

# The Book of Numbers

## Murmuring and a Miracle

Text: Numbers 10:11 – 11:35

- I. The Departure from Sinai (Numbers 10:11-28)
- A. After spending 11 months and 20 days at Mount Sinai, the time had come for the Israelites to depart (cf. Exo. 19:1; Deut. 1:6-8).
  - B. They knew it was time to leave because the cloud lifted up from the Tabernacle (cf. 9:17ff).
  - C. The next destination was the wilderness of Paran – a three-day journey with two stops between (10:33; 11:35; 12:16).
  - D. The rest of this section details the marching order of the tribes as they travelled.
- II. The Invitation to Hobab (Numbers 10:29-36)
- A. Earlier, Moses had fled to Midian where he married a daughter of the priest of Midian.
  - B. This man was known both as Reuel and Jethro (Exo. 2:15-18; 3:1; 18:1, 5, 27).
  - C. Here, he is called by another name, Hobab.
    - 1. Some have suggested that this was Moses' brother-in-law, not his father-in-law.
    - 2. In fact, the Hebrew word can be translated as either.
  - D. As Israel prepared to depart, Moses invited Hobab to journey with them to the Promised Land.
    - 1. We will do you good – by fellowship and blessings.
    - 2. God will do you good – because of His promise to Israel (cf. Gen. 12:1-3).
  - E. When he decided to return to his own land, Moses begged him not to leave.
  - F. Though his response is not recorded here, his descendants are found among the Israelites in the land of Canaan (cf. Judges 1:16; 4:11; 1 Sam. 15:6).
- III. The Murmuring of Israel (Numbers 11:1-10)
- A. Keep in mind that this complaining by the children of Israel is after only – at most – three days of travelling!
  - B. The first complaint is not specified, but possibly was linked to the desire for meat.
  - C. It seems to have originated in the uttermost part of the camp – the end of those marching.
    - 1. Perhaps this is where the mixed-multitude were found (vs. 4).
    - 2. Perhaps there were stragglers who lagged behind because they were weary of the journey.
  - D. God sent fire to punish those who complained, but, when Moses prayed, the fire was quenched.
  - E. A second complaint soon began – a cry for meat in the place of manna.
  - F. This murmuring displeased both God and Moses.
- IV. The Appointment of Seventy Elders (Numbers 11:11-17)
- A. At this time, Moses cried out to the Lord due to the heavy burden he was called to bear.
  - B. In response, God commanded him to call 70 elders of Israel to be appointed as his helpers.
  - C. Moses did as God commanded, and God did as He had promised.

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- D. In fact, there were 72 elders appointed – for two men remained in the camp (vs. 25-30).  
{*Or, perhaps, there were 68 who gathered and two remained in the camp, making the total 70.*} (Cf. Mark 9:38-40)

## IV. The Miracle of Quail

(Numbers 11:18-35)

- A. In response to Israel's complaint, God promised to give them meat to eat.
1. In fact, God said that He would give them enough to eat for a month!
  2. He promised to give them so much that they would become sick of it!
- B. Even though this was a blessing from God, it was also a warning with a serious purpose.
- C. God said that He would do this because they had despised Him.
1. This was not a reward for bad behavior.
  2. Instead, it was meant to teach them a lesson about their own character.
  3. In spite of the abundance of God's blessings, they still despised Him.
  4. Because they focused on the negative, they overlooked the many good things God had done for them.
  5. Their ingratitude, selfishness, and worldliness would lead to their destruction.
- D. Moses wondered how God would be able to provide so much meat.
- E. But God instructed him to watch and see (cf. Psalm 78:26-32).
- F. God caused a wind to blow in from the sea an abundance of quail.
- G. As they came in, they fell over the camp of Israel – a diameter of from 16 to 30 miles!
- H. The people stayed up all night and all the next day gathering quail and spreading them out to dry and to cure.
- I. The least amount that was gathered was at least 10 homers – 45 to 55 gallons!
- J. Yet, as soon as they began to eat, God sent a plague among them.
- K. Those who had lusted and despised God were killed and buried.
- L. The place became known as "The graves of greediness."