers to the question with which we opened our brief meditation, let us muse upon it all day long.

**Numbers 11:12 "Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers'?"**

NET Numbers 11:12 Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your arms, as a foster father bears a nursing child,' to the land which you swore to their fathers?

NLT Numbers 11:12 Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms like a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors?

ESV Numbers 11:12 Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,' to the land that you swore to give their fathers?

NIV Numbers 11:12 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?

KJV Numbers 11:12 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?

- **Carry them:** Isa 40:11 Eze 34:23 Joh 10:11
- **as a nursing:** Isa 49:15,23 Ga 4:19 1Th 2:7
- **the land:** Ge 13:15 22:16,17 26:3 50:24 Ex 13:5
- **[Numbers 11 Resources](#)** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**THEY ARE YOUR  
PEOPLE LORD**

**Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth** - Both these rhetorical questions allude to Israel being birthed as a nation. The implication is "These are not my children, but Yours. Why should I be responsible for supplying all their wants and putting up with their grumbling?" GNT renders it "I didn't create them or bring them to birth!"

Note repetition of **was it I?** - "A rendering that reflects this emphasis is "Did I myself conceive all these people or did I myself bring them to birth?" (similarly Buber). Of course, Moses didn't, and he blames the LORD for placing the whole burden upon him. It was the relation between the LORD and the people of Israel that was like the relation between mother and child " (UBSH).

**NLT** = "Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? " Moses is disputing with the LORD about who is responsible. He is saying in essence he is not the parent, that "these are your children, not mine."

**That You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom** - This is a picture of carefully, tenderly, lovingly bringing them to the Promised Land. "Moses compares the Israelites to a nursing baby and himself to a wetnurse." (FSB)

**As a nurse carries a nursing infant** - Also a picture of tender care and attention to the needs of the infant, in this case of course referring to Israel.

Moses' description reminds us of Paul's tender words to the saints at Thessalonica...

1 Thessalonians 2:7; 11 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,

**to the land which You swore to their fathers**- The Promised Land of Canaan. Notice how Moses distances himself from the people by saying "their ancestors" instead of "our ancestors." **Fathers** would be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who all received the covenant promise of land.

**NET Note**- The questions Moses asks are rhetorical (ED: THAT MAY BE SO, BUT HE IS STILL FILLED WITH EMOTION AND CONFUSION AND FRUSTRATION). He is actually affirming that they are not his people, that he did not produce them, but now is to support them. His point is that God produced this nation, but has put the burden of caring for their needs on him.

**Have I conceived all this people?** Chald. "Am I the father of all this people? Are they my sons?" Are they my children, that I should be charged with the responsibility of supplying all their wants?

**Have I begotten them?** Or, Heb. "Have I brought them forth?" Both terms are perhaps more intrinsically appropriate to the mother, although in spiritual generation the distinctive functions of father and mother seem not to be always very clearly marked. Thus Paul says, 1 Cor. 4:15, "Ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel." But in Gal. 4:19, he says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." The wording, however, of the entire verse seems intended to describe the office of a nursing-father.

**Carry them in thy bosom.** That is, carefully, tenderly, lovingly. This Moses might be said to do in an inferior sense, but how infinitely far does he come short therein of Him of whom it is said, Is. 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

**As a nursing father beareth the sucking child.** Strikingly indicative of the mildness, gentleness, and love which should characterize rulers, and especially rulers in the church. Is. 49:23, "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." So also the apostle, 1 Thes. 2:7, 11, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." Accordingly, Ainsworth cites from Maimonides the following rule relative to the deportment of the governors of the church:—"It is not lawful for a man to govern with stateliness over the congregation, and with haughtiness of spirit, but with meekness and fear. And every pastor that bringeth more terror upon the congregation than is for the name of God, he shall be punished, and shall not see himself to have a wise son. It is not lawful for him to govern with contemptuous carriage, although they be the common people of the land; neither may he tread upon the heads of the holy people; (for) although they be unlearned and base, they are the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and (are) the armies of the Lord, who brought them out of the land of Egypt by great might and by strong hand; but he must bear the toil of the congregation and their burden, as Moses, our master, of whom it is said, 'As a nursing father beareth the sucking child.' " The Targum of Jon. for "nursing father" has "pedagogue," the term used by Paul in speaking of the Law; Gal. 3:24, "The law was our school-master to bring us to Christ."

**Numbers 11:13 "Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, 'Give us meat that we may eat!'"**

NET Numbers 11:13 From where shall I get meat to give to this entire people, for they cry to me, 'Give us meat, that we may eat!'

NLT Numbers 11:13 Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep whining to me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat!'

ESV Numbers 11:13 Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.'

NIV Numbers 11:13 Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!'

KJV Numbers 11:13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

- Mt 15:33 Mk 8:4 9:23
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THEY WANT A BAR-B-QUE WHERE'S THE MEAT?**

**Where am I to get meat to give to all this people?**- What does this question show us about Moses' mindset? At this point he seems to have developed spiritual amnesia and lost sight of the awesome power of God which had already wrought many great miracles. When we feel afflicted by variegated circumstances, we often tend to forget what God has done for us in the past.

Moses' words were echoed some fourteen hundred years later by the disciples of Jesus when they were confronted with 4000 hungry people who had no food to eat. Faced with these overwhelming odds they (like Moses) asked "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?" (Mark 8:4+)

**For they weep before me, saying, 'Give us meat that we may eat** - They are not asking but commanding (Lxx = didomi in [aorist imperative](#) = "Do it now!" is the idea) Moses to give them meat! No wonder he feels overwhelmed! They are demanding meat and God is angry. The message is be careful what you pray for!

**Guzik** - When Moses said, "For they weep all over me" it showed that Israel cried childish tears from a temper-tantrum.

**Weep** (01058) see note on [bakah](#) a verb which can describe shedding tears, whining, or nagging (compare Jdg 14:16–17). The Septuagint has [klaio](#) which expresses strong inner emotion, to the point of bewailing and the present tense and indicates they were continually weeping and lamenting their perceived sad state.

### Numbers 11:14 "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me.

NET Numbers 11:14 I am not able to bear this entire people alone, because it is too heavy for me!

NLT Numbers 11:14 I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy!

ESV Numbers 11:14 I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me.

NIV Numbers 11:14 I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.

KJV Numbers 11:14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

YLT Numbers 11:14 I am not able -- I alone -- to bear all this people, for it is too heavy for me;

- Ex 18:18 De 1:9-12 Ps 89:19 Isa 9:6 Zec 6:13 2Co 2:16
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES CONFESSES HIS INADEQUACY

**I alone am not able to carry all this people** - "The construction 'I, I alone' highlights the burden he bears of sole leadership." (Currid) **I alone** is "literally 'I, I alone, I am not able to carry all this people.'" The Hebrew pronoun for "I" occurs three times, once as an independent pronoun, to emphasize that Moses cannot take care of the Israelites by himself." (UBSH) Moses is focused on **HIS** ability and energy, not on the ability of the LORD.

**Guzik** - Now Moses has a correct understanding, though not a correct attitude yet. He cannot bear all these people alone; God will do it in him and through him.

**because it is too burdensome for me** - "it" refers to the burden of taking care of the people.

**Burdensome** (heavy, severe, difficult) (03515) [kabed](#) meaning to weigh heavily, to be heavy, to be made heavy, to make dull, to let weigh down, to harden, to multiply. The Lxx has [barus](#) (from **baros** = weight, something pressing on one physically or emotionally) which literally means heavy.

**Rod Mattoon** - Moses cries out, "Lord this burden is too heavy for me to bear!" Have you ever felt this way? Moses feels helpless. He has failed to see God's plan for his life? We do the same thing when we are depressed. He is so "down in the dumps" that he wants to die (vs. 15). This is the world's solution to problems, but not God's. Other great men have desired to die. Elijah wanted to die after his victory on Mt. Carmel when he was threatened by Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4). Jonah wanted to die when his plant died (Jonah 4:8-9).

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**I am not able to bear all this people alone.** "Had the work been much less, he could not have gone through it in his own strength; but had it been much greater, through God strengthening him he might have done it."—Henry.

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**Mattoon** on depression in spiritual leaders - Depression is no respecter of persons. Some of history's greatest Christians and leaders were afflicted with depression. Satan's goal is to get God's people so discouraged and depressed that he can whisper into the heart of a lost sinner and say, "There is a Christian! Do you want to be like that?"

Satan works on all of us to get us down in the dumps. You are not alone if you feel this way. The Prince of Preachers, Charles



Spurgeon, said, "There are dungeons beneath the castles of despair." Spurgeon suffered black periods of anguishing depression. His church family at Metropolitan Tabernacle was once amazed to hear Spurgeon begin a sermon from Isaiah 41:14 with these words in his introduction: I have to speak today to myself, and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and downhearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why I cannot tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me; I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down. I need your prayers.

John Knox said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and put an end to this miserable life." Adoniram Judson, the first foreign missionary from America, suffered from deep depression after the death of his wife Nancy. He said, "God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in Him, but I find Him not." With the last of her savings drawn out of her small bank account, Lottie Moon, the Baptist missionary to China, lapsed into a period of deep depression. She quit eating, and her mental and physical health declined. A doctor was sent for, and only then was it discovered that she was starving to death. In hopes of saving her life, her colleagues made arrangements for her to return home, in the company of a nurse, but it was too late. She died aboard ship on Christmas Eve, 1912, while at port in Kobe, Japan.

Others were gripped by depression. William Cowper, the author of the song There is a Fountain Filled With Blood suffered from severe depression all of his life. In fact, he spent eighteen months in an insane asylum and tried several times to take his own life. Abe Lincoln was another who suffered from depression all of his life. He wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be any better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode that I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better it seems to me. Winston Churchill was also a man that suffered from bouts of depression.

Depression and despair afflict the strongest of Christians and those in leadership.

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#### **Thoughts for the Quiet Hour - Nu 11:14**

It is most needful for all servants of Christ to remember that whenever the Lord places a man in a position of responsibility, He will both fit him for it and maintain him in it.

It is, of course, another thing altogether if a man will rush unsent into any field of work, or any post of difficulty or danger. In such a case we may assuredly look for a thorough breakdown, sooner or later. But when God calls a man to a certain position, He will endow him with the needed grace to occupy it.

This holds good in every case. We can never fail if we only cling to the living God. We can never run dry if we are drawing from the fountain. Our tiny springs will soon dry up; but our Lord Jesus Christ declares, "He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

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#### **The United Way The burden is too heavy for me. (Number 11:14NIV)**

You can't do it by yourself—and that's the way God planned it! Moses had to find that out the hard way! Finally God told him to take seventy men, and He would, "Take of the spirit that is on you and put the spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden ... so that you will not have to carry it alone" (Numbers 11:16–17). Burn-out victims, God is talking to you! You're not John Wayne, and you're not Rambo! Big battles are won by armies who march in step together.

Paul Harvey says, "We revere the airplane pilot who did it alone and the country doctor who never left the bedside. That spirit of independence served us well and caused us to grow tall. But we'd never have made it to the moon with that spirit; we'd never have eradicated typhoid, small pox, or polio without a cooperative effort. No person alone could fetch oil from beneath the ocean, or keep the city lights burning all night—that takes inter-dependence. We are all becoming increasingly inter-dependent! That spirit will not cost more than it's worth. On the steep slope ahead, holding hands is necessary, and it just might be that we can learn to enjoy it."

Now there's a word to the Church! Jesus said, "Where two or three come together in My Name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19–20, NIV). Alone we're vulnerable, but together we can win the day!

CHILD OF GOD, REACH OUT FOR THE HELP THAT'S AVAILABLE TO YOU TODAY! (Bob Gass)

**Numbers 11:15 "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness."**

NET Numbers 11:15 But if you are going to deal with me like this, then kill me immediately. If I have found favor in your sight then do not let me see my trouble."

NLT Numbers 11:15 If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favor and spare me this misery!"

ESV Numbers 11:15 If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."

NIV Numbers 11:15 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."

- kill me: 1Ki 19:4 Job 3:20-22 6:8-10 7:15 Jon 4:3,8,9 Php 1:20-24 Jas 1:4
- let me not: Jer 15:18 20:18 Zep 3:15
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES DESIRE TO DIE IF BURDEN CONTINUES**

**So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once if I have found favor in Your sight,** NLT = " just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favor and spare me this misery!" Note the irony of **kill** and **find favor** (grace)! UBSH says this "highlights the sharp irony in these words that borders on disrespect. Who could dare speak to God this way?" If he is going to continue to shoulder the demands of leadership in this context, he tells (**kill** is actually a command) God he would rather die.

**Bush** - "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand" (KJV). That is, forthwith, immediately. "Out of hand" is an old English phrase, equivalent to "outright." The original for "kill" is reduplicated, "killing kill me," (or "please kill me to kill") in order to express more forcibly the vehemence of the desire. It is as if he should say, I shall take it as the greatest kindness if thou wilt at once remove me from the world—an expression of impatience which cannot be justified even in view of the sorest trials to which he was subjected.

**Wiersbe** - It's sad to see a great man of God ask God to take his life because he feels that his divine calling is a heavy burden by which God has afflicted him and made him wretched. Moses lost his perspective and got his eyes off the Lord and on himself, something that's easy to do in the difficult experiences of life. His "I am not able" (11:14) reminds us of when God called Moses and assured him of His help (Ex. 3:11–12). But at least Moses took his burden to the Lord and accepted God's counsel (1 Peter 5:7). (Be Counted)

**Gilbrant** - Our prayers are not always answered, for which we may be thankful. Elijah also thought that death was the only way out (1 Ki. 19:4). It wasn't. In the words of [Annie J. Flint's](#) hymn (see below), "After we have exhausted our store of endurance, he giveth and giveth and giveth again." But God gave Moses help for the further task. (CBL)

**THOUGHT**- Beloved do you feel like Moses as you read these notes, feeling as if you "have exhausted (your) store of endurance"? Then, you might take a moment and sing this great old hymn taking care to truly ponder the wonderful words of promise....

### **HE GIVETH MORE GRACE**

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure;  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

**And do not let me see my wretchedness** - NET = "then do not let me see my trouble." "my own ruin" (NIV). **Bush** - "Heb. "Let me

not see my evil." That is, let me not live to become a miserable creature. To "see good" is to enjoy it; to "see evil" is to suffer it. So also to "see death" is to die, Ps. 50:23, 89:49, 91:16, Luke 2:26. Comp. the speech of Elijah, 1 Kings 14:4. "

**Guzik on do not let me see my wretchedness** - This was a prayer God would not answer. God wanted Moses to see his wretchedness—his inability to fix this problem—apart from the mighty hand of God. When Moses sees his wretchedness—his weakness, then he can be strong in God's strength. As Paul learned: God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

**NET Note** - The word "trouble" here probably refers to the stress and difficulty of caring for a complaining group of people."

**Wiersbe** - One of the sad results of carnality among God's people is discouragement on the part of the leaders (v. 10ff). Now Moses himself complained to God! Notice how often he said "I" and "my" and "me" in his prayer, for his concern was himself and not God's glory. Moses should have known that the same God who delivered them, led them, and provided for them, would give them flesh in the wilderness; but, as often happens, self-centered praying killed his faith. Finally, Moses was about to give up: "I am not able!" (v. 14). See what his father-in-law said back in Ex. 18:18. Of course, in himself, Moses was not able to lead Israel, but with God leading him, he could do the impossible. Yet Moses was so discouraged that he even asked to be killed! (Wiersbe's Expository Outlines)

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And if thou deal thus with me.** If thou still leavest me to bear the whole of this burden. It is remarkable that the word "thou" here addressed to the Most High is in the original in the feminine instead of the masculine gender—at instead of attâh. A similar usage occurs Deut. 5:27, where the people, terrified with the divine majesty in the delivery of the Law, said unto Moses, "Speak thou (Heb. at) unto us." The reason of the peculiarity is mere matter of conjecture. The Rabbins say it was owing to a special trepidation and confusion which interfered with distinct utterance. Kennicott and others suppose an error in the manuscripts. We must leave it undetermined.

**Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand.** That is, forthwith, immediately. "Out of hand" is an old English phrase, equivalent to "outright." The original for "kill" is reduplicated, "killing kill me," in order to express more forcibly the vehemence of the desire. It is as if he should say, I shall take it as the greatest kindness if thou wilt at once remove me from the world—an expression of impatience which cannot be justified even in view of the sorest trials to which he was subjected.

**Let me not see my wretchedness.** Heb. "Let me not see my evil." That is, let me not live to become a miserable creature. To "see good" is to enjoy it; to "see evil" is to suffer it. So also to "see death" is to die, Ps. 50:23, 89:49, 91:16, Luke 2:26. Comp. the speech of Elijah, 1 Kings 14:4. We feel for the vexations of Moses, but we recognize at the same time his infirmity in asking for release from his troubles in such a disorderly way. His language is probably equivalent to that used in Ex. 32:32, "Blot me out of the book which thou hast written," but is susceptible of a more favorable construction than is often put upon it; q. d. "Lord, if thy decree against this people may not be reversed; if justice demand their utter extermination; let my eyes be first closed in peace. Subject me not to the severe mortification of surviving all my nation, and of enduring the insults and scorn of our enemies. In mercy take me first out of the world, where I should only lead a life of sorrow and regret, heavier than death itself." The opposite meaning which some would elicit from the words may be thus expressed:—"Lord, grant the pardon of this people to the prayers of thy servant, who would rather submit to everlasting misery than fail to obtain his request." The sentiment implied in this language finds no warrant either in the letter or the spirit of the teachings of the Scriptures.

**Numbers 11:16** The LORD therefore said to Moses, "**Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.**"

NET Numbers 11:16 The LORD said to Moses, "Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know are elders of the people and officials over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting; let them take their position there with you.

NLT Numbers 11:16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather before me seventy men who are recognized as elders and leaders of Israel. Bring them to the Tabernacle to stand there with you.

ESV Numbers 11:16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

NIV Numbers 11:16 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.

KJV Numbers 11:16 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.

- seventy: Ge 46:27 Ex 4:29 24:1,9 Eze 8:11 Lu 10:1,17
- officers: De 1:15 16:18 31:28
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TENT OF MEETING  
[Logos.com](#)

## JEHOVAH COMES TO THE AID OF MOSES

The story of the seventy elders begins in Nu 11:16-17 and picks back up again in Nu 11:24-25.

**Brian Bell** - The Lord tended to His weary servant before addressing the ingratitude of the people. How important for all leaders to have the Spirit be upon them to rightly lead His people! ([Numbers 11](#))

Keep in mind that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law had encouraged him to assign other leaders to help with the load of judging the people (Ex 18:13-26). Now Yahweh provides spiritual help for Moses.

**The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers** - These were men that were known **elders** and known to be leaders among the people and therefore presumably were godly men. The Lxx translates "elders" with the Greek word [grammateus](#) which in the NT was on skilled in the Jewish law and here conveys the sense of them be chief officers much like [grammateus](#) is used in Acts 19:35.

**Bush**- We read no rebuke of Moses on this occasion, for although his conduct was faulty, yet the Lord's forbearance was such that he was willing to pass by his offence as far as any outward manifestation was concerned.

**Currid** on 70 - The number 'seventy' is often used of such a group of elders (see Exod. 24:9), and it is a symbolic number that reflects totality and completeness. ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

**And bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you** -Exodus 33:9–11+ describes Moses at the tent to hear from Yahweh. So this was in preparation for an encounter with Yahweh in preparation for service. If we compare Nu 11:26± this tent of meeting seems to be the tent of meeting that was outside the camp and therefore in this case was not synonymous with the Tabernacle in the center of the camp.

**NET Note** - The LORD provides Spirit-empowered assistance for Moses. Here is another variation on the theme of Moses' faith. Just as he refused to lead alone and was given Aaron to share the work, so here he protests the burden and will share it with seventy elders. If God's servant will not trust wholeheartedly, that individual will not be used by God as he or she might have been. Others will share in the power and the work. Probably one could say that it was God's will for others to share this leadership—but not to receive it through these circumstances.

### Related Resource:

- [Who were the seventy elders of Israel? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

#### The Appointment of seventy Elders as Assistants to Moses

**Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel.** Chald. "Gather before me." Targ. Jon. "Gather in my name seventy worthy men." We read no rebuke of Moses on this occasion, for although his conduct was faulty, yet the Lord's forbearance was such that he was willing to pass by his offence as far as any outward manifestation was concerned. The inward reproach of his own conscience he might still be left to feel. It is a matter of considerable debate among commentators, whether this body of seventy elders was one of mere occasional creation and temporary duration, or whether it was hence forward perpetual, and the same in fact with the Sanhedrim or great national council of the Jews, of which we read in the New Testament. The Jewish writers generally, and many Christian writers of eminence are of the latter opinion. The former appears, however, the more probable hypothesis, as no

mention is made of the existence of such a council in all the Old Testament, and this silence cannot well be accounted for consistently with the actual existence of such a body. Add to this, that the Sanhedrim was a judicial institution having control of matters of justice and cases of appeal. The present appears to have been simply a kind of senate formed to aid Moses in bearing the burdens and responsibilities of the station to which he was elevated, and which we can easily apprehend must have been extremely arduous and onerous.

**Whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people.** That is, men of mature age, of grave and exemplary deportment, of ripened wisdom, who would know how best to use the authority committed to them; men who should be elders in fact as well as in name. It is evident from Ex. 24:1, that there was already existing a class of persons called “elders,” and that out of these a selection was to be made on the present occasion.

**And officers over them.** Heb. soteravv, his officers, the same as the soterim mentioned Ex. 5:6, on which see Note. Targ. Jon. “That had been set over them in Egypt;” as if their sufferings there in behalf of their brethren had entitled them to this distinction. “Among the persons that appear in the Israelitish Diet, besides those already mentioned, we find the soterim, or scribes. They were different from the judges; for Moses had expressly ordained (Deut. 16:18) that in every city there should be appointed, not only judges, but soterim likewise. It is very certain that Moses had not originally instituted these officers, but already found them among the people while in Egypt. For when the Israelites did not deliver the required tale of bricks, the soterim were called to account, and punished, Ex. 5:6–14. Now, as satar in Arabic, signifies to write; and its derivative, mastir, a person whose duty it is to keep accounts, and collect debts, I am almost persuaded that these soterim must have been the officers who kept the genealogical tables of the Israelites, with a faithful record of births, marriages, and deaths; and, as they kept the rolls of families, had, moreover, the duty of apportioning the public burdens and services on the people individually. An office exactly similar, we have not in our governments, because they are not so genealogically regulated; at least we do not institute enumerations of the people by families. But among a people whose notions were completely clannish, and among whom all hereditary succession, and even all posthumous fame, depended on genealogical registers, this must have been an office fully as important as that of a judge. In Egypt, the Levites had not yet been consecrated and set apart from the rest of the tribes; there, of course, the soterim must have been chosen either out of every family, or, perhaps, merely according to the opinion entertained of their fitness for the office. In the time of the kings, however, we find them generally taken from the tribe of Levi, 1 Chron. 23:4, 2 Chron. 19:8–11, 34:13. This was a very rational procedure, as the Levites devoted themselves particularly to study; and among husbandmen and unlearned people, few were likely to be so expert at writing, as to be intrusted with the keeping of registers so important. Add to this, that in later times, the genealogical tables were kept in the temple. We find these soterim mentioned in many other passages besides those quoted above. In Num. 11:16, they are the persons of respectability from among whom the supreme senate of Seventy is chosen. In Deut. 1:15, mention is made of soterim appointed by Moses in the wilderness, although the people had previously had such magistrates in Egypt; most probably he only filled the places of those who were dead. In Deut. 20:5, we see them charged with orders to those of the people that were selected to go to war; which is perfectly suited to my explanation of the nature of their office. In Deut. 29:10, 31:28, Josh. 8:33, 23:2, we find them as representatives of the people in the Diets, or when a covenant with God is entered into. In Josh. 1:10, they appear as the officers who communicated to the people the general’s orders respecting military affairs; and this, again, corresponds to the province of muster-masters. In 2 Chron. 26:11, we have the chief soter, under whose command the whole army stands after the general, if indeed he himself be not so. In 1 Chron. 27:1, the name of the office alone is mentioned.”—Michaelis.

**Bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation.** Heb. “Take them unto the tabernacle.” That they might there be, as it were, consecrated to the Lord in the most public manner, so that there should be no doubt among the people as to their authority.

**That they may stand there with thee.** Heb. ve-hithyatzebu, and they shall make themselves to stand, they shall present themselves. The Hebrew writers give a peculiar emphasis to the phrase “with thee” in this connection, as if it imported that they were to be men of like wisdom, weight, and estimation with Moses, though in an inferior degree.

**Numbers 11:17 "Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone."**

NET Numbers 11:17 Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take part of the spirit that is on you, and will put it on them, and they will bear some of the burden of the people with you, so that you do not bear it all by yourself.

NLT Numbers 11:17 I will come down and talk to you there. I will take some of the Spirit that is upon you, and I will put the Spirit upon them also. They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone.

ESV Numbers 11:17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

NIV Numbers 11:17 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.

KJV Numbers 11:17 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.

- **I will come:** Nu 11:25 12:5 Ge 11:5 18:21 Ex 19:11,20 Ex 34:5 Joh 3:13
- **speak with:** Nu 12:8 Ge 17:3,22 18:20-22,33
- **I will take:** Nu 27:18 1Sa 10:6 2Ki 2:9,15 Ne 9:20 Isa 44:3 59:20,21 Joe 2:28 Joh 7:39 Ro 8:9 1Co 2:12 12:4-11 1Th 4:8 1Pe 1:22 Jude 1:19
- **they shall:** Ex 18:22 Ac 6:3,4
- **[Numbers 11 Resources](#)** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Exodus 18:21-22 (JETHRO SPEAKING) ""Furthermore, you (MOSES) shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.

## SPIRIT EMPOWERED ASSISTANTS

**Then I will come down and speak with you there** (fulfilled in Nu 11:25), **and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them** - The Spirit is distributed recalling 1 Cor 12:11 that there is "one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." At Pentecost we see the Spirit "distributed" Luke writing "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them." (Acts 2:3+).

**THOUGHT-** Don't misunderstand. A portion of the Holy Spirit upon Moses was not taken and given to each man for He is One God, one Who is able to manifest His power everywhere (which is a praise the Lord, for that means the same Spirit is in every believer and has access to the full power of the Spirit to live the Christian life, not just part of His power! cf Eph 5:18+).

**Currid** - "That verb (take) in Hebrew can mean 'to withdraw', or 'take from', and can therefore have the idea of God's taking some of the spirit from Moses and giving it to the others. But the verb can also bear the sense of 'to reserve'. That translation would mean that the same type of spirit would be put on the seventy as was placed on Moses. Either interpretation is possible. The spirit that is placed on these men relates to the special and extraordinary operations that come from a divine endowment. It is a gift of the Spirit to be able to rule the people in a godly and righteous manner." ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

Even as a flame of fire increases as it reaches out and embraces further objects,  
so the Holy Spirit is not diminished by His extension to others' lives,  
but rather is made more effective.

-- Irving Jensen

**Guzik** on **and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone-** The elders were there to help Moses carry the spiritual load—to help him care for and minister to the people, and to be a support for him in the ministry. God's help was going to come to Moses through the support of godly men. This is a customary way for God to meet our needs.

**NET Note-** Moses would be relieved of some of the responsibility when these others were given the grace to understand and to resolve cases.

**I will come down.** Chald. "I will reveal myself." Targ. Jon. "I will reveal myself in the glory of my majesty." From v. 25 it appears that this revelation or descent was in connection with the cloudy pillar, which might have been at the same time lowered somewhat nearer to the surface of the earth.

And talk with thee there. It is clear from what follows that the Lord, in the symbol of his presence, came down and communed with Moses, according to his promise, but what he said is not made known.

**And I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them** Heb. âtzalti, I will separate, set apart, keep, reserve, of the spirit which is upon thee, etc. That is, he would endow them with the same spirit of government, or with those gifts of wisdom, judgment, counsel, courage, etc., which were bestowed upon Moses, though not to the same degree. They were to be partners, but not equals, in the divine donation. "Spirit" is often used for gifts of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts (charismata), for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." So "spirits" is used to denote spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. 12:4, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." The communication of the spirit of Moses to the seventy elders does not imply any diminution as it respected him. The Jewish writers illustrate the matter by saying that "Moses in that hour was like unto the lamp that was left burning on the candlestick (in the sanctuary); from which all the other lamps were lighted, yet the light thereof was not lessened a whit." In point of strict truth, however, there was not any thing actually taken from Moses. It is merely the language of appearance, founded upon the similarity of the phenomena. In like manner it is said that the Lord God formed Adam of the dust of the ground, not that he was really so formed, for in the original it is, he "formed him dust of the ground," that is, to be of the same material with the dust, so that when he died, he might be said to be resolved into it. So the spiritual gifts evinced by these elders were of the same kind with those of Moses, and therefore they are said to be taken from him. The inference is very plain, that divine gifts and qualifications are indispensable for those who are called to act as leaders and superintendents in the Lord's church, and that those who are not possessed of these qualifications are not called.

**And they shall bear the burden of the people with thee.** Heb. "They shall bear with thee in the burden." The preposition "in," however, does not affect the sense, as appears from the usage in Ezek. 18:19, 20, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father," where the literal rendering is, "shall not bear in the iniquity of the father." The allusion is to the complaint of Moses in vs. 11, 14, and an assurance given that the men now selected shall take part in the burdensome cares and fatigues growing out of the government of an unruly people.

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#### **Question - [What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament?](#)**

**Answer:** The role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is much like [His role in the New Testament](#). When we speak of the role of the Holy Spirit, we can discern four general areas in which the Holy Spirit works: 1) regeneration, 2) indwelling (or filling), 3) restraint, and 4) empowerment for service. Evidence of these areas of the Holy Spirit's work is just as present in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament.

The first area of the Spirit's work is in the process of regeneration. Another word for regeneration is "rebirth," from which we get the concept of being "born again." The classic proof text for this can be found in John's gospel: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). This begs the question: what does this have to do with the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament? Later on in His dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus has this to say to him: "You are Israel's teacher...and do you not understand these things?" (John 3:10). The point Jesus was making is that Nicodemus should have known the truth that the Holy Spirit is the source of new life because it is revealed in the Old Testament. For instance, Moses told the Israelites prior to entering the Promised Land that "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). This circumcision of the heart is the work of God's Spirit and can be accomplished only by Him. We also see the theme of regeneration in Ezekiel 11:19-20 and Ezekiel 36:26-29.

The fruit of the Spirit's regenerating work is faith (Ephesians 2:8). Now we know that there were men of faith in the Old Testament because Hebrews 11 names many of them. If faith is produced by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, then this must be the case for Old Testament saints who looked ahead to the cross, believing that what God had promised in regard to their redemption would come to pass. They saw the promises and "welcomed them from a distance" (Hebrews 11:13), accepting by faith that what God had promised, He would also bring to pass.

The second aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is indwelling, or filling. Here is where the major difference between the Spirit's roles in the Old and New Testaments is apparent. The New Testament teaches the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20). When we place our faith in Christ for salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. The Apostle Paul calls this permanent indwelling the "guarantee of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). In contrast to this work in the New Testament, the indwelling in the Old Testament was selective and temporary. The Spirit "came upon" such Old Testament people as Joshua (Numbers 27:18), David (1 Samuel 16:12-13) and even Saul (1 Samuel 10:10). In the book of Judges, we see the Spirit "coming upon" the various judges whom God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors. The Holy Spirit came upon

these individuals for specific tasks. The indwelling was a sign of God's favor upon that individual (in the case of David), and if God's favor left an individual, the Spirit would depart (e.g., in Saul's case in 1 Samuel 16:14). Finally, the Spirit "coming upon" an individual doesn't always indicate that person's spiritual condition (e.g., Saul, Samson, and many of the judges). So, while in the New Testament the Spirit only indwells believers and that indwelling is permanent, the Spirit came upon certain Old Testament individuals for a specific task, irrespective of their spiritual condition. Once the task was completed, the Spirit presumably departed from that person.

The third aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is His restraint of sin. Genesis 6:3 would seem to indicate that the Holy Spirit restrains man's sinfulness, and that restraint can be removed when God's patience regarding sin reaches a "boiling point." This thought is echoed in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8, when in the end times a growing apostasy will signal the coming of God's judgment. Until the preordained time when the "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) will be revealed, the Holy Spirit restrains the power of Satan and will release it only when it suits His purposes to do so.

The fourth and final aspect of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament is the granting of ability for service. Much like the way the spiritual gifts operate in the New Testament, the Spirit would gift certain individuals for service. Consider the example of Bezalel in Exodus 31:2-5 who was gifted to do much of the artwork relating to the Tabernacle. Furthermore, recalling the selective and temporary indwelling of the Holy Spirit discussed above, we see that these individuals were gifted to perform certain tasks, such as ruling over the people of Israel (e.g., Saul and David).

We could also mention the Spirit's role in creation. Genesis 1:2 speaks of the Spirit "hovering over the waters" and superintending the work of creation. In a similar fashion, the Spirit is responsible for the work of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) as He is bringing people into the kingdom of God through regeneration.

All in all, the Spirit performs much of the same functions in Old Testament times as He does in this current age. The major difference is the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in believers now. As Jesus said regarding this change in the Spirit's ministry, "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

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#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Holy Spirit do?](#)
- [When / How do we receive the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the Hebrew word \*ruach\*?](#)
- [What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?](#)
- [Who is the Holy Spirit?](#)

**Numbers 11:18 "Say to the people, **Consecrate** yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt." Therefore the LORD will give you meat and you shall eat.**

NET Numbers 11:18 "And say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you will eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat, for life was good for us in Egypt?" Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat.

NLT Numbers 11:18 "And say to the people, 'Purify yourselves, for tomorrow you will have meat to eat. You were whining, and the LORD heard you when you cried, "Oh, for some meat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will have to eat it.

ESV Numbers 11:18 And 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 better for us in Egypt." Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat.

NIV Numbers 11:18 "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.

- **Consecrate yourselves:** Ge 35:2 Ex 19:10,15 Jos 7:13
- **you have wept in the ears** Nu 11:1,4-6 Ex 16:3-7 Jud 21:2
- **For we were well-off in Egypt.:** Nu 11:4,5 14:2,3 Ac 7:39



- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SETTING APART THE PEOPLE

**Say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow** - While consecrate or setting apart can be a positive thing (Lev 11:44,etc), here it was a setting apart for punishment, much like the setting apart in Joshua 7:13 at the [sin of Achan](#).

**NN** - "The Hitpael is used to stress that they are to prepare for a holy appearance. The day was going to be special and so required their being set apart for it. But it is a holy day in the sense of the judgment that was to follow."

**Consecrate yourselves** 8x in 8v - Lev. 11:44; Lev. 20:7; Num. 11:18; Jos. 3:5; Jos. 7:13; 1 Sam. 16:5; 1 Chr. 15:12; 2 Chr. 29:5

**And you shall eat meat** - This sounds like God was going to bless them, by giving them the desire of their heart. Unfortunately their desire was greedy, selfish and sinful and so God's answer turned out to be punishment, because they denied and doubted the goodness of God's plentiful provision of manna.

Sometimes the LORD chastises us by giving us what we ask for—  
what our intense craving cries out for.

-- Guzik

**for** - Explains why God would give them meat.

**you have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat!"**- Note they got what they asked for.

**For we were well-off in Egypt** - They are delusional. They were not well-off in Egypt. Read Exodus 1:8-14ff+. See [notes above](#) on their bad memory!

**Therefore the LORD will give you meat and you shall eat** -Clearly Moses had heard from the LORD that He would grant their request for meat.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow.** Chald. "Prepare yourselves." On the import of this phrase see Note on Ex. 19:10. It denotes preparation in the sense of superinducing upon their minds a state of devout reflection, and external abstinence from whatever would interfere with the sanctity which they were then required to study. So, to "sanctify a war," as in Jer. 6:4, 51:28, Joel 3:9, is to engage in a war with holy motives, to enter into it in such a state of mind, have such an eye to the divine glory, that it should be a consecrated war. Alas! how totally unlike the great mass of wars that have been waged among men! The reason why this sanctification was now commanded probably was, that if they duly repented of the sin of their rebellion, and thus approached the Lord in a humble and contrite frame, the promised flesh might not prove a judgment and a curse to them, but a lawful comfort and luxury. Otherwise the command, "Sanctify yourselves" would be equivalent to, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" i. e. in a way of judgment, and not of mercy.

**Ye have wept in the ears of the Lord.** The parallel clause in v. 20 is, "ye have wept before" the Lord, as the Chald. also renders it here. All unreasonable complaints and murmurings, though vented ostensibly against the Lord's ministers, or addressed to no one in particular, are in reality uttered towards the Lord himself, and come up into his ears.

**The Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.** This was indeed a compliance with the desires of the people, but of the same nature with that which is spoken of at a subsequent period, when he is said to have "given them a king in his anger." A significant allusion to this kind of indulgence occurs also, Ps. 106:16, "He gave them them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." The prayers of the wicked may be answered, but in such a way that nothing shall be more to be dreaded. The divine promises to the evil are virtual threatenings.

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### Numbers 11:19 'You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days,

- About a year before this, the people had been thus feasted for one day (Ex 16:13); but now such plenty was to be afforded them for a whole month, and they should use it so greedily, that at last they should entirely loathe the food for which they had

so inordinately craved.

- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PLENTIFUL SUPPLY FOR A PLAGUE

**You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days-** This passage is the negative aspect of exceeding abundantly beyond all you can ask or think! (cf Eph 3:20+). Their full plate would turn into a full plague!

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George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days,** etc. As they did about a year before, Ex. 16:12, 13, when the people had been thus feasted for one day.

**Numbers 11:20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"** " "

NET Numbers 11:20 but a whole month, until it comes out your nostrils and makes you sick, because you have despised the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we ever come out of Egypt?"

NLT Numbers 11:20 You will eat it for a whole month until you gag and are sick of it. For you have rejected the LORD, who is here among you, and you have whined to him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"

ESV Numbers 11:20 but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we come out of Egypt?"

NIV Numbers 11:20 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?"

KJV Numbers 11:20 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?

- **month:** Ex 16:8,13
- **and it:** Nu 21:5 Ps 78:27-30 106:15 Pr 27:7
- **rejected:** 1Sa 2:30 2Sa 12:10 Mal 1:6 Ac 13:41 1Th 4:8
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REJECTION OF JEHOVAH!

**but a whole month,** God says, "You want flesh? Ok, I'll give you some flesh! I won't give it to you for 1,2,5,10, or even 20 days. I'll give it to you for a month!"

**until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you -** "The expression לִזְרָח (lézarah) has been translated "ill" or "loathsome." It occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek text interprets it as "sickness." It could be nausea or vomiting (so G. B. Gray, Numbers [ICC], 112) from overeating." ([NET Note](#)) Loathsome is zara found only here in OT, and translated in Lxx with the Greek noun **cholera** (guess what English word that gives us?) which **LSJM** says is "a disease in which the humours of the body are violently discharged by vomiting and stool." (See the "fulfillment of this prophecy" in Nu 11:33+ below! **Cholera** is a wasting disease - [see the WHO report](#) from 2019 which has this bullet point "Researchers have estimated that each year there are 1.3 million to 4.0 million cases of cholera, and 21 000 to 143 000 deaths worldwide due to cholera."

**because** - Term of explanation. Explains it is their own fault!

[NET Note](#) - The explanation is the interpretation of their behavior—it is in reality what they have done, even though they would not

say they despised the LORD. They had complained and shown a lack of faith and a contempt for the program, which was in essence despising the LORD.

**You have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him-** The word rejected is translated despised in the NET and KJV. In English [reject](#) means to refuse to accept, submit to, believe or make use of. Despise is (to me) stronger for it means to regard with contempt or scorn, to dislike intensely, even to loathe or to scorn! Amazing! The Septuagint translates **rejected** with the verb [apeitheo](#) which means to be disobedient, to disbelieve, to refuse to believe, in this case it describes Israel refusing to believe Yahweh, His presence, His power, His provision! Amazing!

**Rejected**, (cast off, despised) ([03988](#))([ma'as](#)) means to reject, to despise, to abhor, to refuse. The primary idea is to treat as loathsome (that which is repulsive, detestable, causing disgust). The first use in Lev 26:15 (Lev 26:43 - Lxx = *prosochthizo* = to be offended, very upset over something someone has done) is of Israel who is warned not to "**reject** My statutes." And yet later God says "when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not **reject** them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God." (Lev 26:44) **Ma'as** is used of men rejecting God's law, ordinances or statutes (2Ki 17:15, Lev 26:15, 43, Isa 5:24, Ezek 5:6, 20:13, 16, 24, Amos 2:4. Saul **rejected** God's word - 1Sa 15:26. Isa 30:12, cp Hos 4:6), of rejecting Him (1Sa 10:19), the promised land by the first generation (Nu 14:31, cp Ps 106:23). God told Samuel "they have not **rejected** you, but they have **rejected** Me from being king over them." (1Sa 8:7) 2Ki 17:20 says Jehovah "**rejected** all the descendants of Israel." (cp Hos 9:17) Used of Jehovah saying He would "cast off Jerusalem." (2Ki 23:27 contrast Jer 31:38-40) We are not to "**despise** the discipline of the Almighty." (Job 5:17, Pr 3:11, 15:32) After Job sees God, he says "therefore I **retract** and I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6) Used of a reprobate (Ps 15:4). In a clear Messianic prophecy Psalms 118:22 = "The stone which the builders **rejected** ([apodokimazo](#) - regard as unworthy after testing) Has become the chief corner stone." Evil should be refused or rejected (Isa 7:15, 16).

**Saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt** - Out of their mouth came that which filled their heart! The heart was filled with disbelief and thus they question everything that Jehovah had done for them over the past 12+ months! Amazing! Amazingly short memories and hard hearts!

**FSB** - The anger Yahweh feels toward Israel is not because of their longing for meat, but because, in their craving, they long for Egypt and thus reject the goodness, provision, and power of Yahweh.

**NIVSB** - **you have rejected the LORD**. The principal issue was not meat at all, but a failure to demonstrate proper gratitude to the Lord, who was in their midst and who was their constant source of good.

**NET Note** "The use of the demonstrative pronoun here ("why is this we went out ...") is enclitic, providing emphasis to the sentence: "Why in the world did we ever leave Egypt?""

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Until it come out at your nostrils** Denoting a nausea and surfeit. "What does this mean? Is it not a figurative expression, to show that they were to eat till fully satisfied? Bishop Patrick says, 'Till you be glutted and cloyed with it.' Is it not a striking illustration that this figure of speech is used at this day to convey the same meaning? A host says to his guests, 'Now friends, eat mookamattam, to the nose,' literally, to eat till they are full up to the nose. 'O, sir, how can I eat any more? I am full to the nose, I have no more room.' Of a glutton, it is said, 'That fellow always fills up to the nose!' "—Roberts. Bp. Patrick's note is this:—"Till you be glutted with it, and vomit it up so violently, that it shall come not only out at your mouth, but at your nostrils." This is perhaps somewhat favored by the original *zârâ*, in the ensuing clause, which several of the versions render, "in dispersionem," for a scattering, deriving it from *zârâh*, to be diffused, or spread abroad.

**And it be loathsome unto you.** Heb. "And it shall be unto you for a loathing." Gr. "It shall be unto you for a cholera (*εις χολεραν*), which Hesychius defines as a violent disorder of the bowels. The effect, we may presume, to have been what we should now express by cholera morbus. Chald. "It shall be unto you for an offence." "What a righteous thing it is with God to make that loathsome to men which they have inordinately lusted after. God could make them despise flesh as much as they had despised manna."—Henry.

**Because that ye have despised the Lord.** Heb. *meastem*, contemptuously refused, or set at nought. Chald. "Ye have rejected the Word of the Lord." Gr. "Ye have disobeyed the Lord." The word in the Heb. is the same with that which occurs 1 Sam. 8:7, "For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." It is a serious reflection that our complaining of the divine dispensations amounts, in the Lord's sight, to a positive contempt of him.

**Which is among you.** That is, by the visible symbol of his presence. Chald. "Whose divine majesty dwells among you." Their sin, therefore, was a kind of spiritual lese-majesty.

**Numbers 11:21** But Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month.'

- Nu 1:46 2:32 Ge 12:2 Ex 12:37 38:26
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES BEGINS TO DOUBT GOD'S PROVISION**

**But Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month -** The 600,000 is a round number. Moses was overwhelmed and in his state forgot Who God was and what miracles He had already performed (miraculous bread and water!) When we forgot what He has accomplished, we often fail to see what He can accomplish.

**Guzik** - Moses reacted as we often do—trying to figure out how God would perform a particular promise. Moses couldn't figure it out; but God never asked him to. God will provide, because His arm has not been shortened, nor has He lost any strength.

**LASB** - Moses had witnessed God's power in spectacular miracles, yet at this time he questioned God's ability to feed the wandering Israelites. If Moses doubted God's power, how much easier it is for us to do the same. But completely depending upon God is essential, regardless of our level of spiritual maturity. When we begin to rely on our own understanding, we are in danger of ignoring God's assessment of the situation. By remembering his past works and his present power, we can be sure that we are not cutting off his potential help.

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**George Bush** [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**The people among whom I (am) are six hundred thousand, etc.** That is, so many who were able to carry arms; which, by a fair proportion, would require of the aged, of women and children, and the mixed multitude, enough to make a grand total of near three millions of people. In view of the demands of such an immense host, the faith of Moses seems to have wavered. Either from the discomposure of his spirit by reason of the affronts of the people, or from a fear that they might be commanded to feed upon the cattle required for sacrifice, or from sheer incredulity, he is prompted to inquire how it can be possible that so many mouths should be fed with flesh for a whole month together. All the cattle we have, says his unbelief, will come short of the requirement, and all the fish of the Red Sea would be insufficient for it.

**Numbers 11:22** "Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them?"

- There is certainly a considerable measure of weakness and unbelief manifested in these complaints and questions of Moses; but his conduct appears at the same time so very simple, honest, and affectionate, that we cannot but admire it, while we wonder that he had not stronger confidence in that God, whose stupendous miracles he had so often witnessed in Egypt.
- 2Ki 7:2 Mt 15:33 Mk 6:37 8:4 Lu 1:18,34 Joh 6:6,7,9
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passage:**

Psalm 78:19+ Then they spoke against God; They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

**Spurgeon** - To question the ability of one who is manifestly Almighty, is to speak against him. These people were base enough to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged, so they were ungrateful enough to declare. As if the manna was a mere makeshift, and the flowing rock stream a temporary expedient, they ask to have a regularly furnished table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt (ED: BUT I DOUBT THEY HAD A LAVISH SPREAD AS SLAVES!).

Alas, how have we also quarrelled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. **They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits.**

**THOUGHT** - Are you content with the Lord's provision? See [Christian Contentment](#) and [Contentment-Devotional](#)

## **MOSES FAILS TO SEE WITH EYES OF FAITH**

From the psalm above we see that Moses' "belief" was not that different from the Israelites -- is God able?

**Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them?** Clearly they would deplete their livestock quickly. So the answer is of course "No."

**Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them-** Now Moses is getting closer to the sort of thing Yahweh could do. He made the sea and the fish and could gather them for Israel if that was His will.

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### **George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)**

**Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?** That is, gathered together in shoals. Harmer's note on this passage is worthy of being transcribed. "When Moses mentioned Israel's being fed with fish, collected from the Red Sea, he seems to have supposed something of an extraordinary kind; but analogous to what had happened to several people, in small companies, not any thing miraculous. In answer to the divine declaration, Moses proposed a difficulty in accomplishing this promise, in the natural course of things, not as imagining it could not be done by a miracle; he could not but know, that he that rained down manna, could, by a miracle, gorge them with flesh; but in the common course of things, or in the natural, though more unusual operation of Providence, could it be brought about? That was what puzzled Moses. Some flocks, and a few oxen, they had with them for the solemnities of sacrifice; but could a part of them, with any addition that might be procured from the people on the skirts of the desert, be sufficient to support them a whole month? Fish might be obtained from the Red Sea, from which, it seems, they were not very distant, but could it be expected they would come in such numbers to the shore, within their reach, as fully to satisfy the cravings of their appetites, day after day, for a whole month?—'We remember the fish we did eat in Egypt freely,' was a part of their moan, Num. 11:5. If Moses knew what the common people of Egypt now know, and which their sages in ancient days must, at least, have remarked, he could be no stranger to that change of place that may be observed as to fish, and their crowding together at certain times; and to some such a natural, but surprising and unknown occurrence, as to the inhabitants of this sea, the words of Moses seem to point: 'Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them?... or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together,' by some natural impulse, to this place, for a month or more, which none of us have had any notion of, nor received any information about, to suffice them? Such is, I apprehend, the spirit of these words."

**To suffice them.** Heb. u-mâtzâ lâhem, and shall one find for them? For parallel instances of this usage, see Josh. 17:16, Judg. 21:14, with my Note upon each passage. The remark of Philip, John 6:7, 9, implies a similar staggering of faith:—"Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them (the great multitude) that every one of them may take a little." In both cases, however, the doubts were soon silenced.

**Numbers 11:23 The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not."**

NET Numbers 11:23 And the LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's hand shortened? Now you will see whether my word to you will come true or not!"

NLT Numbers 11:23 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Has my arm lost its power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!"

ESV Numbers 11:23 And the LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not."

NIV Numbers 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."

- **Is the Lord's:** Ge 18:14 Ps 78:41 Isa 50:2 Isa 59:1 Mic 2:7 Mt 19:26 Lu 1:37
- **shall:** Nu 23:19 2Ki 7:2,17-19 Jer 44:28,29 Eze 12:25 24:14 Mt 24:35
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Isaiah 50:2 "Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink for lack of water And die of thirst.

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.

Matthew 19:26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

## IS THE LORD'S POWER LIMITED?

**The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited?"** - Literally "Is the LORD's hand shortened?" That is, "Is the power of the Lord diminished?" This is divine rhetoric! Of course the omnipotent God's power is never limited. In short (pun intended) God's reach is long enough to effect what he has promised. That power which has been so signally displayed on your behalf, and which is as unchangeable as it is unlimited.

**Guzik** - God had not suddenly become weak or limited. God has resources that Moses knew nothing about. We might say that God likes to meet our needs in completely unexpected ways.

Man's deficiency is the perfect setting to show God's sufficiency.

-- cf 2 Cor 12:9-10+

**NET Note** - "This anthropomorphic expression concerns the power of God. The "hand of the LORD" is idiomatic for his power, what he is able to do. The question is rhetorical; it is affirming that his hand is not shortened, i.e., that his power is not limited. Moses should have known this, and so this is a rebuke for him at this point. God had provided the manna, among all the other powerful acts they had witnessed. Meat would be no problem. But the lack of faith by the people was infectious."

**LASB** - How strong is God? It is easy to trust God when we see his mighty acts (the Israelites saw many), but after a while, in the routine of daily life, his strength may appear to diminish. God doesn't change, but our view of him often does. The monotony of day-by-day living lulls us into forgetting how powerful God can be. As Moses learned, God's strength is always available.

**Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not** - Later in Numbers Moses records "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Nu 23:19)

#### Related Resource:

- The Hand of the Lord

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#### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Is the Lord's hand waxed short?** Gr. "Shall not the Lord's hand be sufficient?" Chald. "Shall the Word of the Lord be hindered?" Hand, by a well known figure of speech, is often used as significant of power, as being the instrument by which power is put forth (Deut. 32:36, Josh. 4:24, 8:20), while the original term for shortened implies that which is lessened or scantied, and is thus rather applicable to what the hand signifies than to the hand itself. In Mic. 2:7, it is spoken of the Lord's Spirit—"Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened (Heb. shortened)?" but for the most part, as here, the word is predicated of the Lord's hand. Thus, Is. 59:1, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." Is. 50:2, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" where the latter clause explains the former. "Even true and great believers sometimes find it hard to trust God under the discouragements of second causes, and 'against hope to believe in hope.' Moses himself can scarcely forbear saying, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' when this was become the common cry. No doubt this was his infirmity."—Henry.

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### **C H Spurgeon - Numbers 11:23**

Which of his people have found the riches of his grace drained dry? Which of his children has had to mourn that the unsearchable riches of Christ had failed to supply his need? In grace, as well as in providence and nature, the unanimous verdict is that God is still Almighty, that he does as he wills, and fulfils all his promises and his counsels. How is it, then, that such a question as this ever came from the lips of God himself? Who suggested it? What suggested it? What could there have been that should lead him or any of his creatures to say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" We answer, there is but one creature that God has made that ever doubts him. The little birds doubt not: though they have no barn nor field, yet they sweetly sing at night as they go to their roosts, though they know not where tomorrow's meal shall be found. The very cattle trust him; and even in days of drought, ye have seen them when they pant for thirst, how they expect the water; how the very first token of it makes them show in their very animal frame, by some dumb language, that they felt that God would not leave them to perish. The angels never doubt him, nor the devils either: devils believe and tremble. But it was left for man, the most favoured of all creatures, to mistrust his God. This high, this black, this infamous sin, of doubting the power and faithfulness of Jehovah, was reserved for the fallen race of rebellious Adam, and we alone, out of all the beings that God has ever fashioned, dishonour him by unbelief, and tarnish his honour by mistrust.

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### **C H Spurgeon - Morning and Evening —Numbers 11:23**

God had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil his promise for him? No; he who makes the promise ever fulfils it by his own unaided omnipotence. If he speaks, it is done—done by himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfilment upon the co-operation of the puny strength of man. We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator's work. Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as he hath said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" May it happen, too, in his mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, "Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

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### **Robert Hawker - Poor Man's Evening Portion —Numbers 11:23**

God had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil his promise for him? No; he who makes the promise ever fulfils it by his own unaided omnipotence. If he speaks, it is done—done by himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfilment upon the co-operation of the puny strength of man. We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator's work. Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as he hath said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" May it happen, too, in his mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, "Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

**Numbers 11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent.**

NET Numbers 11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. He then gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and had them stand around the tabernacle.

NLT Numbers 11:24 So Moses went out and reported the LORD's words to the people. He gathered the seventy elders and stationed them around the Tabernacle.

ESV Numbers 11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent.

NIV Numbers 11:24 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.

- gathered: Nu 11:16,26
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD** -Moses now obeys the divine command of verse 16: he comes out of the tabernacle, where he had been speaking with God, and gathers the elders outside the tent.

**Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent**- In preparation for a divine encounter.

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### Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask - NUMBERS 11:24—Was the tabernacle outside the camp of Israel or inside it?

**PROBLEM:** Numbers 2 places the tabernacle inside the camp, but here in Numbers 11:24 (cf. 12:4) it is said to be outside the camp.

**SOLUTION:** It was both. The twelve tribes were camped around the tabernacle (Num. 2:3, 10, 18, 25), with a space between them and the tabernacle in the center (Num. 2:2). Hence, to get to the tabernacle they would have to go "outside" their camping area. And yet the tabernacle was literally "in the middle" of them.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And Moses went out.** But whether from his own tent or the sanctuary is uncertain. The Targ. Jon. renders it, "He went out from the tent of the Shekinah," into which it may be supposed he had gone to pour out his prayers into the Lord's bosom. He no doubt "went out" also in the person of the emissaries who were dispatched to various parts of the camp to gather in the seventy elders, and as they were convened at the Tabernacle of the congregation, the presumption is that it was thence that Moses is said to have gone out. The place of their congress was the place of his egress.

**Set them round about the tabernacle.** Heb. "Made them to stand." All important assemblies were wont to meet at the Tabernacle. Comp. ch. 27:2.

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### James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - SPIRIT-POSSESSED MEN -- Numbers 11:24–30

"O Comforter, the Holy Ghost!  
Before Thee mortal may not boast;  
I grasp Thy Name of Paraclete,  
But find Thee strong as well as sweet;  
But more—Thy presence felt so near,  
The eyes of faith makes bright and clear;  
My glad heart bursts into song,  
By Thy presence still kept strong."

The Lord does not deal with all in the same way. Moses prayed that he might be relieved from the "burden of all the people," and the Lord granted him according to his request (vs. 11–17). Paul prayed that the thorn in the flesh might be taken away, but instead of that he got grace sufficient to bear it (2 Cor. 12:7–10), and to glory in it. In the one case Moses was the loser (v. 17), in the other Paul was the gainer. Let us take good heed how we treat our thorns and our burdens. From this portion we may learn—

**1. The possibilities of a believer's life.** On Moses there rested a spiritual influence enough for seventy men (vs. 24, 25). Is there any limit as to the measure of wisdom and power God is able to communicate to a meek and faithful servant? The Spirit was given to Christ, our great High Priest, without measure, so that this holy anointing oil might flow down to the skirts of His garments—the whole body of His people.

**2. Spirit-possessed men are separated men.** "Gather the seventy and set them round about the tabernacle" (v. 24). These men



were called out, set aside, and their names written (v. 26) before the Holy Spirit was put upon them. The one hundred and twenty in the upper room were separated and set aside for this definite purpose before they were all filled with the Spirit. Come ye yourselves apart at God's bidding, and ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

**3. There are degrees of Spirit filling.** "The Lord took the Spirit that was upon Moses, and gave unto the elders" (v. 25). After this Moses would not have the same measure of the Spirit upon him. This was not needed, because he had not the same amount of work to do. The measure of our Spirit-filling depends much upon the measure of our faith and service for the Lord. The Lord does not give His penny to idlers in the market place. Carey's motto was good, "Attempt much for God, and expect much from God."

**4. Spirit-possessed men cannot be hid.** "Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, and there ran a young man and told Moses" (vs. 26, 27). The power of the Holy Spirit is fire from Heaven, it cannot be hid. If it is put under a bushel, then so much the worse for the bushel. Christ could not be hid. When He lives in us by the Holy Ghost there is no hiding of Him. When those who have hitherto been dumb for Christ begin to prophesy it is sure to create some excitement. "There ran a young man and said Eldad and Medad do prophesy." There is nothing like the mighty power of the Holy Spirit to make young men run, and to waken them up out of the sloth of spiritual indifference. When a man gets endued with the Spirit his life will tell.

5. Spirit-possessed men are not to be hindered. "Joshua said, my lord Moses forbids them; Moses said, Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets" (vs. 28, 29). Perhaps Joshua himself was that young man who was so suddenly startled by this innovation as to run with the tidings of it. Such men are needed, and Moses' gladness at the hearing of it shows the largeness and meekness of his unenvious heart. Every Spirit-filled man rejoices in others being endued with power from on high for Christ and His kingdom's sake. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," as all might be (1 Cor. 14:5). The Holy Ghost has been given that every believer might have this power, and the command is, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

**Numbers 11:25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again.**

NET Numbers 11:25 And the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to them, and he took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but did not do so again.

NLT Numbers 11:25 And the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Then he gave the seventy elders the same Spirit that was upon Moses. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But this never happened again.

ESV Numbers 11:25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

NIV Numbers 11:25 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.

- **came down:** Nu 11:17 12:5 Ex 34:5 40:38 Ps 99:7 Lu 9:34,35
- **took:** Nu 11:17 2Ki 2:15 Jas 1:17
- **they prophesied:** By prophesying here we are to understand, their performing those civil and sacred functions for which they were qualified; exhorting the people to quiet and peaceable submission, and to trust and confidence in the providence of God. 1Sa 10:5,6,10 19:20-24 Jer 36:5,6 Joe 2:28,29 Ac 2:17,18 Ac 11:28 21:9-11 1Co 11:4,5 14:1-3,32 2Pe 1:21
- **[Numbers 11 Resources](#)** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JEHOVAH CAME DOWN AND GAVE THE SPIRIT TO 70 ELDERS**

**Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him-** This phrase **the LORD came down** (see below) often describes a divine manifestation, in this context, a manifestation of His mercy and grace to Moses, but in the next occurrence in Nu 12:5+ signifying judgment (as in Ge 11:5). Presumably all the elders heard Yahweh speak to Moses. The LORD came down brings to mind the Lord Jesus coming down from Heaven to be born as a Man and be sacrificed as a Lamb. **NIVSB** adds "In a sense every theophany (appearance of God) is a picture and promise of the grand theophany, the incarnation of Jesus, both in grace and in judgment."

**The LORD came down** - 5x in 5v in the OT - Ge 11:5; Ex 19:20; Nu 11:25; Nu 12:5; Jdg. 5:13

**And He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders**- Yahweh fulfills His promise of Nu 11:17. God always keeps His Word. Jewish interpreters misinterpret the Spirit here as Moses' human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit, which would not even make sense in the context (i.e., the 70 prophesying).

**And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied** - (see comparable experience of Saul in 1 Sa. 10:9–11) The fact that they **prophesied** was clear evidence that they also had the power of the Spirit and could assist Moses in this spiritual task. How this clear supernatural sign would have served to encourage a downcast, disillusioned Moses! The Hebrew word for rested is [nuach/nuah](#) (as when Noah's ark settled down on Aarat in Ge 8:4) and is translated in the Lxx with the verb [epanapauomai](#) which is fascinating as this is the same (relatively rare -12x) verb used by Peter writing " If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God **rests** ([epanapauomai](#)) on you.." (1 Peter 4:14+).

**THOUGHT** - The Spirit empowered Othniel (Jdg 3:10+) to deliver his people, as he did Gideon (Jdg 6:34+), Jephthah (Jdg 11:29+), Samson (Jdg 14:6, 19+)—and also David (1 Sa 16:13). God used Spirit empowered men to deliver His people from evil in the OT. Who would He use to deliver His people from the evil influences of a society such as America which is rapidly decaying before our very eyes! Spirit filled believers! (Eph 5:18+, cf Jude 1:23+).

**NET Note** - The text may mean that these men gave ecstatic utterances, much like Saul did when the Spirit came upon him and he made the same prophetic utterances (see 1 Sam 10:10–13). But there is no strong evidence for this (see K. L. Barker, "Zechariah," EBC 7:605–6). In fact there is no consensus among scholars as to the origin and meaning of the verb "prophesy" or the noun "prophet." It has something to do with speech, being God's spokesman or spokeswoman or making predictions or authoritative utterances or ecstatic utterances. It certainly does mean that the same Holy Spirit, the same divine provision that was for Moses to enable him to do the things that God had commanded him to do, was now given to them. It would have included wisdom and power with what they were saying and doing—in a way that was visible and demonstrable to the people! The people needed to know that the same provision was given to these men, authenticating their leadership among the clans. And so it could not simply be a change in their understanding and wisdom.

**But they did not do it again** - Literally "they did not add" It was a one-time spiritual experience associated with their installation. Now some writers say this indicates that God's bestowal of the Holy Spirit was temporary. To be sure the Holy Spirit was not given as a permanent gift to men in the OT, but this does not necessarily mean these men did not have spiritual power from the Spirit's presence as they assisted Moses. All the text says is that they did not prophesy again.

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Holy Spirit in the OT](#) - Craig Blomberg (top 1/3 of the article is Spirit in OT, remainder is Spirit in the NT).

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#### **George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)**

**And the Lord came down in a cloud.** Or, perhaps better, "in the cloud." The manifestation in this case was no doubt similar to that mentioned Ex. 33:9, "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and (the Lord) talked with Moses," where see my Note. Comp. also Ps. 99:7, "He spake to them in the cloudy pillar."

**When the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.** Heb. yithnabbe-u, were made or impelled to prophesy, the Hithpael, or reflexive conjugation having here the same signification as the Niphal or passive, except that in the Hithpael the idea is more distinctly of an impulsive power within the subject, and the Niphal of one without. It is therefore peculiarly applicable to that state of possession, or spiritual excitation, which prompts extraordinary utterances. Prophesying, in this sense, was one of the special gifts or operations of the Lord's Spirit in its illapse upon the minds of men. The usual word for prophet in the original Hebrew is nabi, which is really of a passive import, implying one who speaks from a divine impulse, and utters things entirely beyond the scope of his own unassisted ability. He is not so much a speaker as one spoken through. Thus it is said, Joel 2:29, "Upon the handmaids in those days I will pour out my Spirit," that is, Acts 2:18, "I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." So Acts 19:6, "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." In like manner, when Saul was anointed king, it was said to him, 1 Sam. 10:6, "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy, and shalt be turned into another man." Accordingly it is added, v. 10, "And the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied." The term evidently is not restricted to the sense of foretelling future events, but implies also any kind of utterance prompted by a divine influence, and especially the unfolding the meaning of the sacred Word. Thus Paul, 1 Cor. 14:3, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Analogous to the elders here appointed were the "helps and governments," spoken

of by Paul (1 Cor. 12:28) as established in the early Christian church.

**And did not cease.** Heb. lo yâsâphu, did not add, that is, did not continue to prophesy in that manner after that day. In like manner it is said, Deut. 5:22, that God pronounced the ten commandments, and “added no more” (Heb. lo yâsôph), by which is to be understood, that he spake no more to the people in that peculiar manner. So also it is said of Saul, 1 Sam. 10:13, “And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came,” etc. The gift indicated was probably designed to be of merely temporary duration. Gr. “And they added no more.” And Sol. Jarchi, a noted Jewish commentator says, “They did not add;” i. e. they “prophesied not save that day only.” This would be sufficient to afford an attestation that they were moved by a divine impulse, and this testimony it was important the people should have. With this coincides the comment of Theodoret, “The seventy did not prophesy beyond this day, because God promoted them not to prophesy, but to govern, which St. Paul also reckons among other gifts bestowed upon Christians,” 1 Cor. 12:26. It is, however, to be remarked, that this rendering is not uniform. The Chald, exhibits a sense directly opposite,—“And they ceased not,” and this is the sense adopted by our translators, unless indeed we suppose with Patrick that the true idea which they attached to the phrase is, “They did not cease all that day while they stood round about the tabernacle.” After all, a shade of doubt as to the genuine import of the phrase will still hang over it.

**Numbers 11:26 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 who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp.**

NET Numbers 11:26 But two men remained in the camp; one's name was Eldad, and the other's name was Medad. And the spirit rested on them. (Now they were among those in the registration, but had not gone to the tabernacle.) So they prophesied in the camp.

NLT Numbers 11:26 Two men, Eldad and Medad, had stayed behind in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but they had not gone out to the Tabernacle. Yet the Spirit rested upon them as well, so they prophesied there in the camp.

ESV Numbers 11:26 Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.

NIV Numbers 11:26 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.

- **had remained in the camp** Ex 3:11 4:13,14 1Sa 10:22 20:26 Jer 1:6 36:5
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### "UNOFFICIAL PROPHESYING"

**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** - Why there were not with the other 68 is not stated. One writer suggests "To show that the bestowal of the Spirit was an act of God unrelated to Moses' presence, the LORD placed the Spirit on two men ... Eldad and Medad, who had not joined the others at the tabernacle" (BKC)

**(now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent)** - That is they were number 69 and 70.

**and they prophesied in the camp** - The effect of the Spirit was no different on them.

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George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**But there remained two (of the) men in the camp.** That is, two out of the seventy elders before designated. This, however, does not appear in the wording of the original Hebrew, which has simply, “And there remained two men.” To intimate the true sense our translators have inserted the words “of the” before “men.” The reason of their withholding themselves from the meeting at the Tabernacle is not stated, but whatever it were, the circumstance gave occasion for a manifestation of the Lord's good pleasure, with which we should not otherwise have been favored. It is not improbable that as Saul, when the appointment was about to be made,

withdrew and “hid himself among the stuff,” so the persons here mentioned were kept back by a similar reserve or repugnancy. But the Lord by his Spirit found them out, and the divine influence soon showed its effects upon them. Though among “them that were written,” that is, designated, nominated, for the purpose, yet refusing to come they were seized with the spirit of prophecy and gave vent to it in the midst of the camp.

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### James Hastings - ELDAD AND MEDAD

1. The Israelites had been once more displaying suspicion and ingratitude. Turning with loathing from the manna, they whimpered, like spoilt children, for the fish and flesh they had enjoyed in Egypt, and murmured against God and against Moses. The patience of their leader completely broke down under this new provocation, so that he went so far as to accuse God Himself of being a hard taskmaster, who had laid too much upon him. With infinite forbearance allowance was made for the manner in which Divine counsel was graciously fulfilled: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” God dealt with His servant as a father at his best will deal with his child who runs to him, hurt and bruised, in a passion of tears. Instead of beginning with an angry rebuke, help and relief are first given, and then in a few calm words the needed counsel is proffered. It was in a spirit of patient love that God appointed seventy-two elders from among the people to help His over-wrought servant and share his heavy burden.

2. Seventy of the men thus appointed came together promptly, and were ranged in a semicircle before the tabernacle. Then, in the sight of all the people, the cloud descended, wrapped them all in impenetrable mist, as a sign that the chosen men were being mysteriously baptized with the Spirit, and when again they emerged they began to prophesy. It was the ancient counterpart of the day of Pentecost, when the disciples met, and the Spirit came upon them as a mighty, rushing wind, and they began to speak with other tongues, as men chosen and inspired by God.

¶ In the 25th verse of the eleventh chapter of Numbers, it is said that “the Lord took of the spirit that was upon Moses, and gave it unto the seventy elders,” Some conclude from this statement that, as a punishment for his intemperate prayer, the wisdom of Moses was thus lessened, while others were enriched at his expense. But wisdom, and all gifts similar to it, are not diminished by distribution. If we impart information, we do not lessen our own store of knowledge. If we give of our love lavishly, yet affection is not lessened by such outpouring. The spread of fire over what is inflammable increases its intensity. Though we light a thousand candles from one which burned alone at first, it still burns brightly as before. So is it with the Spirit of whose fulness we all receive. No Christian man is poorer because his brother is enriched with grace, nor was Moses. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.”

3. Two men, Eldad and Medad, although summoned with their brethren, did not come to the assembly at the tabernacle. For some reason unknown to us, they failed to put in an appearance at the critical time, when others of the elect were receiving the mysterious but efficient grace of the Spirit. Yet, at one and the same moment, they also were inspired while walking together, as they probably were doing, in some far-off part of the camp. To the amazement of the people, and doubtless to their own amazement too, they suddenly began to prophesy. Joshua exhibited some jealousy and suspicion, and would have silenced them, because the blessing had not come through Moses; but the great lawgiver, with characteristic insight and generosity, would not heed the request—“My lord Moses, forbid them.” Calmly, yet decisively, the answer rang out, “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.”

Three things are contained in these words

(1) By his reply to Joshua, Moses showed his true greatness of soul. He loves his people better than himself. The cause he has really at heart is the cause of Israel, not his own honour and dignity. In the “kingdom of priests” the more kings the better. What Moses was—a man filled with God’s Holy Spirit—that he desired all his people might be. The less he was separated from them by greater wisdom and goodness, the better he was pleased. The man of little mind works for his own advancement: he helps forward a cause, but it is partly that he may be known to have helped it, that he may become famous. He is envious of rivals, and wants to put a distance between himself and others. Not so Moses. He wants to draw up others to his own level. He would prefer to be one of many, rather than one above many. He is indifferent to his own renown, and anxious only for the well-being of his own people. He is willing to efface himself in his work. Hence his words contain a lesson to us all—a lesson to think of others more than of ourselves, to sink self in a common work, to strive for the success of the work rather than for personal fame.

¶ Dr. McLaren frequently referred to John the Baptist’s answer to the question “Who art thou?” “I am a voice,” as being the model for all time. Most truly he took to himself the advice he gave: “We must efface ourselves if we would proclaim Christ.”

¶ The most touching thing that has ever befallen me is the conduct of the Cambridge man who hoped to have been made Professor, when I was taken. He had for five years been preparing himself for it, and had written a book for the purpose. He is a simple student whose one aim in life it was, and who has no other prospect. All

this I did not know at the time; but he wrote to me immediately on my appointment, and I asked him to come and see me. He took to me, and has now formed a strong friendship for me. So far from bearing me a grudge, he says that my coming to Cambridge will be a greater boon to him than the Professorship. Where else are people so good and so unselfish? Still more wonderful, his wife agrees with him, and we are all fast friends.

(2) The man who is jealous of any infringement of his office when uncertified allies come into the field is convicted at once of thinking more of the distinction which office confers than of the work for the promotion of whose interests all office is constituted. Office is just the little circle of space made round a man, so that he may have elbow-room for the exercise of his gift. Office presupposes a gift, and a gift presupposes a work for the furtherance of which it has been bestowed. In God's plan, office exists for the sake of the gift, and the gift exists for the sake of the work; so that office is the least important thing of the three. The living organism always comes before the mere shell it inhabits. It is not the office that precedes and begets the gift, but the gift that creates the office; and both alike exist for the far-reaching ends that wait to be achieved. To discover, encourage, and attest a gift where it exists comes within the legitimate authority of the Church and its leaders; and perhaps in nine cases out of ten that is done. But in the tenth case the Church withholds its warranty and approval where the genuine gift exists, and in the next tenth case it certifies where there is no gift at all, and then claims that the mere empty shell of office must be respected for its own sake.

¶ A sixth hindrance is what I may call officialism, that is, a dependence for our work not on our subjective fitness, but upon official powers. It is certain that, as the objective is over-valued, the subjective is under-valued. It is curious that in the Anglican body, High Churchmen are dry, and Low Churchmen exalt their own persons. In the Catholic Church all priests are High Churchmen. And there is a danger of official assumption. But for this we should not have had the hatred and contempt of sacerdotalism. I am sorry to say that even good priests sometimes swagger; they think to magnify their office, but they be little themselves. This has been the cause of endless troubles in hospitals and workhouses. Unfortunately even good priests are not always refined, and they resent any hindrances in the way of their sacred office with want of self-control, which gains nothing, and often loses everything. The main contention is lost in a personal dispute. I have often said that our priests are always booted and spurred like cavalry officers in time of war. But they will not fight worse for being chivalrous and courteous.

(3) But the words are also notable in themselves, especially the second half of them: "Would that the Lord would put his spirit upon them." In the gift of this Spirit Moses perceives the highest well-being. When may we say that a man has received the Spirit of God? When he seems to us in all humility, and at however infinite a distance, to be like God; that is, when he is good and loving and wise. They who have the Divine Spirit are according to the highest Biblical teaching righteous and faithful, pious and understanding. Therefore the prayer of Moses may be the prayer for us all: "Would that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."

#### **Numbers 11:27 So a young man ran and told Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."**

NET Numbers 11:27 And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

NLT Numbers 11:27 A young man ran and reported to Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

ESV Numbers 11:27 And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

NIV Numbers 11:27 A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So a young man ran and told Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp-** So they too manifested evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit. And notice they were not disciplined for not being with the 68, so they clearly were not out of the Lord's will. Exactly why they were separate is not clear.

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#### **Numbers 11:27-29 Dr. Woodrow Kroll -- Zealous for What?**

How easy it is to misplace our zeal. Around 1420 A.D., "golfe" or "the Gouf" became so popular that King James II of Scotland feared the pastime placed the country at risk in its ongoing war with England. He reasoned that his men were spending too much time chasing the "golfe" ball and too little time practicing archery. Consequently the king persuaded his government to pass an act of parliament banning "golfe." Obviously, his zeal was misplaced, not to mention ineffective.

Joshua also had a misplaced zeal. As the assistant to Moses, he considered it his responsibility to make sure his master's power

and influence were not threatened. Since part of Moses' authority stemmed from the fact that God spoke through him, the thought of others prophesying or speaking for the Lord disturbed Joshua. In his enthusiasm to protect his master's position, he was ready to hinder the proclamation of God's Word.

Over the centuries, God has used many instruments to proclaim His Word. Sometimes these instruments possessed questionable motives. The apostle Paul noted that some "preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely" ([Phil. 1:16](#)). His conclusion? "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (v. 18).

Our zeal must primarily focus on the message, not the messenger. If the Word of God is being faithfully proclaimed, let's rejoice. God sometimes chooses the least likely to speak for Him. If someone is not a true spokesman for Him, God will take care of that. We need not worry.

Be zealous for the message; God will judge the messenger.

**Numbers 11:28 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them."**

NET Numbers 11:28 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his choice young men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!"

NLT Numbers 11:28 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' assistant since his youth, protested, "Moses, my master, make them stop!"

ESV Numbers 11:28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them."

NIV Numbers 11:28 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!"

- **Joshua:** Ex 17:9
- **My lord:** Mk 9:38,39 Lu 9:49,50 Joh 3:26
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JOSHUA THE SERVANT OF MOSES

**Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them-** Joshua's request reminds us of Jesus' disciples in Mark 9

John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "**Do not hinder him**, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 "For he who is not against us is for us. 41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:38-41+)

**NET Note** - The effort of Joshua is to protect Moses' prerogative as leader by stopping these men in the camp from prophesying. Joshua did not understand the significance in the LORD's plan to let other share the burden of leadership.

**LASB** - The disciples wanted Jesus to forbid others to drive out demons because they were not part of the disciples' group. But this type of narrow attitude was condemned by both Moses and Jesus. Beware of putting limits on God-he can work through whomever he chooses.

**Wiersbe** - Joshua was upset about their receiving the Spirit but Moses was grateful. He seems to have regained his usual composure and attitude of generosity when he said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" Moses wasn't the only servant of God to face this problem of "spiritual exclusiveness." John the Baptist faced it (John 3:26-30), and so did Jesus (Luke 9:46-50) and Paul (Phil. 1:15-18). However, Joshua felt that Moses and God were losing something by allowing these two men to receive the Spirit. The first time we meet Joshua in Scripture, he is leading the army of Israel in victory over the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-16). Then we see him on Mount Sinai with Moses (Ex 24:13; 32:17), and now we learn that he is Moses' servant (Num. 11:28). Later, he will become Moses' successor.

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**And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, (one) of his young men, answered, etc.** Heb. mibbehoorauv, of his chosen ones. It is probable he was one of the “able men” whom Moses chose at the suggestion of Jethro to preside over certain classified portions of the people, Ex. 18:25. The term there employed is yibhar, chose, and mibbehor, chosen, is from the same root.

**My lord Moses, forbid them.** Targ. Jon. “My lord Moses, request mercy from before the Lord, and forbid them the spirit of prophecy.” Joshua, it would seem, spoke from a commendable zeal for the honor of Moses, but rashly and precipitately. He no doubt thought that these men’s prophesying or teaching in the camp tended to make those gifts common, and thus disparage Moses in the eyes of the people; or, he may have thought the proceeding was schismatic, as being calculated to divert the people from the Tabernacle, the appointed place of meeting, where the rest of the seventy elders were assembled. The prompting under which he acted seems to have been very similar to that which moved the disciples in forbidding one to cast out devils in Christ’s name because he followed not with them, Luke 9:49, 50, Mark 9:50. And it would appear from the answer both of Moses and of our Lord, that some degree of jealousy rested in the heart of Joshua, as well as of the disciples.

**Numbers 11:29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"**

NET Numbers 11:29 Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for me? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

NLT Numbers 11:29 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 upon them all!"

ESV Numbers 11:29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

NIV Numbers 11:29 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!"

- **Are you jealous:** 1Co 3:3,21 13:4 Php 2:3 Jas 3:14,15 4:5 5:9 1Pe 2:1
- **would:** Ac 26:29 1Co 14:5 Php 1:15-18
- **that the:** Mt 9:37,38 Lu 10:2
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MISPLACED LOYALTY OF JOSHUA

**But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake?"** - We see a similar mistaken reaction by Jesus' disciples James and John and Jesus had to rebuke them,

John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.” But Jesus said to him, “Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you.” (Lk.9:49,50+)

**NET Note** - The Piel participle  $\text{מִבְּהוֹרָא}$  (méqanne’) serves as a verb here in this interrogative sentence. The word means “to be jealous; to be envious.” That can be in a good sense, such as with the translation “zeal,” or it can be in a negative sense as here. Joshua’s apparent “zeal” is questioned by Moses—was he zealous/envious for Moses sake, or for some other reason?

**Wiersbe** - Moses manifested no envy toward the two men empowered by the Spirit to prophesy. This is the sign of a great man. Moses certainly had his days of discouragement, as we all do, but he was a man of God in spite of his failings. (Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines)

**Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them-** "Moses expresses here the wish that the whole nation would have that portion of the Spirit. The new covenant, of course, would turn Moses’ wish into a certainty."

**Currid** - Moses then speaks, using an optative clause (a mood expressing wish or desire): ‘Would that ...!’ He truly desires that all God’s people should have the divine spirit upon them. Thus Moses is humble about his leadership position and he does not lord it

over the people (see Nu 12:3). ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

**LASB** - Moses was looking forward to the day when all God's people would experience the pouring out of God's Spirit. The prophet Joel recorded God's promise to pour out his Spirit on all believers (Joel 2:28, 29), and this was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). Believers today can be sure that they have the Holy Spirit when they become Christians (Romans 8:9). We also can pray to live by the Holy Spirit's power (Galatians 5:16-26). If you wish to have the Holy Spirit's power, pray for him to fill your life with his presence and strengthen you to follow Christ.

**Brian Bell** - Remember at this time in Israel's history, Moses was the only prophet among the people.. The change was a great relief to Moses, but not to his aide, Joshua.. In his eyes, those 2 elders prophesying in the camp represented a challenge to Moses leadership. But Moses looked on God's activity in the lives of others with Joy rather than Jealousy & was grateful for the mercy God had shown them. ([Numbers 11](#))

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### **George Bush** [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Enviest thou for my sake?** Rather, "Art thou jealous, or zealous, for my sake?" This is the force of the original term which is employed to signify a fervent or highly excited state of jealous, envious, or indignant feeling. Moses knew the men better, and was aware of the true source of their inspiration; consequently he designed to administer a gentle rebuke to Joshua for giving way to too earnest a spirit of zealous or jealous regard for his honor. He intimates, therefore, that the number, be it ever so great, of those who were possessed of such extraordinary endowments was so far from being a source of uneasiness to him that he rejoiced in it, and heartily wished there were more of them. We derive from the words of Moses the practical intimation that we are not secretly to grieve at the gifts, graces, or usefulness of others; that we are not to be unduly excited at the weaknesses or infirmities of others; and that we are not to be forward to condemn and silence those that differ from us, as if they did not follow the Lord because they do not follow him with us. "Shall we reject those whom Christ hath owned, or restrain any from doing good because they are not in every thing of our mind?"—Henry.

**That the Lord would put his spirit upon them.** That is, the gifts of his spirit. Chald. "His spirit of prophecy." Paul, in like manner, wished that all the church could "prophesy," saying, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy," 1 Cor. 14:1.

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### **F B Meyer - Numbers 11:29 Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets! (R.V.)**

This one saying proves the incomparable greatness of Moses' character. Little souls are monopolists. They like to be good and gifted, because it gives them a kind of superiority to others; but they dislike to see a leveling-up process at work by which the Eldads and Medads are lifted to stand by their side.

This was the mistake of Joshua. — When he heard that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them!" But he was immature, a saint in the process of manufacture, and smitten with jealousy, for the sake of his master and friend.

This was the complaint of John's disciples, when they saw the crowds ebbing away from their great teacher.

This was the quarrel of the Pharisees, that Jesus made religion so cheap and accessible to all, that even the publicans and sinners received his priceless wares.

But when a man is really great and good, he longs that all should be as he is, and better; he takes a deep delight in the spread of vital godliness; he is glad when others are endowed with greater gifts than himself, that they may make the Gospel better known than he could ever do; he is content to decrease, if Christ may only increase; he is willing that affliction should be added to his bonds, if only Christ may be magnified; he prays that the Lord would put his Spirit on all his people. This is very unnatural to any of us; but God, the Holy Spirit, waits to baptize us even into this, and to make the glory of God the object of our life. Make haste, O blessed Paraclete, and do this for me!

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### **Francis Schaeffer - Prophesying in the Camp - Joshua is next mentioned in an intriguing passage in Numbers: (Num. 11:24–29).**

Joshua had another lesson to learn, and a very serious one: God's glory is to come first. There is a great difference between leadership and self-aggrandizement. There is to be leadership among the people of God, according to the gifts He bestows, but there is not to be glorification of oneself or other men. Joshua asked that Eldad and Medad be forbidden to prophesy because they had not come before Moses in the tabernacle; but Moses answered magnificently, "Don't envy for my sake." Maybe Moses' response is one of the reasons the Bible says that Moses was a meek man. Though Moses was such a tremendous leader, he would not



tolerate Joshua's glorifying him.

The young man Joshua was learning a lesson that anybody who is ever going to be worth anything in leadership must learn. None of us learns it completely, of course, and yet we must master it if we are going to be of any use in the Church of God. A leader must never confuse himself with God. When a person begins to exercise certain gifts and God brings him to a place of leadership in the Church of Christ, how easy it is to do this. Yet this is the destruction of all true spiritual leadership.

Joshua also had to learn that a person cannot bind God with man-made rules. Joshua had a man-made rule: God really should not have placed His Spirit on the two men in the camp. This did not fit into Joshua's concept of what was good and proper. God has bound Himself with rules based on his own character, which He will never break; but men (including God's leaders) must never try to bind Him with their own rules. He will not keep these rules.

**Numbers 11:30 Then Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.**

NET Numbers 11:30 Then Moses returned to the camp along with the elders of Israel.

NLT Numbers 11:30 Then Moses returned to the camp with the elders of Israel.

ESV Numbers 11:30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

NIV Numbers 11:30 Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel-** So the "Tent of Meeting" they were at was apparently distinct from the Tabernacle proper.

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**George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)**

**And Moses gat himself into the camp.** Heb. "Was gathered;" implying that he and the elders, now brought under a special influence from above, were moved as in a kind of passive way, to convey themselves from the Tabernacle into the midst of the camp, there to enter immediately upon the administration to which they had been called. The original word is the same with that which is applied, ch. 12:14, 15, to Miriam, and rendered in the one case "received in," and in the other "brought in."

**Numbers 11:31 Now there went forth a wind from the LORD and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground.**

NET Numbers 11:31 Now a wind went out from the LORD and brought quail from the sea, and let them fall 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 three feet high on the surface of the ground.

NLT Numbers 11:31 Now the LORD sent a wind that brought quail from the sea and let them fall all around the camp. For miles in every direction there were quail flying about three feet above the ground.

ESV Numbers 11:31 Then a wind from the LORD sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the ground.

NIV Numbers 11:31 Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction.

KJV Numbers 11:31 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.

YLT Numbers 11:31 And a spirit hath journeyed from Jehovah, and cutteth off quails from the sea, and leaveth by the camp, as a day's journey here, and as a day's journey there, round about the camp, and about two

cubits, on the face of the land.

LXE Numbers 11:31 And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails over from the sea; and it brought them down upon the camp a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on that side, round about the camp, as it were two cubits from the earth.

ASV Numbers 11:31 And there went forth a wind from Jehovah, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the earth.

CSB Numbers 11:31 A wind sent by the LORD came up and blew quail in from the sea; it dropped them at the camp all around, three feet off the ground, about a day's journey in every direction.

NKJ Numbers 11:31 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.

NRS Numbers 11:31 Then a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quails from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, about two cubits deep on the ground.

NAB Numbers 11:31 There arose a wind sent by the LORD, that drove in quail from the sea and brought them down over the camp site at a height of two cubits from the ground for the distance of a day's journey all around the camp.

NJB Numbers 11:31 A wind, sent by Yahweh, started blowing from the sea bringing quails which it deposited on the camp. They lay for a distance of a day's march either side of the camp, two cubits thick on the ground.

GWN Numbers 11:31 The LORD sent a wind from the sea that brought quails and dropped them all around the camp. There were quails on the ground about three feet deep as far as you could walk in a day in any direction.

- a wind: Ex 10:13,19 15:10 Ps 135:7
- and brought: Ex 16:13 Ps 78:26-29 105:40
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

QUAIL FROM REGION OF GULF OF AQABAH

## KNEE DEEP IN BIRDS!

**Now there went forth a wind from the LORD-** Wind is the Hebrew word [ruach/ruah](#) which is used 6 times in 5 verses in Numbers 11 (Nu 11:17, 25, 26, 29, 31), all the uses prior to Nu 11:31 being translated as **Spirit**. As **Constable** says "The **Spirit** (Heb. ruah) of Yahweh settled the leadership problem (Nu 11:29), and now the **wind** (Heb. ruah) from Yahweh would solve the food problem (Nu 11:31) (**ED: AND I MIGHT ADD "WOULD SOLVE THE "GRUMBLING SPIRIT" PROBLEM!**)

**NET Note** - "The irony in this chapter is expressed in part by the use of the word רוח (ruakh). In the last episode it clearly meant the **Spirit** of the LORD that empowered the men for their spiritual service. But here the word is "**wind**." Both the spiritual service and the judgment come from God."

**NET Note** on **went forth** - means "burst forth" or "sprang up." See the ways it is used in Gen 33:12, Jdg 16:3, 14; Isa 33:20.

**and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp - Constable** has an interesting comment noting that "The wind was from the southeast (Ps. 78:26) and apparently blew these quails from the [Gulf of Aqabah](#) (Nu 11:31–34). Normally quails migrated to the **northeast**, from central Africa, so the direction from which these quails came was an abnormal (SUPERNATURAL) provision of the Lord."

**Merrill** adds "The normal flight pattern of these quail to this day is northeasterly, from the interior of Africa. The wind must have been from the southeast, a most unusual phenomenon, and drove the birds northwest across the Sinai." (BKC)

**NET Note** "The "quail" ordinarily cross the Sinai at various times of the year, but what is described here is not the natural phenomenon. Biblical scholars looking for natural explanations usually note that these birds fly at a low height and can be swatted down easily. But the description here is more of a supernatural supply and provision"

**About a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side** In the OT a [day's journey](#) on foot was about 20-25 miles, so that this would have been a phenomenal number of quail!

**All around the camp and about two cubits deep on the surface of the ground**- About 18 inches of quail!

**Henry Morris** - Critics contend this miracle of the quail, sent in response to the complaint of the people's desire for flesh to eat (Numbers 11:4), is physically absurd. The picture, however, is not what it seems at first: quail stacked three feet high for miles all around. The language permits the more understandable rendering that the quail were easily accessible, flying two cubits above the ground. This was the second time God had providentially directed quail to the camp in great numbers (Exodus 16:13). ([Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

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**George Bush** [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

### **The Quails brought**

**And there went forth a wind from the Lord.** Heb. *ve-ruah nâsa*, and a wind broke up; that is, was let forth with violence, as seems to be implied by the use of a term which is ordinarily applied to the striking of tents preparatory to departure, which was usually executed no doubt with very considerable dispatch. The word for "wind" is the same with that employed above to signify "spirit," and there may have been an allusion intended to the contrast between the spiritual influence imparted to the elders on this occasion, and that violent inflation from the Lord which brought on the quails, and thus spent itself eventually upon the people. The same word occurs in relation to the same event, Ps. 78:26-28, "He caused an east wind to blow (Heb. *yissa*) in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations." The Lord, even in working miracles, does not always dispense with the use of means. He could easily have commanded the appearance of the quails without the agency of the wind, but it seemed good to his wisdom to make one physical power subordinate to another.

**And brought quails from the sea.** That is, from across the sea, or from the direction of the sea, not out of the waters. They came from the African side of the Red Sea. Heb. *selâv*, a term which Bochart traces to *shâlâh*, which signifies to live peacefully, or to abound, because in warm countries no bird is more abundant. It is more probable, however, that the Hebrew name refers to the foolish and ruinous security in which the quail is known to indulge. When she lights upon a field abounding in grain, she resigns herself to the power of appetite without fear or suspicion. Absorbed entirely in the enjoyment of the moment, she betrays herself with her incessant singing, and is easily enticed into the snare of the fowler. The Israelites, in feeding upon them, showed a similar recklessness, and as Ephraim is compared by the prophet, Hos. 7:11, to "a silly dove without heart," i. e. without understanding, so may they be compared to "a silly quail without heart." "These birds," says Kitto, "as well as the way of taking and preparing them, must have been well known to the Israelites while in Egypt. At the proper season these migratory birds resorted to Egypt in such vast flocks, that even the dense population of Egypt was unable to consume them while fresh, but they salted and dried great quantities for future use. It is still the same in those countries; and modern travellers, on witnessing the incredible numbers of these birds, have expressed their conviction that, as the text describes, such a suitable wind as the Almighty sent, could only have been necessary to furnish even the great Hebrew host with a sufficient supply of quails to last for a month."—Pict. Bible. Ludolph, in his History of Ethiopia, who is followed by Saurin, Bp. Patrick, and others, endeavors to make out that the original term denotes locusts instead of quails, but the current of authority goes decidedly in favor of the latter rendering. The following considerations serve to confirm it. (1.) The term *selâv* nowhere else in the sacred volume signifies the locust, nor does the root from which it comes favor this interpretation, for no creature is more restless than the locust. Besides, the creature which in one passage is called *selâv* is called *oph*, bird, in another; but the latter term properly denotes the fowls of heaven and not winged insects. Ps. 78:27, "He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls (Heb. *oph canaph*, fowl of wing) like as the sand of the sea." (2.) It does not appear that insects are ever called in Scripture *oph canaph*. *Canaph* properly signifies a wing, which may be contracted or expanded, for the purpose of covering and protecting the body; which does not seem to accord with the wings of insect tribes. (3.) On the hypothesis of Ludolph, it may be considered as an inexplicable circumstance that Moses, in a country swarming with locusts, did not seem to think of them, when he asked with surprise: "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. 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?" Moses knew that the innumerable swarms of locusts which devour the land of Egypt and the surrounding countries, were the sport of every wind, and that a steady gale could waft as many into the desert, as would suffice all the thousands of Israel. Why then did he not mention the locusts, and present his supplication for a favorable breeze? This circumstance cannot be accounted for, but on the supposition that locusts were not the object of their desire, nor in the contemplation of Jehovah. We rest, therefore, in the conclusion. that quails and not locusts are intended by the sacred writer.

**Let (them) fall by the camp.** Heb. *yittash*, be spread abroad, diffused. The word occurs 1 Sam. 30:16, "And when he had brought

him down, behold they (the company) were spread abroad (Heb. netushim) upon all the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing," etc.

**A day's journey.** Heb. "The way of day." And so in the next clause. The phrase is somewhat ambiguous, as we are not informed whether the day's journey means the space over which an individual could travel in one day, in which case it would be much greater—or the whole army could traverse, which would be much less. If the journey of an individual is intended, it might be about thirty miles; but if the sacred historian refers to the whole army, a third part of this space is as much as they could march in one day in the sandy desert, under a vertical sun. In the opinion of Bochart, this immense cloud of quails covered a space of at least forty miles' diameter; for a day's journey is at least twenty miles. Ludolph thinks, it ought to be reduced to sixteen miles; and others, to half that number, because, Moses refers to the march of Israel through the desert, encumbered with their women and children, their flocks and herds, and the baggage of the whole nation; which must have greatly retarded their movements, and rendered the short distance of eight miles more than sufficient for a journey of one day. It is equally doubtful, whether the distance mentioned by Moses, must be measured from the centre or from the extremities of the encampment; it is certain, however, that he intends to state the countless numbers of these birds which fell around the tents of Israel.

**And as it were two cubits (high) upon the face of the earth.** The first impression produced by these words would undoubtedly be, that the quails fell in such abundance that they were actually heaped up on the surface of the earth to the height of two cubits. But the Hebrew admits of another rendering, which we, with Mr. Kitto, are inclined to adopt, especially as it has the sanction of Jarchi, a Jewish commentator:—"They flew so high as against a man's heart, that he was not fatigued in getting them, either by reaching high or stooping low." So also the Vulg. "And they flew in the air two cubits high above the ground." But more to the purpose is the following note from the "Pictorial Bible." "As we understand, it would seem that the birds were so exhausted, or rather they were so strictly kept by the Divine power within the limit of a day's journey from the camp, that even when roused or attempting flight, they could not rise more than three feet from the ground, and were thus easily caught by nets or by the hand.... In support of the view we have been led to take, we may add, that if the birds had lain two cubits deep upon the ground, the far greater part of them must have been dead before they could have been collected, and would therefore have been unfit for food, since the Israelites could eat nothing that had died of suffocation, or the blood of which had not been poured out."

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**Irving Jensen** has an interesting observation - The next events were a sequence of miracle upon miracle, explained in no other way:

- (1) A miraculous wind (11:31).
- (2) Quails from the sea area, probably from the Arabian Gulf to the southeast (11:31).
- (3) The quails dropped at the camp (11:31).
- (4) The miraculous number of quails (11:31, 32), blown off normal course in their migration, so that the birds flew waist high (three feet) above the surface of the earth. The flight lasted so long that the Israelites stood for two days and a night knocking down the quails. To keep them from spoiling the quails were spread about the camp to dry in the sun (11:32b).
- (5) The climactic miracle of judgment, in which God smote a number of the people with a very great plague (11:33). This is the first major decimation of the journeying host.

If the lesson of murmuring was not fully learned in this judgment, the place itself might be a reminder in days to come, for the people called it Kibroth-hattaavah, meaning "the graves of greediness." (Everyman's Bible Commentary - Numbers)

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**Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask - NUMBERS 11:31–34**—How could God bring judgment on the people for eating the quail that He provided?

**PROBLEM:** God miraculously provided quail for the people to eat. However, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against them, and He struck them with a great plague so that many of them died (v. 33). How could the wrath of God be aroused against the people for eating the very meat that He had miraculously provided?

**SOLUTION:** It is necessary to see the judgment of God in light of events which led up to it. In Numbers 11:1–3, we find that the people of God began to complain. In fact, the text indicates that they were acting like people who had suffered some misfortune. Numbers 11:1 says, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord." This was a direct rejection of God's provisions for them. They had apparently forgotten the bondage from which they had been rescued. This attitude displeased God, and He brought judgment upon them as a disciplinary act.

In verse 4, the people began to complain again because they wanted meat to eat instead of the manna which God was providing for them. They had apparently not learned the lesson, and their attitude displeased God again. In fact, verse 10 says, "Moses also was displeased." God brought disciplinary judgment upon them again, this time by giving them exactly what they asked for. In

response to their disobedient and ungrateful attitude, God told Moses to tell the people, "Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat ... 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?' " (Num. 11:18–20)

Even after this warning they did not get the point. When God brought the quail, verse 32 says, "And the people stayed up all that day, all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail." The lust and unrepentant attitude of the people brought the judgment of God upon them. Verse 34 states, "So He called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving." So, God did not bring judgment on the people for eating the quail, but because of their lustful and ungrateful hearts.

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#### Related Resources:

- [What were the quail mentioned in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Quail](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Quail](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Quail](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Quail](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Quail](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Quail](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Quail](#)

**Numbers 11:32 The people spent all day and 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.**

NET Numbers 11:32 And the people stayed up all that day, all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail. The one who gathered the least gathered ten homers, and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

NLT Numbers 11:32 So the people went out and caught quail all that day and throughout the night and all the next day, too. No one gathered less than fifty bushels! They spread the quail all around the camp to dry.

ESV Numbers 11:32 And the people rose all that day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

NIV Numbers 11:32 All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp.

- homers: Ex 16:36 Eze 45:11
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

QUAIL SEASON!

### GATHERING QUAIL

**The people spent all day and all night and all the next day** - When they gathered manna as God had ordained, they only gathered in the day but here their selfish desires motivated gathering all day! They must have had some huge freezers! (Just joking). Think of the mindset -- desert heat and dead quail! That is a formula for a stench!

**THOUGHT** - It took only a brief time each morning to gather enough manna to sustain them for the day, but the Jews were willing to spend two days and a night getting meat to satisfy their carnal appetites. Unspiritual people in churches spend time, money, and energy on things that satisfy their own desires, but they would never make those sacrifices just to please God and do His will. (Wiersbe)

**and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers)**- One homer is about 11 bushels (from 500 to over 1000 gallons of quail). This is another manifestation of the greedy lusts of their flesh. They failed to learn that God could provide daily and in this case He had promised a month's worth.

God sometimes answers our prayers,

and we find that the answer is not a blessing at all!

--Warren Wiersbe

**and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp** - "Although it is hard to translate the expression, it indicates that they spread these quail out all over the area. The vision of them spread all over was evidence of God's abundant provision for their needs." ([NET Note](#))

**Currid** - Perhaps what they are doing is curing the birds by drying them in the sun, which is an activity known from the ancient Near East. ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And the people stood up all that day**, etc. Rather, "rose up" (Heb. *yâkom*); that is, they engaged earnestly in the work, and were intent upon gathering the fowls for thirty-six hours. This is not unfrequently the import of the original term.

**He that gathered least gathered ten homers** Or, "ten heaps," as the original word homer is properly distinguished from omer, a much smaller measure, and from hamor, an ass, or the load that was commonly laid upon that animal. But some writers make it equal to the cor, which is more than double the weight, and is the common load of a camel. But it was not necessary that every one should gather ten camel loads of quails; for God had promised his people flesh for a month, and would have fulfilled his promise had he bestowed on every individual the third part of a cor, or camel's burden. The truth of this assertion will appear, when it is considered, that every Israelite received for his daily subsistence, an omer of manna, which is the tenth part of an ephah. But an ephah is the tenth part of a cor; and by consequence, a cor contains an hundred omers. If then, an omer is sufficient for one day, a cor must be sufficient for an hundred days, that is, for more than three months. Hence, if every Israelite gathered ten cors of quails, they collected thirty times more than God had promised. Bochart endeavors to remove this difficulty, by observing, that Moses, in this verse, speaks only of the heads of families, leaving out of his enumeration, the women, children, and slaves. But it is evident, that Moses did not use the word people, in this restricted sense; for he states, that the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people that gathered the quails. Dissatisfied, therefore, with this solution, Bochart proposes another with which he is better pleased: The ten homers are not ten cors, but ten heaps; for in this sense, the word is sometimes used. Thus, in the prophecy of Habakkuk, ch. 3:15, homer signifies a heap of many waters; and in the book of Exodus, ch. 8:14, a heap of frogs. Onkelos and other interpreters accordingly render it in this passage, ten heaps. If this be admitted, Moses has not determined the quantity of these birds which every one gathered; but only says, that every one at least gathered ten heaps, that is, by a familiar phrase among the Hebrews, a very great number; for ten is often used in Scripture for many. This version ought, perhaps, to be preferred, both on account of what has been already stated, and because the cor is a measure of corn, not of flesh. The view now given is of some value; for if every Israelite gathered ten cors of quails, the number of these birds must have been so great as to exceed all belief. But it has been shown, that instead of ten cors, an Israelite did not collect and use the third part of one. It is not meant to limit the power of God; but surely no violence should be offered to human belief, by requiring more from it, than God has revealed in his word. The quantities collected must have been at any rate immense, and give new force to the language of the Psalmist, Ps. 78:27, "He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea." In indulging themselves in feasting upon this new luxury it is evident that their appetites scarce knew bounds. The consequence was what might be anticipated; they ate to surfeiting, and the surfeiting was fatal.

**And they spread (them) all abroad round about the camp.** Heb. "Spread for themselves a spreading." Evidently implying that they were thus spread in order to be dried in the sun for preservation. "This is the first indication in Scripture of animal food being prepared so as to be preserved for future occasions. Our earliest information concerning the Egyptians describes them as salting and drying, for future use, great quantities of fish and fowl. A nomade people, as the Hebrews were when they went down to Egypt, never think of any such process, even at the present day. It is therefore natural to conclude that they learnt this simple and useful art from the Egyptians. We are disposed to conclude with Calmet (in his note on the place), that the Hebrews salted their quails before they dried them. We have here, then, the earliest indication of processes, the benefits resulting from which have become so diffused and familiar, that it costs an effort of recollection to recognize them as benefits."—Pict. Bible.

**Numbers 11:33 While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague.**

NET Numbers 11:33 But while the meat was still between their teeth, before they chewed it, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.

NLT Numbers 11:33 But while they were gorging themselves on the meat-- while it was still in their mouths--

the anger of the LORD blazed against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague.

ESV Numbers 11:33 While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck down the people with a very great plague.

NIV Numbers 11:33 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.

- And while: Ps 78:30,31 Ps 106:12-15
- smote: Nu 16:49 25:9 De 28:27
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

(Ps 106:12-15) when they believed His words; They sang His praise. 13 They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, 14 But craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert. 15 **So He gave them their request, But sent a wasting disease** (cf Isa 10:16+ = "will send a wasting disease") **among them.** ("but sent leanness into their soul" = Ps 106:15KJV)

**Spurgeon - He gave them their request** - Prayer may be answered in anger and denied in love. That God gives a man his desire is no proof that he is the object of divine favour, everything depends upon what that desire is. **But sent leanness into their soul.** Ah, that "but!" It embittered all. The meat was poison to them when it came without a blessing; whatever it might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the soul lean. If we must know scantiness, may God grant it may not be scantiness of soul: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner. To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase; but to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer! The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. We fret and fume till we have our desire, and then we have to fret still more because the attainment of it ends in bitter disappointment.

### GOD SENT A SEVERE PLAGUE!

**While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed** - This was not "food poisoning" because they did not even have time to swallow. This was a supernatural manifestation of the anger of Jehovah!

**THOUGHT** - Don't miss the principle clearly taught here -- many times when God judges people or a nation, He allows them to have their own way, allowing them to "satisfy" the lusts of their flesh. We see this in Romans 1 (see Ro 1:24, 26, 28) where three times God gave them over to their sinful desires! I personally fear for America, that God may be on the verge of allowing Romans 1 to take effect in our society which is becoming increasingly anti-God. You might take a few moments to read Ro 1:16-32 and pay special attention to Romans 1:28, the third divine "giving over." What do the people do in that passage? What is God's response? What is a depraved mind? Read the description of a depraved mind in Ro 1:28b, and Ro 1:29-32 and ask God to give you a continuing strong desire to pray for a Spirit wrought, Word centered, God glorifying, Christ exalting revival to America while there is still time. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people** - This is the third time the anger of the LORD is kindled against His chosen people (see Nu 11:1<sup>±</sup>, Nu 11:10<sup>±</sup>). He shows no partiality when it comes to sin. Someone must pay and pay they did with a severe plague!

**and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague** - Literally "a stroke." In fulfillment of His Words in Nu 11:20.

**John Currid** - In an ironic sense, this 'plague' is to remind Israel of Egypt. A cognate of this word is used specifically of the ten plagues in Egypt (Exod. 3:20; 9:15; 1 Sam. 4:8). The Israelites are craving Egypt (Nu 11:4-6), and so God is giving it to them! ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

**Brian Bell** - God's mercy to Moses, was tempered with judgment when it came to the complainers. You want meat...I'll give you meat! Wind-borne quail blew in from the sea. A 36 hour quail bash! While the meat was still in their teeth - i.e. Before it was chewed. 1. A plague hit the people who rejected Yahweh. Here a principle emerges which is of perpetual application & importance! **There are times when God grants an unwarranted request, in order that men may learn through experience the folly of their**

**desires.** We as parents have done the same to teach our children an important lesson. We may get what we wanted, but it doesn't satisfy. ([Numbers 11](#))

**Henry Morris** - the wrath of the LORD. In Exodus 16:11-13, the Lord had graciously supplied quail when the people complained, and He did not rebuke them for questioning Him. Now, however, there was no excuse for their lack of faith. He had also given them the law since that first experience, and they had covenanted to obey it. Thus discipline was doubly justified at this point. ([Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

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### **George Bush** [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**Ere it was chewed.** Heb. *terem yikkârêth*, ere it was cut off; which Pool and others understand of the supply of quails—before it ceased at the end of the month. Thus Joel 1:5, "Howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off (Heb. *nikrath*) from your mouth," that is, taken away, made to cease. So also the Vulg. "As yet the flesh was between their teeth, neither had that kind of meat failed." Yet the present rendering is admissible, though not we think quite so probable, as the term nowhere else occurs in the sense of chewing. The Psalmist thus alludes to this portion of the sacred history:—"So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lusts. But while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel;" where it is observable, that the original word for "chosen" (*bahurim*) is the same with that rendered "young men," v. 19.

**The Lord smote the people with a very great plague.** Heb. "Smote with a very great smiting." "With a very great slaughter."—Cov., Mat. The term "plague" in our translation is of very indefinite import, equivalent to stroke or judgment. It was doubtless some kind of bodily disease or pestilence, the legitimate effect of their surfeit. As Attersoll remarks, "their sweet meat had sour sauce."

**Numbers 11:34** So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had been greedy.

NET Numbers 11:34 So the name of that place was called Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people that craved different food.

NLT Numbers 11:34 So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah (which means "graves of gluttony") because there they buried the people who had craved meat from Egypt.

ESV Numbers 11:34 Therefore the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had the craving.

NIV Numbers 11:34 Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages: Psalm 78 gives us an excellent "commentary" on these final passages in Numbers 11...**

Psalms 78:26-31<sup>±</sup> He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens And by His power He directed the south wind. 27 When He rained meat upon them like the dust, Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas, 28 Then He let them fall in the midst of their camp, Round about their dwellings. 29 So they ate and were well filled, And their desire He gave to them. 30 Before they had satisfied their desire, While their food was in their mouths, 31 The anger of God rose against them And killed some of their stoutest ones, And subdued the choice men of Israel.

**Spurgeon - He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.** He is Lord Paramount, above the prince of the power of the air: storms arise and tempests blow at his command. Winds sleep till God arouses them, and then, like Samuel, each one answers, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

**And by his power he brought in the south wind.** Either these winds followed each other, and so blew the birds in the desired direction, or else they combined to form a south east wind; in either case they fulfilled the design of the Lord, and illustrated his supreme and universal power. If one wind will not serve, another shall; and if need be, they shall both blow at once. We speak of *fickle* winds, but their obedience to their Lord is such that they deserve a better word. If we ourselves were half as obedient as the winds, we should be far superior to what we are now.



**He rained flesh also upon them as dust.** First he rained bread and then flesh, when he might have rained fire and brimstone. The words indicate the speed, and the abundance of the descending quails.

**And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; there was no counting them.** By a remarkable providence, if not by miracle, enormous numbers of migratory birds were caused to alight around the tents of the tribes. It was, however, a doubtful blessing, as easily acquired and super abounding riches generally are. The Lord save us from meat which is seasoned with divine wrath.

**So they did eat, and were well filled.** They greedily devoured the birds, even to repletion. The Lord shewed them that he could "provide flesh for his people, "even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire it is disappointed, and by the way of satiety arrive at distaste. First the food satiates, then it nauseates.

**For he gave them their own desire.** They were filled with their own ways. The flesh meat was unhealthy for them, but as they cried for it they had it, and a curse with it. O my God, deny me my most urgent prayers sooner than answer them in displeasure. Better hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be well filled with sin's dainties.

**And he let it fall in the midst of their camp.** They had no journey to make; they had clamoured for flesh, and it almost flew into their mouths,

**round about their habitations.** This made them glad for the moment, but they knew not that mercies can be sent in anger, else they had trembled at sight of the good things which they had lusted after.

**They were not estranged from their lust.** Lust grows upon that which it feeds on. If sick of too much flesh, yet men grow not weary of lust, they change the object, and go on lusting still. When one sin is proved to be a bitterness, men do not desist, but pursue another iniquity. If, like Jehu, they turn from Baal, they fall to worshipping the calves of Bethel.

**But while their meat was yet in their mouths,** before they could digest their coveted meat, it turned to their destruction.

**The wrath of God came upon them before they could swallow their first meal of flesh.** Short was the pleasure, sudden was the doom. The festival ended in a funeral.

**And slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.** Perhaps these were the ringleaders in the lusting; they are first in the punishment. God's justice has no respect of persons, the strong and the valiant fall as well as the weak and the mean. What they ate on earth they digested in hell, as many have done since. How soon they died, though they felt not the edge of the sword! How terrible was the havoc, though not amid the din of battle! My soul, see here the danger of gratified passions; they are the janitors of hell. When the Lord's people hunger God loves them; Lazarus is his beloved, though he pines upon crumbs; but when he fattens the wicked he abhors them; Dives is hated of heaven when he fares sumptuously every day. We must never dare to judge men's happiness by their tables, the heart is the place to look at. The poorest starveling believer is more to be envied than the most full fleshed of the favourites of the world. Better be God's dog than the devil's darling.

## **GRAVES OF ONES WHO CRAVED**

**So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah-** "Graves of craving" ("Graves of Lust!")

**THOUGHT** - How many men and women have been buried in the "graves of lust?" Sadly this is rhetorical question, because the answer is FAR TOO MANY!

**because** - Explains both the Hebrew name and the reason for the name.

**there they buried the people who had been greedy** - Paul gives an excellent "commentary" stating "Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved." (1 Cor.10:6) The minds of the Israelites were governed by their bellies. They were "set on the flesh" as Paul would later write in Romans.

For the mind set on the flesh is death,  
but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

-- Romans 8:6+

This passage reminds me of Paul's words in Philippians 3

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Php 3:18-19+)

**Henry Morris** - The name "Kibroth Hattaavah" literally means "graves of craving"; it refers to the burial of those who complained and died in the fire of the Lord (Nu 11:1). ([Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

**NET Note** adds - The name "the graves of the ones who craved" is again explained by a wordplay, a popular etymology. In Hebrew קִבְרוֹת הַתַּאֲוָה (qivrot hatta'avah) is the technical name. It is the place that the people craved the meat, longing for the meat of Egypt, and basically rebelled against God. The naming marks another station in the wilderness where the people failed to accept God's good gifts with grace and to pray for their other needs to be met.

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### George Bush [Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers](#)

**And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah.** That is, "graves of lust." Vulg. "Sepulchres of concupiscence." There is a distinct allusion to the term in Ps. 78:29, 30, "So they did eat, and were well filled; for he gave them their own desire (Heb. taavâthâm); they were not estranged from their lust (Heb. mittaavâthâm)." The words "he called" may be rendered impersonally "one called," i. e. the name of the place was called. That is to say, The name of the place was made a memorial of the sin and the punishment by which it was distinguished.

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**John Currid** applies this story of Israel's getting what they asked for (and then some!) - This story is a great example of God judging people by giving them over to the cravings, desires and lusts of their own hearts. Paul explains this biblical principle in Romans 1. He says:

1. Therefore **God gave them up** ([paradidomi](#)) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves ...
2. For this reason **God gave them up** ([paradidomi](#)) to dishonourable passions ...
3. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up** ([paradidomi](#)) to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness ... (Ro 1:24, 26, 28–29+).

And one cannot help but think that God is bringing such judgement today on societies of unbelief. **Western culture has been given over to its insatiable appetite for sexual immorality and greedy materialism. And with it will come a day of reckoning.** We must repent of our ways and return to God (ED: SEND REVIVAL LORD GOD. IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN). As Paul says, 'For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen' (Ro 1:25+). ([Numbers Evangelical Press Study Commentary](#))

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### Question: [What does it mean that "God gave them over" in Romans 1:24–28?](#)

**Answer:** Paul, writing "to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people" (Romans 1:7), says that his purpose is to preach the gospel, for in it "the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (verse 17). He goes on to compare the righteous saints with the unrighteous Gentiles, upon whom the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. He lists the works of the unrighteous who have incurred [God's wrath](#) and then says that "God gave them over" to three things:

- "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them" (verse 24, NASB).
- "God gave them over to degrading passions" (verse 26, NASB).
- "God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper" (verse 28, NASB).

Of the most popular English versions in use today, only the New International Version and New American Standard Bible use the phrase *God gave them over*. Most modern Bible versions say, "God gave them up" (e.g., ESV, NKJV). The Greek word translated "gave over" or "gave up" means "surrendered, yielded up, entrusted, or transmitted." In this context, it refers to the act of God completely abandoning the unrighteous. As the wicked deserted God, God in turn deserted them, no longer giving them divine direction or restraint, but allowing them to corrupt themselves as they wished. Because they would not honor Him, He let them do what they pleased to dishonor themselves. Being given over or yielded up to one's sinful desires is a judgment from God.

*Who was it that God gave over?* The ungodly and unrighteous: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the

godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Romans 1:18). These are the godless and wicked, those who reject the truths that God makes plain to them about Himself. They know God exists, and they are “without excuse” in their active suppression of the truth (verse 20). They do not acknowledge or honor God, nor are they grateful to Him. Their thinking becomes futile; they cannot reason, and their hearts become dark, lacking the light of God (verse 21). They claim to be wise but are actually fools (verse 22). They worship the creature rather than God the Creator (verse 23).

*What was it God gave them over to?* Paul specifies three things to which God surrendered the wicked: 1) “To sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another” (verse 24). Giving their hearts’ sinful desires free rein, the wicked degraded themselves in sexual immorality. 2) “To shameful lusts” (verse 26). Both men and women abandoned the natural sexual functions and committed [homosexual acts](#). 3) “To a depraved mind” (verse 28). The result is that “they do what ought not to be done.” The depraved mind without the light of God will naturally run to evil and, unless divinely checked, will work out the full extent of its depravity.

*Why did God give them over?* “God gave them over” to these things because of a choice they made to reject the [knowledge of God in creation](#); to refuse to draw obvious conclusions from the evidence all around them of God’s existence and attributes; to decline to give God thanks; and to exchange “the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:23). All through history foolish men have attempted to bring God down to their level, portraying Him in various images and worshiping created things rather than the Creator. It’s a direct violation of the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–5). Their minds rejected the proof they had of the divine nature, so, as a just punishment, God abandoned them to minds incapable of grasping the truth (Romans 1:19–20).

*What’s the result of God’s having given them over?* “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:29–32). In the outworking of the depravity of the human heart, the contrast between light and darkness become more apparent: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). As the Gentiles refused to keep God in their knowledge, they committed crimes against reason and against their own welfare, and God gave them over.

The sad fact is that sometimes God gives us what we want. God allowed the Israelites who rebelled to reap the natural consequences of their choice: “But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices” (Psalm 81:11–12). In Romans 1, Paul shows how the wicked made a choice to reject God, and that choice set them on a downward spiral of increasing darkness and decreasing hope. As the godless run farther and farther from God, God intervenes less and less. The Spirit’s restraint of sin is a blessing, and if that restraint is removed, all wickedness follows. ([GotQuestions.org](#))

#### **Numbers 11:35 From Kibroth-hattaavah the people set out for Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.**

NET Numbers 11:35 The people traveled from Kibroth Hattaavah to Hazeroth, and they stayed at Hazeroth.

NLT Numbers 11:35 From Kibroth-hattaavah the Israelites traveled to Hazeroth, where they stayed for some time.

ESV Numbers 11:35 From Kibroth-hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.

NIV Numbers 11:35 From Kibroth Hattaavah the people traveled to Hazeroth and stayed there.

- **journeyed**: Nu 33:17
- **Hazeroth**: Nu 12:16 De 1:1
- [Numbers 11 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From Kibroth-hattaavah the people set out for Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth**- The identification of Hazeroth is also unknown