

NUMBERS
People Grumble
Lesson Text: Numbers 11:1–6, 10–15

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **EXAMINE** the Israelites' grumbling about life in the wilderness; **RECOGNIZE** grumbling reflects an ungrateful heart; and **GIVE THANKS** for our blessings.

In Focus

Today's lesson teaches us to choose thanksgiving over complaining and grumbling.

Keep In Mind

The mixed multitude that was among them fell to lusting. And the children of Israel also wept again and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes." **Numbers 11:4-6 (NKJV)**

Lesson Text
Numbers 11:1–6, 10–15 (NKJV)

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 burned among them, and consumed those who were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.

3 And he called the name of the place Taberah [that is, A burning], because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

4 And the mixed multitude that was among them fell to lusting. And the children of Israel also wept again and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?"

5 We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic;

6 but our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes."

Numbers 11:10-15

10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent. And the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

11 And Moses said unto the Lord, “Why hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? And why have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?”

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 swearest unto their fathers’?

13 From whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, ‘Give us flesh, that we may eat.’

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

15 And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness!

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

Moses: His name means “drawn out of the water.” God chose him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, where they were enslaved and oppressed.

Taberah: A place near the wilderness of Paran, whose name means “burning.” It is the place where God punished the Israelites for murmuring and complaining about having only manna to eat.

Cloud By Day and Pillar of Fire by Night: The cloud by day and pillar of fire by night were the manifestations of God’s direction and His will. When the cloud by day lifted, the people followed it. When the cloud settled, it was God’s will for the people to stop and set up camp. The pillar of fire by night was a sign of God’s protection during the darkness of night.

Background

The book of Numbers chronicles the story of the 40 years the Children of Israel wandered in the desert before entering the Promised Land. After their long enslavement, they followed a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; the Children of Israel left Egypt and traveled from place to place. After two years in the Sinai desert, God lifted the cloud and the Israelites left the wilderness of Sinai. They followed the cloud until it rested in the wilderness of Paran. Today’s text finds the Israelites, only three days into their journey, mumbling and complaining about the hardships they endure while traveling in the desert.

In Depth

- 1. The People Complain (Numbers 11:1–6)** The Children of Israel began to complain barely three days into their journey (10:32ff). Angered by their unappreciative attitude, God to devoured the Israelites' camp by fire, and numerous people died. The people regarded Moses and began to cry out for his help. Moses prayed for them, God heard his prayers, and the fire stopped. Moses named the place Taberah, which means "burning." The place served as a reminder of God's burning anger against the Israelites for their ungratefulness.

After the fire ended, the spirit of complaining returned, as the "mixed multitude" (**Mixed Multitude:** *They were probably the offspring of marriages between the Israelites and the Egyptians; the term may also include all those who were not of 'pure' Israelite blood. In Exodus and Numbers, it probably denoted the miscellaneous hangers-on of the Hebrew camp, whether they were the issue of spurious marriages with Egyptians or were themselves Egyptians, or belonging to other nations.* (Smiths-Bible-Dictionary)) followed the Israelites out of Egypt were tired of eating manna. The Israelites joined in and began complaining they, too, were tired of eating manna every day. They yearned for the days back in Egypt when they freely ate fish, cucumbers, melons, etc. (v. 5).

The smell of fire was still fresh in their nostrils, the Israelites complained about their situation. How quickly they forgotten their enslavement! They reminisced as though they lived as princes and princesses in Egypt. They quickly forgot God's provisions and began to grumble and complain again.

God is able to provide more than we can imagine. The daily provision (manna) from heaven simply exemplified the provisions and the compassion God has for His people. If the Israelites prayed to God instead of murmuring, what would the results might have been?

Reflect on our personal experiences. During times of trials, do we forget God's blessings? Do we complain? Are we unhappy because God has not blessed us with more? Consider all God has done for us. God gives us life, health, strength, family, employment, and many other blessings are too numerous to count. Because we are busy focusing on things we don't have, we appear ungrateful for God's blessings. After just two short years in the wilderness, the Israelites forgot they were enslaved for more than four hundred years when God delivered and saved them for a purpose.

Turn our complaints into praise. Consider praying instead of murmuring. Know our wilderness experiences are moments to praise and thank God for everything He has provided in our life. By faith, ask God to provide for our needs and quietly wait for God's answer. When we take our concerns to God, He hears us and does something about it. Do not lose

sight of God's hand in our life by focusing your attention on things that are not important. Allow God's blessings to lead us, as we live each moment with a grateful heart.

- 2. Moses Complains (Numbers 11:10–15)** God's servant, Moses, did his best for the people. When Moses heard them complaining, he became agitated by their behavior. After all, God blessed the nation by delivering them from slavery, directing them through the wilderness with a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, and providing them with food daily. How could they be so ungrateful? What more could they want?

Moses took his concerns to God. Moses knew he was God's man and his divine commission obligated him to intercede on behalf of the Israelites. He was so overwhelmed by the people's complaints he, himself, began to grumble and complain; so much so, he said he would rather God kill him than make him continue to deal with the ungrateful ramblings of the people (v. 15).

It's amazing how easy it is for someone else to make our life a living hell and cause us to forget God's divine providence. Moses was God's hand-picked servant and yet he would rather die than continue to intercede on behalf of an ungrateful people. While in the desert the Children of Israel witnessed numerous miracles firsthand. Yet they readily joined the "mixed multitude" in complaining when things got a little rough. How about you? Rebellion against God is a serious offense. Because of their ungratefulness, the generation of Israelites who rebelled against God never got to see the Promised Land; they died in the wilderness. The Bible tells us when we are saved, we are granted full access to all the valuable resources God has to offer. God lavishes His resources on us "according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). As believers, it is our job to appreciate the good things God has provided and continually give Him praise for our many blessings.

Application for Activation

The reality is God does not change; He is faithful, omnipotent, omnipresent, and immutable. Do you find yourself complaining about situations instead of focusing on God? Do you need to recommit to following God faithfully? Ask God to forgive your complaining and negativity. Make a decision to focus on God, stop complaining, and begin to pray to God, who can answer.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer



Week of 24 Sep 2023
People Grumble
(Exodus Chapters: 13-15)

Monday: Exodus 13-15

Tuesday: Exodus 16-18

Wednesday: Exodus 19-21

Thursday: Exodus 22-24

Friday: Exodus 25-27

Saturday: Exodus 28-29

Sunday: Exodus 30-32