

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS

### "Complaint and Prayer"

Numbers 11:4-15

#### CONTEXTUALLY

1. The far context is the movement of Israel from Sinai to Moab (Num. 10:12). The camp was ordered (Num. 10:13-28).
2. Although God promised to lead Israel into the land (of Promise) (Num. 10:29), Moses failed by suggesting his father-in-law serve as a guide (Num. 10:31). The up-shot was Moses called on God for help (Num. 10:33-36).
3. The immediate context relates to a complaint--un-specified--against the Lord by the nation. This was followed by a fiery judgment, prayer by Moses, and a memorial name, Taberah (11:1-3).

#### TEXTUALLY

##### 1. Food Problems

###### a. By whom v. 4

It is evident the problem started with the "mixed multitude." This group, identified by a different word earlier (Ex. 12:38), were a crowd of people of different nations. It may "seem" advantageous to get a crowd, but the wrong group can easily lead the wrong direction. As water/oil, the people of God do not mix with non-believers (Joshua, Judges).

###### b. About what vv. 5-9

1) Egyptian provision vv. 5, 6 They now recall what they had:

a) Fish Not "for nothing," but in comparison, it was of nominal cost. Even the poor ate it.

b) Cucumbers These were distinguished for softness/sweet flavor.

c. Watermelons Refreshing flesh and cooling juice.

d) Leeks This may refer to chives

e) Onions Flourished in Egypt. Had mild, pleasant taste.

f) Garlic Used with onions.

NOTE: All these were unattainable in the desert, hence: the people dried up and had "nothing at all" (v. 6).

###### 2) Divine provision vv. 6-9

However one may account for the "manna," it is obviously a miraculous provision of God. In Ex. 16:1-21 manna was a miracle food; here it is part of a problem needing a miracle!

The name "manna" comes from the Hebrew (Ex. 16:15) "what is it?" (man hu). Earlier on it was sweet

as honey (Ex. 16:31), but later it became as the taste of oil (Num. 11:9).

The description of Scripture does not agree with the "scholars" that manna was a secretion of the tamarisk tree. Rather, it was crushed, cooked, made into cakes, and was bread (Hebrew: lechem) from heaven.

## 2. LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS vv. 10-15

### a. Posed by Moses v. 10

Actually the people's weeping and complaining brought on God's anger (cf. v. 1). When this occurred, Moses took it as a personal matter. The whole matter was "evil in his eyes" (so Hebrew).

### b. Questioned by Moses vv. 11-13

Here is a battery of questions raised by Moses to the Lord. In detail four questions are raised:

- 1) Why affliction? )
- 2) Why no favor? ) v. 11
- 3) Have I conceived Israel? v. 12
- 4) Where is food? v. 13

These questions are really a pity party for Moses. He vents his frustrations before God. Israel is like a child. Moses is tired of being a nursemaid to the nation all day. Moreover, it was too much to ask him to provide food for such a great multitude.

### c. Resolved by Moses vv. 14, 15

Moses, God's servant (v. 11) and leader of Israel (cf. Ex. 3:1-4:17) comes to two conclusions:

- 1) I can't take it any longer v. 14
- 2) I want to die rather than fail in what

I know God wants me to do v. 15 (cf. Ex. 32:32; 1 Kings 19:4; Job 3:11; 6:9; Jonah 4:3).

## REMEMBER

Scripture records all the moles and pimples: Jacob was a twister; Samson a womanizer; Saul was disobedient; David had lust and murdered; Ahab was corrupt; Absalom was a schemer. All were human like you/me. Yet, God solves problems. Let Him do it.