

WHERE ARE WE?

1. Israel is in the wilderness enroute from Sinai to Moab (10:11-21:35). That is her geographical position.
2. Spiritually Israel has been reminded of redemption (9:1-14). She has been promised divine guidance by means of the cloud by day and fire by night (9:15-23). Instruction about trumpets being blown also provided divine notice for movements of the entire camp (10:1-10).
3. Moses, regretfully, was unsure of God's guidance and sought to enlist Hobab, the Medianite, for help (10:29-32). He seems to have acknowledged this failure by calling upon God to take Israel in/out (10:33-36).

NOTE: The Hebrew text has two giant letters "N" bracketing verses 35, 36. The verses speak of the 10 million Israelites or their 10 thousand battalions. The Lord is their Warrior! Note the war cry in Scripture (Psa. 68:1; Isa. 28:21; Obad 1). Many passages speak of God as One of war (Ex 15:1-18); Deut. 33:1-3, 26-29; Josh. 5:13-15 etc). Israel saw her wars as the Lord's (1 Sam. 25:28; 2 Chron. 20:15). However, when Israel sinned, the Lord did not come to her aid (Num. 14:39-45; Josh 7). In fact, he waged war against Israel (Jer. 21:4ff) or used others against the nation (Isa. 10:5-27). We too are in a battle (Eph. 6:10-17). We should fight the good fight of faith with all our might because Christ is our strength and Christ is our right.

CHECK OUT THESE POINTS1. COMPLAINT v. 1

It is hard to see the sin of ingratitude loom so large on the horizon after Moses had expressed such faith to Hobab in 10:29; but there it is boldly recorded. Israel was grieved, sad, mourned. All of these terms are covered by the verb used. It basically means to complain, to murmur (cf. Lam. 3:39). Tragically the verb has an overtone of impiety. Dreadful!

The original Hebrew text makes it plain. The complaint reached the "ears" of the Lord "of something bad." The word "bad" is the opposite of "good." Thus the misfortunes of Israel were viewed as "evil." God's good for us is often seen as that which is bad (cf. 1 Kings 22:8). Job learned God's way is best (2:10; 42:2 cf. Rom. 8:28).

2. DISPLEASURE v. 1

Col 3⁵⁻¹⁶ Eph 4:25-32

The Lord heard of the complaint of Israel. He hears everything! This provoked God to displeasure. Hebrew idiom expresses this in a unique way. The text states "his nose became hot." This vivid expression is found about 80 times in the O.T. God was really incensed. Let it be firmly remembered: God is never pleased when His own question His perfection! God obviously has perfect righteous anger.

3. JUDGMENT v. 1

It is true that the desert is most inhospitable. Any modern traveler would agree with Israel's complaints, but not Scripture! Complaints are evidence of unbelief and rebelliousness (cf. Deut. 9:22; Psa. 78:17ff).

Consequently, God sends fire. Note: In the Bible fire expresses 1) God's presence (Ex. 13:21; 24:17). 2) God's purging (Lev. 9:22ff; Num. 16:19ff). 3) God's judgment (Amos 1:4; Ezek. 10:1, 2). 4) God's wrath (Isa. 30:27ff; Jer. 15:14; 17:4). God Himself is fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). His goal is maturity, cleanness (Isa. 48:10; Mal. 3:2ff). Thus, God's anger and judgment are with sin and not the sinner.

4. PRAYER v. 2

Israel grumbled against Moses and plotted against him, yet they knew he was God's man. As such, they appealed to him to call upon God in their behalf. Moses becomes the intercessor to God (cf. 21:7; Ex. 32:32). Actually, the people should have prayed for themselves! Blessed be God for those who pray for us. God was gracious to Israel. The fire burnt "against" Israel, but did not burn any people (cf. Job 1:16). Moreover, the fire did not burn over the entire camp, but at one end only. Then it sank down or was subdued. It smoldered when Moses prayed. What a demonstration of grace issuing out of judgment.

5. REMEMBRANCE v. 3

Taberah means "burning." Forever this event is recorded before God and men. The event will not be forgotten. Not as a mark against Israel (negative), but as a teaching item for all (positive) (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). Taberah brings the whole event into focus.

SO--Lord, help me be satisfied with Thee and Thy plan for me--always. Amen.

Josh. 7 -