

## NUMBERS 11:1-15 (MOSES' HEAVY BURDEN)

I knew I was in trouble at 8:45 on Monday, 15 October. I did my morning devotional work in the book of Hebrews and got that posted, and then around 5:15 to 5:30 I started typing this sermon. I left for about 45 minutes to clean the mall and 7-11 and then came back home. By 8:45, I thought that I had finally finished the first verse. That was about 2 or 2 ½ hours of typing. Once I got into verse 2, I realized that verse 1 was incomplete.

If I was to get 15 verses done at that pace, it would be well into Tuesday morning, without any more breaks, before I got them finished. Fortunately, not all were as complicated as verse 1. But it seemed like it was more than I could bear. Now imagine Moses. He didn't just have his duties as the leader of the people who were all in one accord. Rather, as the account today shows, they were not only not in one accord, they were all over the place.

People were inciting the multitude into rebellion, and there was – literally – nothing that Moses could do to appease them over what had them riled up. If you've ever supervised a group of people, you know how difficult it can be. Every person is an individual who possesses his own biases, pet peeves, neuroses, desires, hopes, faults, failings, and shortcomings. Toss that one in with 10 or 20 of the same, and it is a recipe for difficulty. Now imagine what Moses had to deal with!

**Text Verse:** “And the Lord said to Moses, “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not.” Numbers 11:23

Our text verse comes from the same chapter in which we are looking at, but it's not cheating. Rather, we won't get to that verse until next week. However, it is a good reminder to us now as we begin these almost mournful verses today. Moses has one victory with the Lord which is followed by – quite possibly – the lowest spot of his entire life. He will be

found wanting elsewhere, and will be punished for that, but it is probably a more difficult thing to deal with his shortcomings here than it is with his failings later. His obvious care both for the people and for the glory of the Lord's name is a point which will weigh heavily on him. His inability to correct the situation will bring him almost to ruin.

If you are facing, or if you come to face, any situation which seems to be absolutely overwhelming, this passage is a great place to come to in order to see that you are not alone. It is also a great place to come to know that the Lord has it all figured out, in advance. All we have to do is remain faithful and place the really complicated stuff in His capable hands. He will tend to it because He cares for you. This is a marvelous lesson we can learn from His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Taberah (verse 1-3)**

#### **<sup>1</sup> Now *when* the people complained, it displeased the Lord;**

This seems like a simple set of words to open up the chapter, but it is actually hard to be dogmatic about what is being said. The Hebrew reads *v'hi ha'am kemitonemim ra b'azene Yehovah* - "and it happened the people complainings evil in ears of Yehovah."

The Hebrew can say either as the NKJV, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord. Or it can say, "Now when the people complained of their hardship in the hearing of the Lord." Or it can say, "And it happened the people sinfully complained in the ears of the Lord." Or, it can even be, "And it happened that the people were evil complainers in the ears of the Lord."

The word *ra*, or “evil,” can be attributed to the bad things which happened to the people, causing them to complain. It can be ascribed to the evil attitude of the people. It can be that the people were evil because of their complaints. Or, it can be attributed to how it is negatively received by the Lord. Sergio looked at it and ascribed the evil to the people. He said, “And it happened that the people were as evil complainers before the Lord” (SLT).

Young’s Literal Translation may give the most precise rendering. He says, “And the people is evil, as those sighing habitually in the ears of Jehovah.” First, the word “when” is not in the Hebrew. Next, the verb “complain” is plural, it says “complaining.” Third, it says, “in the ears of Jehovah.” It is as if a constant whining from an evil people is coming into His ears, deafening out anything else. Adding to this is a new and extremely rare word which is translated as “complain,” *anan*. It signifies to complain or murmur. It is used only here and in Lamentations 3:39, and nowhere else –

<sup>37</sup>“Who *is* he *who* speaks and it comes to pass,  
*When* the Lord has not commanded *it*?

<sup>38</sup> *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High  
That woe and well-being proceed?

<sup>39</sup> Why should a living man **complain**,  
A man for the punishment of his sins?”

Like in Lamentations, the Lord determines the path and the outcome, and yet there is complaint against what He has determined. We don’t need to be told why the people complained, we are simply told that they did, and that their attitude is evil in that they did so. If for no other reason, the context of the passage’s placement shows this. The people have been brought out of Egypt, they were brought to Sinai and the Lord made a covenant with them, they have been taken care of for over a year as the tabernacle was being built, they have received a priesthood, they have been given the Lord’s laws, and they have been divided up into their individual armies. After these many wonders have been brought about, the very last thing recorded was the departure of the people on their way to Sinai as they are led by the pillar of cloud. Nothing has been recorded concerning

any hardships. They are still receiving manna, and they are simply on the march to the Land of Promise. And yet, *the very first recorded thing after their departure* is that the people have sighed habitually in the Lord's ears. Literally, in the turning of the page, it is the very first recorded thing to happen – they are found to be evil complainers. It becomes more certain that it is the people's complaints which are being described as evil with the next words...

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **for the Lord heard it,**

*v'yishma Yehovah* – “and heard Yehovah.” There is no “for” in the words as if it is explaining something. It only says that the complainings of the people were evil in the ears of the Lord, and the Lord heard it. All we need to do is think of the disobedient child in the grocery store. Everything he needs or wants has been, or will be provided, and yet the little whiner just keeps on whining.

He had breakfast, he is assured of food in the hours ahead, he has a great home awaiting him, and he will be taken there when the trip to the store is done, he has mom to care for him, and so on. There is literally nothing else that could be given him to satisfy him any more than he is right at that moment, and yet he whines through the entire time they are there, he whines through the entire trip back, and he whines about everything that happens in the process. Mom may be able to block this out, but dad just happens to be out with them today, and he is hearing what he cannot believe...

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **and His anger was aroused.**

*v'yikhar appow* – “and burned His nostrils.” It is as if fire shot out of His nose over the whining which was going on. “Ooh, it's too rocky.” “Oh me, it's so hot.” “Waaa, all this dust.” The whining was unending as if dealing with spoiled democrats, and the Father simply fumed at their attitude.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **So the fire of the Lord burned among them,**

*v'tivar bam esh Yehovah* – “and burned among them *the* fire of Yehovah.” We are not told what the “fire of the Lord” is. In fact, John Lange says, “The punishment is as obscurely expressed as is the charge of fault.” In other words, just as obscure as the first few words of the verse were, so is the vagueness of the punishment levied upon the camp. We can only speculate what it means. The same idea, however, is found in 2 Kings and in Job. In Job, it may refer to lightning. No matter what it is, it is a directed fire which is destructive and it is ascribed directly to the working of the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **and consumed *some* in the outskirts of the camp.**

The word *akal* means “to eat,” and thus it seems likely that people were consumed. Rather than just tents, it seems to be saying that there is loss of life. And the fire is directed to the *qatseh*, or extremities of the camp. A few things must be considered here. The first is that of the severity of the judgment which came upon them. Time and time again during the Exodus and on the way to Sinai, the people murmured against the Lord and against Moses. And yet, there was not an outburst of this sort from the Lord. However, now the fire of the Lord has gone out and destroyed them. This is similar to what occurred with Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, and uses the same general terminology. The law has now been given, and in the giving of the law, there is the imputation of sin, and then expected judgment. In Hebrews it says –

“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.” Hebrews 2:2, 3

The word of law was spoken, and now every trespass and disobedience will receive its just reward. The people can no longer expect the same treatment that they had received before they agreed to the terms of the law. This is

reflected again in Hebrews where the author there must have been thinking of this very account in Numbers –

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” Hebrews 10:26, 27

And again in Hebrews 12, after telling the people, “For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven...,” He goes on to say, “For our God *is* a consuming fire.” The people of Israel learned this for the first of many times in their history, and it is just a moment after their departure from Sinai.

The second point about these words begs the question, “Why the outskirts of the camp?” Some people say it is because this is where the “mixed multitude” was, as if Israel was pious and noble, and that it was the mixed multitude who were the only ones complaining. There is nothing to substantiate this in either regard. Others have their own explanations concerning it, but the answer falls in the fact that the camp is marching as a military procession.

When an enemy attacks an army, he will start at the outskirts and work his way in. By attacking there, the people will move away from the danger and cluster together. What is obvious here is that the fire coming upon the outskirts then bears a two-fold significance. First, the Lord is acting as an enemy would, working as the author of Hebrews says, in fiery indignation. However, He is also working as a leader of the people He has redeemed, urging them to cluster more closely around Him. In this, it is as if He is saying, “Close to me is safety, but as you depart further from Me, there is danger.” The events of this account are recorded for us by Paul in 1 Corinthians in order to teach us the lessons of the past –

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup> And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ <sup>8</sup> Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup> nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup> nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” 1 Corinthians 10:6-11

The complaining of the people is a sign of distrust in the provision of the Lord. It is an offense to Him, and it demonstrates a lack of faith in His goodness towards those whom He has redeemed. As Paul uses the wilderness account as typology for us, let us take the lesson to heart, and not provoke the Lord through our distrust of His goodness. He has made His promises, and we shall benefit from each and every one of them in due time. What happens in the interim is simply life. It is what we are expected to endure, be it rocky, hot, dusty, or otherwise. But even in our times of forgetfulness and complaining, there is mercy to be found...

**<sup>2</sup> Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched.**

We’re just now getting to verse 2. Maybe you can see why that particular Monday sermon typing was so difficult! It is remarkable that the people cry out to Moses. There is a definite understanding that they must go through a mediator. And in this, they find Moses, not Aaron, as the appropriate one to mediate. Though the law has been instituted, and though Aaron is designated to mediate, they still defer to Moses. Moses is loved and trusted by the people, and they know that he is loved and trusted by the Lord. Aaron is the one to handle the technical aspects of the law, such as sacrifices. However, Moses is the one who speaks to God, and he is the one through whom the law came. He is thus filling the type of Christ to come in this regard. It is Jesus who speaks directly to the Father, and it is He through

whom the New Covenant has come. Jesus will also handle all of the technical aspects of the priestly duties set before Him. But in this case, it is Moses who more accurately reflects Christ for us in such a time of need.

In this verse is another new word in Scripture, *shaqa*, which means “to sink down.” It is rather rare, being seen just six times. The fire which came was from the Lord, and the quenching, or sinking down, of it is also from Him. At the petition of Moses, the Lord responds accordingly.

**<sup>3</sup> So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.**

The name Taberah means “Burning.” It comes from the word *ba’ar* or “burn” which was used in verse 1 and then again here in this verse. At times, the word is used in regards to purging evil from among the people. That is the intent here. It is a lesson that the people have been evil, and the Lord’s intent is to purify them through this fire.

An important point about this location is that Taberah is not the name of a place of encampment. In Numbers 33, where the stops on the way from Egypt to Canaan are recorded, no such place as Taberah is named. Therefore, the location of this encampment is what is given in verse 34 of this chapter, Kibroth Hataavah, or Graves of Craving. The name Taberah is the place within the encampment where the burning took place. It is representative of hell itself, the place of burning in the graves of craving.

*The flesh which God has sent, it is food indeed*

*It is sufficient to fill us and give us life anew*

*And when we have partaken, we will then follow at the lead*

*Of our Lord, who has given Himself for me and you*

*The dew of heaven has left behind a gift for us  
There is bread enough for all to eat  
And this only pictures the coming Messiah, Jesus  
Oh my! How delicious is this Bread... so very sweet  
Thank You, O God, for filling our souls in such a way  
You have granted us life through Your Son  
And so we will exalt You through Him, each and every day  
Until when at last this earthly life is done  
Then we shall praise You forevermore O God  
As in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall forever tread*

## **II. The Manna (verses 4-9)**

**<sup>4</sup> Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving;**

Here is a word found only once in the Bible, *asaphsuph*. It is a reduplication of the word *asaph* which signifies to gather together, or take away. Translating this as “the mixed multitude” is misleading. The “mixed multitude,” who came out of Egypt and who are mentioned in Exodus, is a completely different pair of words. It is obvious that the different word is intended not to speak of that group, but of a gathering together of miscreants. One could think of any modern gathering of democrats and socialists who do nothing but incite violence and stir up rage and anger. This is the idea that is being relayed here.

Another new word is given, *avah*, or desire. It is an intense desire, and even a craving. It can be good or bad. In Isaiah 26, the prophet says the people desire after the Lord. It is as if they had an intense craving for Him. Here in

Numbers, it is not for the Lord, but for something else. Here, there is a group of people who crave after what they do not have, and they will incite the rest of the people to a state of agitation as well...

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”**

The rabble led the entire congregation, referred to here as “the children of Israel,” to also join them in their cravings. The words, wept again, don’t make any sense. The last time that any weeping was recorded was in Leviticus 10 at the time of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. The word is *shuv*, and it indicates to return or turn back.

What is happening here isn’t that they are weeping again, as if connected to the account in verses 1-3. Instead, they “turned back and wept.” In other words, the coming words of verse 5 explain the “turning back.” It is in memory of what they once had in Egypt. In their weeping, they ask for *basar*, or flesh, to eat. It is any type of meat, not specifically what they will ask for next...

<sup>5</sup> **We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;**

The people’s craving is for what they once had, but which they no longer can obtain. They first say that the fish came freely. They were so abundant and cheap that it was as if they were free. They also mention five types of plant which they remembered with passion. All five of these are new to Scripture, and only one, leeks, will be seen again. The other four are mentioned only once in the Bible.

To understand the connection to us, the symbolism of Egypt needs to be reconsidered. That was a picture of life in sin. Israel was redeemed out of

that. It pictures what Christ did for us when He redeemed us from a life of sin. Their desiring flesh to eat, and the delicacies of Egypt, is a picture of us when we are tempted back into sin. Paul refers to this in Ephesians 2 –

“And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

However, in this instance, the people had been redeemed out of sin to life under law. It led to constant failure, because by the law is the knowledge of sin. Our redemption is far greater, because we are not under law, but under grace. As we are under grace, we are not to remember and long for those things which we have left behind, but we should want to live out our lives, not desiring the lusts of the flesh and those things which tempt us. Rather, we are to desire Christ, and be content in Him alone. The opposite of that, however, is seen in the next verse...

**<sup>6</sup> but now our whole being *is* dried up;**

The words are hyperbole. The things they have described – flesh, fish, and tasty fruits and vegetables – would be juicy and refreshing. They have been in the desert where there is nothing either juicy or refreshing in that regard, as will be explained. Again, think of life before Christ and what your soul lusted after. Those things were tempting, and they satisfied, but only for a moment.

As soon as the melon is eaten, you are hungry again. That is why the people left Egypt. They were never fully satisfied. If they were, there would have been no need to leave. But leave they did. Now they have forgotten. Let us

never forget. We now have that which fills forever, and which will forever satisfy...

<sup>6 (con't)</sup> ***there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!***

Of these words, the supposed scholars at Cambridge say, “No account has been given in this chapter of the sending of the manna; and it is possible that the writer means to describe not a miraculous food from heaven but a natural phenomenon of the district.” It is as if they purposefully want to destroy the narrative and pick apart Scripture. First, the fact that the manna is mentioned here is exactly an account of the sending of the manna. Secondly, if they had read their Bible in full even just once, they could not help to remember these two passages –

“And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.” Exodus 16:35

“Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” Joshua 5:12

It is as if they took Hebrew lessons, learned the language, and then were told to write a commentary on the Bible – not because they are Bible scholars, but because they knew Hebrew. The manna was given for the entire time Israel was in their wanderings. Will one person call out what the manna pictured, please? The explanation is found in John 6 –

“I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:48-51

The manna is a type of Christ to come. The picture, then, is that Israel fed upon that which never ceases, Christ. It is as He said, His flesh. They wanted the flesh of Egypt, but God offered Himself to them. And yet, they found Him bland, unfulfilling, and tedious. No wonder the reaction of the Lord later in this chapter is what it is. He has provided for them from Himself, and they have rejected His gracious offering.

The manna which came for forty years is only mentioned in Numbers in these two verses, and so as we continue through the rest of the book, let us remember that everything that occurs does so while the manna continues to be provided. Every evil that Israel will face is a self-inflicted wound based on their rejection of the Lord. And every day of every account which is given is to be considered one more jab in the eyeballs of the unscholarly folks at the University of Cambridge.

Now, to show that what the Lord provided was not an unfair allowance, but one which demonstrates the ungrateful, perverse nature of the people, a description of the manna is once again provided in the narrative. It was first described in Exodus 16, but because we are as slow to learn and as quick to forget as Israel, we are given our own review of it...

**<sup>7</sup> Now the manna *was* like coriander seed,**

*v’haman kizra gad* – “and the manna *was* like seed coriander.” The word for coriander seed, *gad*, is only used twice in the Bible and both times it is used to describe manna. All translations agree that it is coriander, but some scholars don’t. However, it still is sufficient to describe the size of it, which is small and round. We can now wave goodbye to the word *gad*, or coriander.

7 (con't) **and its color like the color of bdellium.**

Bdellium is a whitish transparent wax-like resin. Along with these two descriptions, Exodus 16 gave a little more information on the manna. First, it said –

“...in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. <sup>14</sup> And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as fine as frost on the ground.*” Exodus 16:13, 14.

There, the word translated as “lay” was *shekavah*, which means “an emission.” It seems like a risqué word to be used to describe the food of the people, but nothing sexual should be inferred. It is defined by scholars as the “(seed of) copulation” (HAW). It then would imply “that which gives life.” And that, in turn, perfectly fits with Jesus’ words of John 6 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:32, 33

The term “a small round substance” gives us clues into the manna. The word for “small,” *daq*, literally means “thin.” The word for “round” is *khaspas*, and it means round, but not round like a ball. Rather it is round like a scale. And so we get the idea of a round thing which is very thin.

Also, the word for “frost,” *kphowr*, indicates “to cover” as in the frost covering the ground. That word comes from *kaphar*, which means to appease, atone, forgive, be merciful, etc. It is again a picture of Christ who covers our sins in His mercy. The daily receiving of the bread by Israel looked forward to our atonement and the sustaining of our salvation as we walk in this fallen world. As long as we are here, we can and must continue to rely

on the true Bread from heaven to sustain us until we enter the Land of Promise, which is also exactly when Israel's manna ended.

As the Manna only became visible when the dew had lifted each day, it explains the enigmatic expression used by Jesus in Revelation 2:17 where He promises those who overcome "some of the hidden Manna to eat." Until the dew lifts, it remains hidden. Finally, in the same chapter of Exodus, it said –

"...and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey." Exodus 16:31

It was described as having the *taam*, or taste, of wafers with honey. But if you think of it, if someone didn't know what wafers and honey tasted like, they would be in the dark about the taste of manna. However, honey is a food that is found pretty much everywhere throughout the entire world. This is because honey bees have been domesticated in all places. Further, honey doesn't spoil and so it can be transported anywhere. This probably isn't coincidence. The taste of the very substance which is described as "bread from heaven," and which pictures Jesus Christ, is pretty much universally known.

And therefore, we have another revelation from God's word. The word is used to describe Jesus and it is said to be "sweeter than honey" to the mouth. Jesus is the Subject of the word and is described in picture through the manna as having the taste of honey. It is like a beautifully wrapped package which has been given to the people of the world.

And so, with all of these images given both here and in Exodus, we can have a pretty good idea of what it looked like. As coriander seed is small and unnoticeable, it forms a picture of Christ – small *in* the eyes of the world and yet the only Source of true nourishment *for* the world. The color white would signify His purity, without any defilement at all.

**<sup>8</sup>The people went about and gathered *it*,**

A new word is used here, *shuwt*, or “go about.” It signifies roaming from place to place. The gathering of the manna would have been like going out for blueberries. You’d start picking it up here, see a bigger pile there and go to get that. It would be a process of work, but not in the sense of labor. It would be something to anticipate and enjoy, like looking for Christ in the many passages of Scripture, which is exactly the idea that seems to be conveyed here. The gathering itself is explained in Exodus 16 –

““And Moses said to them, “This *is* the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup>This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.’”

<sup>17</sup>Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup>So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need. <sup>19</sup>And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it till morning.” <sup>20</sup>Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup>So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.”” Exodus 16:15-21

**<sup>8 (con’t)</sup>ground *it* on millstones or beat *it* in the mortar,**

This was never mentioned in Exodus, and it is giving us new insights into the manna. It was hard enough, meaning not sticky, so that it could be ground on a millstone, thus powderizing it so that it could be made into various things – from bread to soup stock, to whatever else cooks use powderized stuff for.

The odd thing is that though it melted as the sun rose and became hot, that was only if it wasn't gathered. When it was gathered in the morning, it apparently became hard like some type of grains so that it could be ground.

If not ground, it could be beaten in a mortar. The word is *duk*, and it is only found here. One can get the sense of beating in a mortar by the sound of the word – *duk, duk, duk*. This would make the manna so that it would be soft and malleable for rolling up into taco shells, although they probably didn't call them taco shells. They probably called them *shawarma* as they do today. It could be beaten into anything else that a mortar is used for as well.

**8 (con't) cooked *it* in pans,**

The word translated as "cooked" signifies, "to boil." The word for "pans" means something deeper than a flat pan. This is probably referring to how we make donuts, by putting them in oil and letting them boil until both tasty and delicious.

**8 (con't) and made cakes of it;**

These would be bread that would be round like a disk, or heaped up into a loaf, and cooked like a cake on a hearth or a fire.

**8 (con't) and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.**

In Exodus, it said it tasted like wafers made with honey. Here it says it is like pastry prepared with oil. There is no contradiction in this. One is speaking of it in its raw state, and the other when it was baked into cakes.

Here though, we have another new word, *lashad*, translated as pastry. It's an important addition to what the manna was like when prepared. The word signifies juicy, or with moisture. In a person, it would be his vitality. It is only used here and in Psalm 32:4 where David said his vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

One might wonder why all of the detail concerning the different ways to prepare the manna, but if the reason for complaining is considered, it becomes obvious. The manna could be eaten plain, cooked, baked, boiled, and so on. As these are all of the ways of preparing any type of food one would eat, it shows that it was a universal basic staple to which anything could be added. If boiled, it could be boiled with spices. If baked, it could be baked with whatever stuffing could be dreamed up. And so on.

When prepared in a certain way, it would be juicy and bring vitality. Every want and need could be met with the manna, but the only true obstacle to overcome would be the thought of eating the same substance each day. Once one simply thought through the obvious though, it would not seem so burdensome. They got it for free, it was always available, it met every need, it came with a guarantee that it would outlast the trip to the Promised Land, and so on. In other words, it was, in its truest sense picturing Christ.

We can go roaming about in a thousand different directions, but wherever we go, He will be there. He offers Himself freely, He is always available for us, He meets every need, and He comes with a guarantee that He will outlast our trip to the Promised Land. He will never fail to appear, and He sustains us completely, wholly, and forever. And yet, how often do we turn our hearts back to Egypt, and turn our desires to that which can never satisfy.

The interesting thing is that no matter what is done to the manna, it always reflects Christ. If in its natural state, it tasted like wafers and honey. He is the word which is sweeter than honey to our taste. In its prepared state, it was like pastry prepared with oil. He is the suffering servant who was beaten

and bruised, and yet He came forth with vitality and the full measure of the Spirit. In Him, there is never any lack, but only increasing delight and wonder.

**<sup>9</sup> And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.**

The wording here shows that the dew came down, and the manna then came down on the dew. It says that the dew lifted in the morning in Exodus 16, and so there is a layering of the dew, hiding it and protecting it from any defilement. As I said earlier, that looks to Christ who gives the hidden manna of Revelation 2:17.

*A heavy burden has been placed on me*

*It is greater than I can bear*

*Take this burden Lord, or kill me*

*To the land of the dead, please send me there*

*I cannot stand in the gap to handle all these things*

*I am overwhelmed and cannot do it, my Lord*

*I am ready to snap and my head rings*

*Here my petition, O God, hear my word*

*I know Your grace is sufficient for me, this I know*

*But that is enough for only me*

*How can I carry the load of others, how can it be so?*

*I am overwhelmed with my burden, O God can't You see?*

### **III. Moses' Displeasure (verses 10-15)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent;**

The picture we are to get here is that the rabble who got the people stirred up caused the entire camp to start grumbling, maybe over their manna as it was being prepared. From there, instead of just grumbling in their homes, they start going to the doors of their tents and moaning, "Hey Moses, we are sick – utterly sick – of this manna!" And then more people come out, and they go into a tizzy, casting dust up in the air, moaning, and weeping at their misery. And to think that none of this would have been the case if people simply stopped and considered. But being a society of infants, they collectively whined so much that the noise reached to heaven itself.

**<sup>10 (con't)</sup> and the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused;**

At the rejection of His provision, the Lord saw it as a rejection of Him. The two are united as one thought in the Lord's mind. One cannot reject the word of God without also rejecting the God who gave His word. Such is true with the manna as well.

**<sup>10 (con't)</sup> Moses also was displeased.**

This is a connecting thought which stems from the people's attitude toward him, and the Lord's placement of the responsibility for the people on him. He is venting in two directions at once with seemingly nowhere to go to find relief.

**<sup>11</sup> So Moses said to the Lord, “Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?”**

Here we have the first of several instances where the prophet of God is utterly defeated in his spirit. It will happen with Elijah after he defeats the prophets of Baal. It will happen again with Jonah after he prophesies to Nineveh and they repent at his preaching. The same attitude of despair shows forth, and the same final request for relief is seen in each of them.

Moses has come to the point of utter frustration, and he cannot find it in himself to go on. The burden has become too heavy. It is actually reflective of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane who cried out, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” The burden was so great that only relief is sought.

**<sup>12</sup> Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,’ to the land which You swore to their fathers?**

When Moses says, “I,” it is emphatic. “Did I conceive?” “Did I beget?” He has been appointed over a people who are unruly, childish, and they are not even his own children. If they were, he could handle them as a parent, but he cannot. They are not his, and yet he has the burden of caring for them. Keil notes, however, that “This is the language of the discontent of despair, which differs from the murmuring of unbelief.” He is looking for deliverance, not questioning God’s plans or purposes.

One cannot help but see Christ in these questions of his. Did I conceive? “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Did I beget? “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of

God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1) Carry them ... to the land which You swore to their fathers... “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Colossians 1:5).

Moses felt the burden and required help to do what was not his responsibility. Jesus felt the burden, but did alone what was required, because it is His responsibility. The promise has been made, and He will see it through to the end. This shows us the weakness of the law, both in its mediator and in its ability to accomplish what it was destined to do. It then highlights the infinitely greater New Covenant which accomplishes all that the law could never do.

**<sup>13</sup> Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’**

Moses is chided by some for caving into the people’s desire for meat, as if he agrees that they have a valid case in that the manna is insufficient for the health, well-being, and happiness of the people. This is surely not the case. What Moses is concerned about is a riot and his own possible demise.

How do you quell the anger and distrust of several million people who are upset about their lot? Telling them to be satisfied with their manna may be true, but it will not improve his lot one bit. This is a rhetorical question in the same vein as those of the previous verse, nothing more. He is asking how he wound up in the position he finds himself, and he desperately needs relief because...

**<sup>14</sup> I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too heavy for me.**

In Exodus 18, Jethro had recommended that Moses divide the people into leaders of thousands, hundreds, and tens in order to take the burden off of him in his administrative and judicial duties. That is not a consideration here. This is something that cannot be delegated or decided upon in that type of capacity. It is an infectious growth of discontent which is probably agreed to by most of those leaders. And even if not, those leaders could do nothing about the matter.

Moses is not asking that his job be terminated. Instead, he is a man who is dealing with a matter which required more than a man could handle. Only God could resolve the matter which lays before him. The burden was too great, and the means of relief was not attainable through his abilities.

**<sup>15</sup> If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—**

*v'im kakah ath oseh li haregeni na harog* – “and if like this You are doing to me, kill me, I pray, kill.” The repetition of “kill” with the word *na*, or I pray, along with the form in which the second word kill is in, shows the impassioned nature of his request. His death would be welcomed in comparison to going on a moment longer. You can almost imagine him curled up on his knees before the ark, unable to lift his eyes, and simply crying out in agony. Again, the parallel to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is striking.

This is what Elijah asked for, “Now, Lord, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!” And it is what Jonah asked for, “Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!” The burden of the office crushed these men, but they each were carried through it for another day of the battle they were called to.

**<sup>15</sup> (fin) if I have found favor in Your sight—**

The thought here is that death would be a grace in comparison to being left alive. And so as a grace, he begs for it.

**\*15 (con't) and do not let me see my wretchedness!"**

The final words today indicate experiencing the matter. "To see my wretchedness" means to live through it. Moses had come to his end, and he wanted no more than to be ended. It shows the truly caring nature of the man. He wanted the best for his people, and he wanted to do the best for the Lord, but in this, he could do neither. To do less than his best would be failure, and indeed in the eyes of the people, he would fail. Their desires could not be met by him.

We leave on this sad note, and it is a good place to do so. The Jews look to Moses as their great lawgiver, and he indeed is. But if they truly looked at the law, including Moses' role in it, they would see that there is no hope in it, no hope in him, and only futility in pursuing either. The only place where satisfaction can come from is the Lord. The only place where contentment can come from is the Lord, and the only place where hope can come from is the Lord. Trusting in Moses, trusting in the law, or trusting in one's own accomplishments under the Law of Moses will only lead to futility and dissatisfaction. And ultimately, it will lead to death.

The joy of life, and the joy found in eternal life, can only be experienced through the One whom Moses petitioned to take the burden from Him. That burden, in the ultimate sense, is the yoke of the law itself. And the one whom Moses petitioned is the One who also carried that burden up to the cross of Calvary and who at that place cast it far away. In its place is something better, something light and easy, and something glorious.

**Closing Verse:** "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

**Next Week:** Micah 5:1-5 *Of the coming King the Bible does tell...* (The One to Be Ruler in Israel) (Christmas sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Moses' Heavy Burden**

Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord

For the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused

-----so it did become

So the fire of the Lord burned among them

And in the outskirts of the camp consumed some

Then the people cried out to Moses

And when Moses prayed to the Lord

The fire was quenched

According to his prayed word

So he called the name of the place Taberah, as we have learned

Because the fire of the Lord had among them burned

Now the mixed multitude who were among them

Yielded to intense craving; they were in a state of defeat

So the children of Israel also wept again and said:

“Who will give us meat to eat?

We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt

The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks  
-----the onions, and the garlic; each meal was a prize  
But now our whole being is dried up  
There is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”  
Now the manna was like coriander seed, have you ever seen some?  
And its color like the color of bdellium

The people went about and gathered it  
Ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar also  
Cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it  
And its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil  
-----as we now know  
And when the dew fell on the camp in the night  
The manna fell on it; what an amazing sight!  
Then Moses heard the people weeping  
Throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent  
And the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused  
Moses also was displeased, and so he had to vent  
So Moses said to the Lord  
“Why have You afflicted Your servant? How did this come to be?  
And why have I not found favor in Your sight  
That You have laid the burden of all these people on me?  
  
Did I conceive all these people?  
Did I beget them, that You should to me say  
‘Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child

To the land which You swore to their fathers? Tell me, I pray  
Where am I to get meat to give to all these people?  
For they weep all over me, saying  
'Give us meat, that we may eat  
Give me relief from this, to You I am praying  
I am not able to bear all these people alone, You see  
Because the burden is too heavy for me  
If You treat me like this  
Please kill me here and now and end this mess  
If I have found favor in Your sight—  
And do not let me see my wretchedness!"  
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness  
And we are wanting to be led by You  
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess  
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land  
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy  
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand  
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply  
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone  
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise  
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown  
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...