

12.26 Seventy Elders; the Plague of Quail (Numbers 10:33, 34; 11:1-35; Psalm 78:26–33)

(The teacher might combine this story with “12.27 Miriam and Aaron Complain Against Moses.”)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- “Life of Moses” Series 3 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Fish (or a picture of one), cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic
- Coriander seed (looks like manna)
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006. Ideas or quotes from this source will be noted by (Ganz).

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *craving*: an intense desire or lust for something
- *misfortunes*: difficulties of life
- *consecrate*: to set apart, making oneself clean in anticipation of God’s word and/or work

Scripture (ESV)

Numbers 10:33 Thus they set out from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them. 34 The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp.

11:1 And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. 2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down. 3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.” 7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. 8 The people went about and gathered it and ground it in handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil. 9 When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it.

10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the Lord blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. 11 Moses said to the Lord, “Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? 12 Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to give their fathers? 13 Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ 14 I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. 15 If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”

16 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their

stand there with you. 17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone. 18 And say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, Who will give us meat to eat? For it was better for us in Egypt. Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, 20 but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before him, saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?’” 21 But Moses said, “The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!’ 22 Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?” 23 And the Lord said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.”

24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. 25 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

26 Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” 28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” 29 But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” 30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

31 Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the ground. 32 And the people rose all that day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. 33 While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague. 34 Therefore the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had the craving. 35 From Kibroth-hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.

Psalm 78:26 He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
And by His power He directed the south wind.

27 When He rained meat upon them like the dust,
Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,
28 Then He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their dwellings.

29 So they ate and were well filled,
And their desire He gave to them.
30 Before they had satisfied their desire,
While their food was in their mouths,
31 The anger of God rose against them
And killed some of their stoutest ones,
And subdued the choice men of Israel.

32 In spite of all this they still sinned
And did not believe in His wonderful works.
33 So He brought their days to an end in futility
And their years in sudden terror.

Introduction/Review:

God had provided for and protected the 2.5 million people of Israel for almost a year! They had food and

water in a wilderness. God had brought them through the Red Sea on dry ground. He had saved them from the Amalekites. His presence and guidance was clearly visible in the pillar of cloud and fire. God spoke directly to Moses to let them know His own desire. So much more could be said about the loving care of the one true God, the Lord God of Israel.

In spite of all these blessings from God, the people had complained. So far, we have seen the people majorly complain at least five times. [Teacher, review the “Murmurings of the Israelites” chart found at the end of this lesson. Do not include #6 and 7 in this review.] Will they ever learn to trust the Lord?

Will *we* ever learn to trust the Lord? One time when I was at a convention of women, some minor thing had gone wrong. I don’t remember the difficulty, but let’s say our lunchtime was delayed. When the problem was announced, a great murmur went up from the audience.

The lady in charge quietly asked, “Do I hear the Children of Israel?” We women were gently rebuked, for we had all been murmuring just like the people of Israel whom we had so often criticized.

Maybe we need to remember not to judge the Israelites too severely and to realize how much we are like them in our complaints. May we learn from their bad example and trust the Lord without complaining.

Story:

Misfortunes

Talk about complaining! It’s the major theme in today’s lesson. God’s cloud had led the people, ✓stopping for eating and resting, for about eight miles.* Whether the people spoke out loud or whispered or merely murmured their complaints in their hearts, God heard them: “The people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes.”

*Misfortunes?! ✓*Certainly it wasn’t easy to travel after living in one place for a year, but *God* was leading them.

What did God do about this griping against Him? When the Lord heard the complaining, he became angry and sent fire. It was called “the fire of the Lord,” and it consumed some of the people in the outlying parts of the camp.

The people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord. When he prayed, the fire died down, but that place was always remembered as the place of fire (Taberah) because the fire of the Lord had burned there.

Remembering

One would think this burning would be a good warning, but it wasn’t. Some of the people began to think back to some of their food in Egypt: cucumbers, onions, fish, melons, leeks (like huge green onions), garlic. Now, all they had to eat was manna, tasty and versatile as it was.

✓“Hey, Saul!” called one man as he marched. “Do you remember how we used to season our food with garlic and onions? Those were good-eatin’ days! To tell you the truth, I’m getting pretty tired of this manna. The wife boils it, bakes it, and serves it raw. It’s pretty amazing how God provides it for all of us every single day and how it provides all the nutrients we need, but I sure would like to eat some meat.”

✓“Yeah, I agree,” answered Saul.

Complaining

You know how a disgruntled spirit spreads: it starts first in one person, then in the family, then in the neighborhood, and then to a multitude. More and more Israelites began complaining and even began to cry. “Boohoo! Oh, that we had meat to eat! We remember the food we ate in Egypt, but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

Were they saying they wished to be back in Egypt? Didn’t they remember that they had been under the whip

of slavery in Egypt? Did they really want to exchange their freedom for some onions?!

Pretty soon, there was an uproar of complaints, not just for a change of diet but a real rebellion against God! [See Nancy Ganz's book on Numbers for ways in which they rejected God.]

Despairing

God heard and saw this rebellion, and "His anger burned hotly." Moses, too, heard and saw this revolt and was displeased; actually, he was fed up. "Why did you give me the burden of all these people?" he himself complained. "Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' I am not able to carry all these people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. Why don't you just kill me at once? ✓I can't take it anymore!"

Helping

Although God was angry with the people, He was very gracious to Moses! God asked Moses to gather seventy elders around the tabernacle. Then He put His Spirit upon those men so that they could help Moses carry the burden. When the Spirit came upon them, the seventy men prophesied just as Moses had.

As for the rest of the people, God said, "Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow. You want meat to eat? You will eat meat, not just one day, two days, five days, ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month. It will come out your nostrils and become loathsome to you because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before him, saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?'"

"What?" said Moses. "How can this happen? The people number six hundred thousand soldiers and you have said, 'I will give them meat that they may eat a whole month!' Shall all our flocks and herds be slaughtered for them and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them and be enough for them?"

The Lord said to Moses, "Is My hand short so that I am unable to do as I say? Just wait and see if my word will come true for you."

Providing

Then the Lord caused a wind to come up. That wind brought quail—beautiful, tasty birds— from the sea. They flew low, about two cubits (three feet), above the ground. How easy it was to catch those quail! The people gathered birds all that day and all night and all the next day. No one gathered less than ✓60 bushels! They spread quail out for themselves all around the camp so that they could preserve them by dehydrating them—like beef jerky.

The people ate some of the quail fresh-cooked, but while the meat was being chewed and before it was swallowed, the Lord roused His anger against the people for their rebellion against Him. He struck the people with a very great plague. It was appropriate to name that place Kibroth-hattaavah, which means "graves of craving" because they buried the people there who had craved meat and had caused a huge complaint against God.

*"[A]ccording to Bunting, Taberah . . . to which the children of Israel first came, and where they abode a month, was but eight miles from Sinai; wherefore the three days' journey were not successively one after another, but the first day's journey was to Taberah . . . ; the second day's journey was to Hazeroth, where they stayed seven days; and the third day's journey was to the wilderness of Paran, and there the cloud rested, (Numbers 10:12); and there was their resting place, for there they continued long, from whence the spies were sent to the good land, and whither they returned after forty days, (Numbers 13:1–3, 25) (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/numbers-10-33.html>).

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

As Moses interceded for the people after God consumed some with fire, so Jesus is our mediator between God and man: God's wrath is turned away from His people because of the cross work of Jesus.

- Don't complain; it is to reject the Lord and His will for you. Trust Him instead.
- Don't complain about your leaders; they are appointed by God: "Touch not the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 26:9).

Activities:

- Play dough: onions, leeks, garlic, melons, fish, quail
- Snack: Chicken jerky or turkey jerky [I found some in my local Safeway store.] Let students taste onions, leeks, garlic, melons, and/or fish.
- Read Psalm 78:26-33 (found above) antiphonally. Boys can read one line and girls, the second.
- Review questions: (Game: Use the game with tabernacle furniture and a cross found in Lesson 12.19). (Some of these questions are from Nancy Ganz.)
 1. Why were the Israelites whining and wailing? [They wanted food from Egypt; they wanted meat.]
 2. Name two foods the people whined about. [Onions, leeks, garlic, melons, fish.]
 3. Why did the Israelites have no right to complain? What had God done for them? [He was with them, provided for them, led them, protected them from enemies, *etc.*]
 4. What effect did the Israelites' rebellion have on Moses? [He felt overburdened, needing help.]
 5. How did the Lord answer Moses' prayer? [God gave him seventy men to help him.]
 6. Where did the seventy elders gather? [Around the tabernacle.]
 7. What did God give to each of the seventy elders? [A portion of the Spirit He had given Moses.]
 8. What effect did the Israelites' rebellion have on God? [He was greatly angered.]
 9. How did God supply the request? [Sent quail.]
 10. How did God punish the rebellion? [People died in a great plague at the time they ate the quail.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the "Exodus 20:1–17" song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the "Lessons" and "Songs" pages at teachingthebibleto kids.org. "Stop! It's the Law," a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same "Songs" page.

Handwork:

- Make a quail. See instructions at <https://www.cindyderosier.com/2013/03/q-is-for-quail.html>.



craving

consecrate

Murmurings of the Israelites

Place	Problem	Provision/Punishment
1. Red Sea	“Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”	Crossed the Red Sea on dry ground (Ex. 14:11, 12)
2. Marah (bitter)	“What shall we drink?”	Water sweetened with a tree (Ex. 15:24)
3. Wilderness of Sin	“Would that we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”	Manna provided (Ex. 16:3)
4. Rephidim/Horeb/ Massah/Meribah	“Give us water that we may drink. . . . Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”	Water from the stricken rock (Ex. 17:2,3)
God’s Covenant Made with Israel at Sinai		(Note that God now, since He has made His covenant promises, begins to punish for complaining.)
5. Mount Sinai/ Horeb	“Moses is gone. Make us a god.”	3000 died in punishment; God’s presence went with them even though they were stiff-necked
6. Taberah (“fire”)	(complaints about misfortunes)	God sent a fire to burn in the outskirts of the camp
7. Kibroth-hattaavah (“craving”)	“Oh that we had meat to eat!”	God gave a month’s worth of quail but sent a great plague that slew many









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<http://freerepublic.com/focus/religion/3197909/posts>

