

Part Two: Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (10:11–14:45)

I. FROM SINAI TO HAZEROTH (10:11–12:16)

A. DEPARTURE, AND ORDER OF MARCH, vv. 11-28

TEXT

Chapter 10:11. And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. 12. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

14. In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nathaneel the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon. 17. And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of tribe of the children of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against they came.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama the son of Ammihud. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni.

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, which was the rearward of all the camps throughout

their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. 28. Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:11. And it happened on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was lifted from the Tabernacle of the Testimony. 12. Then the children of Israel began their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first began their travel according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 14. In the front went the standard of the camp of Judah, according to their armies; and leading his host was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel, the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliav, the son of Helon. 17. And the Tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari went forward, carrying the Tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur, the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of Simeon was Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of the tribe of the children Gad was Eliasaph, the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites went forward, carrying the sanctuary: and the others set up the Tabernacle before their arrival.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama, the son of Ammihad. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan, the son of Gideoni.

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan

went forward, which was the rear side of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel, the son of Okhran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira, the son of Enan. 28. These were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies; then they went forward.

COMMENTARY

Israel had arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month after their departure from Egypt (Ex. 19:1). Now, on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, they are summoned for their first march after receiving the Law. It will be the beginning of a long and arduous trip—much longer and more difficult than even the most gloomy pessimist among them might have guessed. Little do they know that only two of their number above the age of twenty years will ultimately walk across the Jordan River into the Land of Promise; indeed, they know nothing of the circumstances which will make it necessary to take the round-about route from the east rather than the nearer, logical approach from the south. It will be their own stubbornness and lack of faith which will make the difference, and this will cost them dearly: more than thirty-eight years must be spent going from place to place in a barren, waste area before they are finally led of God through Moab.

The land in which most of the intervening time will be spent, called Paran, and, in its northern section, the Negev, is a large desert plateau. It is bounded on the east by the slash of Arabah (that portion of a 3000 mile long geological fault which has resulted in, among other things, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea). On the southwest, the border is the desert of Shur, the generally acknowledged border between Egypt and Philistia. To the north, the barrenness slowly melds into the more hospitable hills of the Amorites, which formed the southern border of Canaan. The Arabs have called the general region *et Tib*, the wandering-place of the children of Israel. Its sandy soil extends approximately 150 miles from north to south, and

virtually the same from east to west. Divided nearly exactly in half by the Wady el Arish, the district is lower in the western half than in the eastern, which rises to lofty mountain heights broken up by many small wadies and large tableland areas. It is hostile country, and far from an ideal place for normal life; this, it would seem, should have made the Israelites even more eager to move quickly into the Land of Promise. That they did not is a reflection upon their unstable faith, and their rejection of the favorable report of the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

As the cloud was removed from the Tabernacle and the trumpet sounded, the tribe of Judah led the way from Sinai, moving in an almost due north path toward Kadesh-barnea, after a brief northeasterly trek to Hazeroth. There is a slight alteration in the original plan of marching: the Levites, instead of traveling all together, are divided to place the Gershonites and the Merarites after Judah and before Reuben. This allows them, ahead of the Kohathites to erect the Tent of Meeting in advance of its furnishings. It is unnecessary to list the order in which the rest of the tribes follow, other than to demonstrate that they did so in accordance with the divine orders. We may conclude that this experience in such marching became the set pattern for later occasions.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

180. How long had the Israelites actually been living at Mt. Sinai?
181. How long would it be before the Land of Promise was actually theirs at the crossing of the Jordan?
182. Describe the chief characteristics of the territory through which the tribes were to march, and in which they would live for the next several years.
183. What signalled the fact that the tribes were to pack up their belongings and move?
184. Why is the original order of march slightly altered now?
185. For what reason are we taken through the entire order of the first nine tribes' departure, without completing the list with the final three tribes?

B. AN INVITATION TO HOBAB vv. 29-32

TEXT

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. 30. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. 31. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. 32. And it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are traveling to the place the Lord spoke about. I will give it to you; come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord has spoken good things concerning Israel." 30. And he said to him, "I will not go; instead, I will return to my own land and to my relatives." 31. And Moses said, "I pray you, do not leave us since you know we are to camp in the wilderness, and you may be more helpful to us than eyes. 32. And it shall be if you go with us that whatever good the Lord shall do to us, we will do the same to you."

COMMENTARY

Hobab is the son of Raguel (another spelling of *Reuel*, based upon the *LXX*: he is also known as Jethro, Ex. 2:18), and hence Moses' brother-in-law. He is invited to accompany the Israelites for two very good reasons, either of which alone would seem sufficient: first, by joining himself to Israel he and his family may share in the rich blessings anticipated by the nation; and, having lived all his life in this area and others similar, Hobab could be invaluable both as a guide and an

instructor in adjustments to living in the desert. This is the gist of v. 31. The initial refusal of Hobab was not accepted by Moses, who repeated the invitation in greater detail.

It is generally assumed that Hobab did join with the Israelites, since it is more probable that a negative answer would have been recorded than an affirmative one, which seems properly inferred from the abrupt ending. Nevertheless, we do not find Hobab's name, nor that of his family and descendants, among the later lists of the children of Israel. He is said to dwell among the children of Judah in Judges 1:16. Since Judah led the march, it is logical that Hobab would have become fixed among this tribe, even if he were not actually made a part of the tribe itself.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

186. Look up the background of the Midianites: the type of life they lived, the areas in which they traveled, and their chief occupation. How would they be especially fitted to aid the Israelites in adjusting to life in Paran?
187. Why did Hobab refuse Moses' invitation the first time it was extended to him?
188. What do we know of Hobab's descendants in later history? Why did they settle where they did?

C. THE CLOUD AND THE ARK LEAD THE PEOPLE

vv. 33-36

TEXT

Chapter 10:33. And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. 35. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. 36. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:33. And they went a three-days' journey from the mount of the Lord; and the ark of the covenant went ahead of them during the three days' journey to find a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they left the camp. 35. And it happened that when the ark went forth that Moses said, "Rise up, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered; and let those who hate you flee before you." 36. And when it rested he said, "Return, Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

COMMENTARY

From this time onward, the nation will be led by the very Presence, symbolized by the cloud and the pillar which attended and preceded the ark of the covenant. This one great difference would be reassuring at all times. Their first leg of the journey occupies three days, suggesting two nights without establishing a camp. They were traversing difficult, sandy terrain. *PC* claims that "a modern army, unencumbered with non-combatants, does not make more than ten miles a day over difficult country, nor can cattle be driven faster than that," p. 98. From Mt. Sinai to the first known station, Hazereth, is a distance of nearly twice that traveled in the first three days.

With the ark of the covenant moving before them, the Israelites set out. The usual place for the cloud was above the ark while it was within the Tabernacle. It is not certain whether the cloud encompassed the ark as it was being transported, but this seems unlikely, since the vision of the carrier Kohathites would have been obscured. The full description of the appearance of the cloud implies that it stretched backward above the entire company of the people, and far enough ahead to guide the journey of those carrying the ark.

The sixty-eighth Psalm is considered to be an enlargement of Moses' prayer as the ark moves forward (*PC*, p. 99). The initial verse, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him," is certainly similar

enough to suggest Moses' words as the basis upon which David composed the song. The words apparently were spoken whenever the ark was moved; this custom may have continued until the ark found its resting place within the Temple.

A counterpart may be seen when the ark rested: Moses invokes the Lord's return to the myriads of Israel after He has scattered their enemies and caused them to flee from His presence. The contrast between the power of God in destroying Israel's enemies and in protecting Israel is beautifully developed in the whole of Psalm 68 (q. v.). Both prayers of Moses, given in the briefest of forms, are rich and significant.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

189. In what respect was the marching order now changed as Israel left Mt. Sinai? Why?
190. Describe the land into which the Israelites were entering.
191. About how far might such a company expect to move daily?
192. Show how the cloud might have been established to conform to the description given in the text.

D. COMPLAINT AND PUNISHMENT AT TABERAH

(11:1-3)

TEXT

Chapter 11:1. 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 burnt among them, and consumed them that 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: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:1. Now the people complained and it displeased the Lord: He heard it and His anger was kindled; and the fire of

the Lord burned among them, and consumed those who were in the outer sections of the camp. 2. Then the people cried out to Moses; and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire was quenched. 3. And he called the place Taberah because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

COMMENTARY

Several factors combine to produce the probable causes of the complaints during Israel's first march from Sinai. *PC* mentions fatigue and anxiety in the march; the year of comparative idleness; the frightful nature of the country into which they were coming; the unknown terrors of the way before them (p. 102). To face such trials, it would be necessary for them to trust implicitly in the God who had promised to lead them and care for their needs. Having but recently been slaves, it is conceivable that the people found such a trust very difficult, despite the signs already given them that God made no foolish, unwarranted pledges.

Even so, the complaints are unjustified. Their needs had always been supplied, often in dramatic and convincing form. The people are, after all, but little more than a year removed from the confounding of Pharaoh's army at the crossing of the Red Sea; they are but a few months removed from the disastrous defection at Sinai when the calf of gold had been erected. From these and other incidents, they might be expected to have found that reliance upon the Lord was a confidence well placed. We are given no precise grounds for their murmuring on this occasion; perhaps no single incident was the precipitator. The dissatisfaction seems to have been general in nature, and significant enough to bring the Lord's intervention dramatically into play.

The fire, whatever its exact nature and however it was brought unto the people, was limited to the outer portion of tents, probably consuming the tents and their occupants. The Targum of Palestine assigns the fire to the tribe of Dan, where a graven image had been concealed; the tradition is remote and

unsupported, and may actually be an anticipation of the defection of Dan reported in Judges 18.

IB states, without evidence, that the place called Taberah was established before the Israelites came upon the grounds; that the story told here is but a familiar legend from the Near East which has been adapted and entered into the text to demonstrate Yaweh's guidance to the spot, p. 193. The assertion is totally unsupported excepting by the wishful thinking of the commentator.

Whether the incident occurred before, during or after the three days' march has been much discussed. Since the tribes were encamped, it seems unlikely they were marching and merely settled down for the night. The site of Taberah, then, would either be near Sinai or, as *PC* suggests may be an earlier name for Kibroth-Hattaavah, p. 103. The exact spot cannot be identified today.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

193. Compare those grounds the Israelites might have used as the basis of their complaints with those factors which should have prevented such complaining.
194. Where did the fire visit? What tradition has grown up about it?
195. What can we say about the nature of this fire?
196. How was the fire ended?
197. What does "Taberah" mean?
198. What can be said about the location of this place?

E. BITTER EXPERIENCE AT THE "GRAVES OF LUST" (KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH), vv. 4-35

TEXT

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a 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 did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes. 7. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. 8. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. 9. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

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, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore 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 swarest unto their fathers? 13. 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 them, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. 18. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten

days, nor twenty days; 20. But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? 21. And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. 22. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? 23. And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

24. And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. 25. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. 26. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. 27. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. 28. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. 29. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them. 30. And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day,

and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. 33. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. 34. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because they buried the people that lusted. 35. And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude among them lusted greatly. And the children of Israel also wept again, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? 5. We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. but now our soul is withered away: there is nothing at all excepting this manna for us to see." 7. And the manna was like coriander seed, and its color was like the color of bdellium. 8. The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills or boiled it in a pot and made cakes of it: and its taste was like that of a cake baked with oil. 9. When the dew fell upon the camp during the night, the manna fell with it.

10. And Moses heard the entire families of the people weeping, each man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord burned greatly, and Moses was displeased. 11. And Moses said to the Lord, "Why have you afflicted your servant? and why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all these people upon me? 12. Have I not conceived all these people? have I not begotten them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father carries the sucking child, to the land you have pledged unto their fathers?' 13. From what source should I have meat to give to all these people? because they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat for us to eat.' 14. I am not able to bear all these people alone; it is too heavy for me. 15. And if you deal this way with us, kill me, I pray, here and now if I have found favor in your sight. Do not

let me see my own misery."

16. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let them stand there with you. 17. I will come down and talk with you there: and I will take of the Spirit which is upon you, and I will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you so that you shall not bear it all alone. 18. "And say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat'; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, 'Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt.'" Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20. but an entire month, until it comes out your nostrils, and is loathsome to you; because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we leave Egypt?"' " 21. And Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 foot soldiers; yet you have said, 'I will give you meat to let them eat for an entire month.' 22. Shall flocks and herds be killed for them, to satisfy them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to satisfy them?" 23. And the Lord said to Moses, "Is the Lord's hand too short? You shall see now whether my word will come to pass to you or not."

24. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the Tent. 25. Then the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit who was upon him, and gave it to the seventy elders; and it happened that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied; but they did not do it again. 26. But two men had remained in camp. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the second, Medad: and the Spirit rested upon them—they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the Tent—and they prophesied in the camp. So a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in

the camp." 28. Then Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, "Moses my lord, restrain them." 29. But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" 30. Then Moses retired into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. Now a wind went forth from the Lord and brought quail from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about three feet deep on the surface of the ground. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail: he who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. 33. And while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a grave plague. 34. Therefore he called the name of that place Qivroth-hatta'wah (Graves of Lust), because there they buried the people who lusted. From Qivroth-hatta'wah they traveled to Hatseroth, and they stayed at Hatseroth.

COMMENTARY

The term "mixed multitude" is generally understood to mean those riff-raffs who had attached themselves to Israel when leaving Egypt. Some have thought them to be renegade Israelites; others believe they were combination marriages of Israelites and Egyptians. They are mentioned twice elsewhere—as a group in Ex. 12:38, and in an individual instance in Lev. 24:10; both times the occasions are altogether unfavorable. How many of them there were is an unsettled question, but any appreciable number could cause a deterioration of morale quickly. Their wish here is for some of the rich, strongly flavored foods they had enjoyed in Egypt. The wish is shared by Israel, which also "wept again." The "flesh" for which they cry is a general term for all meat. The animals which Israel brought forth with them during the exodus

would hardly have kept their tables supplied with meat, and no real help might have been gained from the locale. Wild animals are sparse enough to be rare.

However unusual it might seem to our tastes that the complaint was for such items as leeks, onions and garlic, we must remember that all of these were delicacies to the Egyptians, as well as other residents of the Middle East. We should not assume, as v. 5 suggests, that the Israelites were given their food for nothing, literally, for as *RCP* shows, the Egyptians were unwilling even to give them the straw necessary for bricks, p. 134. The same source further affirms that the people were murmuring on a trumped-up pretext, since the text would later say that the "Children of Reuben had much cattle," (32:1). Their statement that their souls had withered away may have been correct (v. 6); but they were entirely incorrect in attributing the fact to the matter of their food. The obvious fact is that they had lost their faith in a providential God—assuming that this rabble had had some faith in Him earlier.

The description of manna given in verses 7-9 is only a brief summary of that in Ex. 16:14-30. In the fuller passage, we learn of the versatility of manna: it was capable of being baked or boiled, suggesting a food like our potato whose use is limited only to the genius of the cook herself. Evidently God provided the manna with a careful balance of nutrients to safeguard the health of the people who would eat little else for forty years.

Is the factor of food the only cause for the unhappiness among the Israelites? It is not likely, and the Talmud suggests that the root cause was actually the firm line Jehovah had taken against the marriage of near of kin to one another. Their protests annoy both the Lord and Moses. The former is displeased because of the ingratitude and ungoverned passions of His people; Moses is disturbed because of the consequences of their complaints. They have placed an unbearable burden upon him. His situation is similar to that described in Ex. 18, when Jethro suggested a relief from the intensity of judging all

difficulties through the appointment of judges for lesser problems. Moses is entirely correct when he says, "I am not able to bear all these people alone"; and God did not intend for it to be his sole responsibility.

The dialogue of 10-20 is one of several intimate glimpses we have of the relationship Moses enjoyed with Jehovah. The conversation is much too frank and realistic to have been imagined. We gain a very human picture of Moses, lending strong credence to the genuineness of the text. We are also shown once more the intensity with which this great man identifies himself with his people; even when they are under strong threat. If they are to perish, he will go with them.

In giving of His Spirit to the seventy elders of the people, nothing of the Divine Presence in Moses was diminished, (v. 17). The Holy Spirit may indwell every living person alive at any given time to the full capacity of each. Such is certainly a part of our concept of the omnipresence of God. The seventy will be specially heightened in their powers of weighing right and wrong in settling disputes; they will thus shoulder a portion of the load which has, to this point been Moses' exclusively.

It is fascinating to realize now that God insisted upon having all the people prepare themselves for His revelation by undergoing the process of sanctification; and the purpose of this revelation is to demonstrate His righteous wrath. Severe punishment will follow. Their false words, that all had been well in Egypt, are typical of a spirit of ungratefulness, and show what short memories they had. The arduous burdens of servitude are forgotten, and the few occasional pleasures such as the foods, have been remembered disproportionately. We can only think of them as rather typical—too very much like ourselves.

For many of the murmurers, the food they are about to eat will constitute their last meal. God promises meat in such abundance that they shall eat for an entire month, adding the graphic picture that the food will come out of their nostrils and be loathsome to them. The points to be established are clear:

the people must be sternly rebuked for their complaints and ingratitude; they must be brought to see the mighty power of God again as He provides such a vast quantity of food for them, demonstrating that His hand is by no means shortened; they must come to trust Him to provide their every need, but not to cater to their trivial whims and wants; they must be brought to realize that their present state is infinitely better than their former, and the promised covenant land will shortly be available to them, unless their faith falters. The real key to the Lord's words is the statement that they "have despised the Lord," (v. 20). In this state, we should not be surprised at any actions or any foolish words. The emerging pattern is clear: their love has cooled, they take up unfounded complaints, and the next step would be rebellion.

We can hardly blame Moses for wondering where the Lord will find an adequate quantity of meat for the soldiers, not to mention their families and all the Israelites. He had been frustrated before, as Israel stood at the beach of the Red Sea, having not the least idea of God's plan to divide the waters. He had been uncertain as the Israelites murmured for water. How can he conceivably anticipate the actions of God, when the promise is made to feed the people for an entire month on meat which is not their own? His suggestion that the answer may come from fish out of the sea is typical of his confusion. They are a great distance from any sizeable body of water—at least 20 miles from the Gulf of Aqaba—and whether or not any quantity of fish might be available from this source is highly doubtful. God's rebuke once more is spoken with the typical intimacy between Himself and Moses. Even the great leader needed prodding occasionally, which brings us to see that he was, after all, only a man, however noble. The figure of God's shortened hand suggests His inability to accomplish His purposes. Isaiah used the figure with the same meaning (1:2; 59:1). It is both simple and expressive, occurring here rhetorically. The answer Moses must give is a resounding "No".

The Lord's descent into the Tabernacle is indicated by the cloud once more, and this time under abnormal circumstances.

The seventy specially appointed elders are at hand as the Spirit of the Lord is shared. The scene is allegorized by *RCP*: "What was Moses like at that moment? He was like a light placed in a candlestick from which everyone kindles additional lights, and yet the illumination of the original light is by no means diminished," (p. 136). Their prophesying is limited to this day alone; but it served to demonstrate to the people that God had in fact set them apart unto a holy work. It was a faith-building demonstration.

We cannot know why Eldad and Medad did not join with the others at the Tabernacle. They were, nevertheless, equally endowed with the Spirit and empowered to prophesy. No doubt their reason for abstention was acceptable to the Lord. We cannot fault them, nor can we criticize the young man who reported their works. He might have thought their actions were deliberate disobedience which he was obligated to report. Even Joshua considers their actions in error, and asks for their correction and restraint. He is mildly rebuked by Moses, who sees the deeper issue: God has evidently approved their conduct, since they have shared in the gift of His Spirit. If God approves of their situation, they should be encouraged rather than condemned. It is more to be desired that all of the people might share in this *charisma*. With this preliminary sign, God has prepared the way for the great miracle which is to follow.

A specially prepared wind from the Lord, said to have come from the south and east (Ps. 78:26) rained quail upon the camp in vast quantities. Great migrations of quail have been seen in this area, flying from Africa to Europe in the spring. Using the great wind, He sent the quail off their normal course and directly to the camp. There they were literally said to have been "thrown down" among the Israelites to the depth of about three feet, where they were gathered in vast quantities by the people. It is difficult to say exactly how large these quantities were, since the homer was a variable measure. The size of the homer is often given as ten ephahs, or about two bushels. Whatever the precise amount might have been, it was quite sufficient to show that this was no normal phenomenon. God

was keeping His word literally that there would be enough to suffice for one month. All this would both "shame their unbelief" and "punish their greediness," (*KD*, p. 73). No doubt the quail would have been widely spread over the earth to dry, since their consumption would require many days.

The account now takes an unexpected turn. *PC* proposes to explain the visitation of divine wrath, attributing it to the greediness of the people in gathering such great measures of the quail in anticipation of later feasts, while postponing their enjoyment of the divinely given food, p. 112. It may rather be that, despite this great manifestation of God's providence, the hearts of the murmurers were unmoved, ungrateful and still disrespectful toward the Lord. Their motive is indicated by the name attached to the place: "Graves of greediness"; a greedy spirit cannot allow for gratitude. The location of the spot is not known, nor do we know how long the camp remained. It is certain they were not now permitted to eat of the meat for the thirty days; the patience of the Lord had been exhausted.

Hazereth, to which Israel is now led, has been identified with a fountain named Ain el Hadhera; but the identification is based solely upon similarity of the words. Like most of the other desert stations, it would be more remarkable if they could be identified than if they could not, since they represent only temporary campsites.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

199. Discuss the "mixed multitude" among the Israelites—who they were, why they were a source of difficulty, and the purported reasons for their complaints.
200. Why were the murmurings of these people of such concern to the Lord?
201. Why did the Israelites not supplement the manna with meat gained from hunting?
202. In what ways were these complainers misrepresenting their situation in Egypt? Show how their position was typical of human nature.

203. Suggest some of the ways in which manna might have been prepared.
204. What was the possible underlying cause for all the unhappiness of the crowd?
205. How is Moses' situation here similar to his previous experience in judging the people?
206. Analyze the warmly human characteristics of Moses as they emerge in his dialogue with the Lord (vv. 10-20).
207. Why did Moses continually identify himself with his people, rather than recognize the foolishness of their complaining natures?
208. For what immediate purposes did the Lord grant His Spirit to the seventy elders? Why did they prophesy? Why did this special gift not continue?
209. What purposes would be served if the Lord provided enough meat for all the children of Israel to eat for one month?
210. Why did Moses not simply accept the fact that God would be able to accomplish this feat?
211. Explain the phrase, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"
212. Were there legitimate reasons that Eldad and Medad did not go with the other elders to the Tent of Meetings? How can you justify their absence?
213. How could such a vast quantity of quail be at precisely this place at the exact time the Lord had foretold their coming?
214. Why is the action of the wind important in this event?
215. How long did the Israelites spend in gathering the birds? In what quantities were they taken?
216. God had said the people would eat of the meat for one month; what actually happened, and why?
217. Why is it difficult to identify many of the stations at which the Israelites camped in the wilderness?

F. FOOLISH CONDUCT OF MIRIAM AND AARON
AND RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM (12:1-16)

TEXT

Chapter 12:1. And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. 3. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) 4. And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come ye out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. 10. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was

brought out again. 16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 12:1. Then Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married (for he had married an Ethiopian woman). 2. And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses? Has he not spoken with us as well?" And the Lord heard it. 3. Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than all the men upon the face of the earth. 4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the Tent of Meeting!" And the three came out. 5. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, in the door of the Tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they came out, He said, "Now hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. But not so with my servant Moses: 7. he is the reliable one in all my household. 8. I speak with him mouth to mouth, openly, and not in veiled messages; and he sees the very likeness of the Lord. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9. So the anger of the Lord burned against them, and He left. 10. Now the cloud was removed from the Tent, and lo, Miriam was snow white, stricken with leprosy. Aaron looked at Miriam, and behold, she was diseased. 11. And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my Lord, I beg you, do not lay this sin upon us; we have behaved foolishly: we have sinned. 12. Do not let her become as a dead person whose flesh is half consumed when he emerges from his mother's womb!" 13. And Moses pleaded with the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I pray you." 14. But the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had only spit on her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days; after that she may be received back again. 15. And Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam was returned to them. 16. Afterward the people left Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

COMMENTARY

Life is plagued by many types of problems. We now face one of the more common and troublesome: Miriam turns upon her brother in a vicious, verbal assault with two thrusts. She is critical of his wife, and she is envious of his special and unique relationship with God. *PC* gives five reasons for laying the sin specifically at Miriam's feet: she is named first in the account; the verb is in the feminine, and properly says, "she spoke out against"; the attack is "a peculiarly feminine one"; she alone was punished; and, Aaron never led out in anything. The third and fifth arguments seem very thin and inconclusive; it is the fourth which would especially establish her great guilt. No penalty of any kind visits Aaron.

Commentators are much divided over the identification of Moses' wife in the passage. Some contend that the reference could not conceivably be to Zipporah, who was a Midianite, not a Cushite or Ethiopian. They suggest, therefore, that Zipporah was dead and Moses had but recently remarried. The argument is altogether from silence, unless one reads such an inference into this passage. Others suggest Moses had taken a second wife, a most improbable proposal, and one the Lord certainly could not have approved without comment of any kind anywhere in the record. Yet others believe Moses' wife's beauty is being compared to that of a Cushite woman's. This is the position of *RCP*, which uses a process of numerology to establish the claim. The word for "Cushite" has a numerical value of 736, the same numerical value as *yefat mareb* ("a woman of beautiful appearance"). Numerologists may give some credence to such speculation, but they must stand alone.

As for the criticisms themselves, they were of a most unkind sort. The criticism of Moses for having married a woman other than an Israelite should have come from the Lord, not Miriam, if there were grounds for any criticism. It is generally assumed that Miriam's motivation was jealousy, which may well be correct. With all the other burdens Moses was carrying, the last thing he needed was for members of his own family to turn

upon him with such a vindictive spirit. After all, Miriam herself had been distinguished above all the other women when she was made a prophetess—the only one of whom we have record among the people; and Aaron was established as the high priest, than which there was no higher office of permanent nature among the Israelites. Only pride and envy could account for the manner in which the two unite in their criticisms. God had, after all, also spoken through them as well as through Moses, as they confess, v. 2.

The next verse, (v. 3), has bothered countless commentators, as in *IB*: “This verse gave much difficulty to those who were concerned to assert the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The point is, simply, that Moses would not have written so of his own meekness; this would be the most certain indication that he lacked humility.” But such a position ignores other possibilities. If God deemed it appropriate that the account should make such a note at this point, where it surely fits, and instructed Moses to state the fact, in no sense could we understand this to have been a boastful assertion of the great man. It has been asserted that the verse was added to the original, and was not the work of Moses himself. We cannot deny the possibility; and, in fact, the *KJV* puts the verse in parentheses as an apparent indication of this. Whatever the actual explanation, one fact is supremely clear, and that is the truth of the statement itself. Moving from year to year and incident to incident throughout the life of Moses, we cannot but marvel at the unbounded humility of so significant a man. This would make the onslaught against him even more difficult to bear, and virtually impossible for the man himself to counter successfully.

God’s manner of calling specially to the three is unusual and unexpected. It is thought that the call came simultaneously, and to them at their individual residences. They meet at the Tent, and from that point Aaron and Miriam are separated from Moses.

The divine message is prefaced by a well-understood fact:

when God spoke to the ordinary prophet, He used the technique of dreams or visions. Neither of these methods should be limited to day-time occurrences, however, since nocturnal revelations are a distinct rarity in the Scriptures. They were, nevertheless, less distinctive than the method God used in speaking to Moses: "mouth to mouth." The thought is identical to that of Ex. 33:11, "face to face." Messages to others came darkly, as in riddles or mysterious utterances. To Moses, He spoke clearly, unambiguously.

Even Moses did not look directly upon the face of God. He beheld His "similitude", or the "aftereffects", as in Ex. 33:22, 23. After having lived forty days in intimacy with God, some of the glory of God Himself was infused upon Moses' own face, and the Israelites could not look upon him until he was veiled (Ex. 34:29-35). This transmitted glory must yet have been grossly less than that of God Himself. Aaron and Miriam ought to have been totally ashamed of having expressed themselves derogatorily.

When the cloud of the Divine Presence was lifted, Aaron noticed the leprous condition of Miriam. It is an indication that she had led the verbal assault upon Moses. The fact that her skin was white would indicate she had been visited by a milder form of leprosy. Even so, leprosy in any form is to be greatly dreaded, and this would be sufficient to cut her off from her people for life, or for the duration of the plague itself. Aaron is quick to confess his part, and their mutual guilt; he pleads for pardon of their rash foolishness, and for Miriam's healing. They are compelled to seek the mediation of the very one they have offended!

Moses' intercessory prayer is but partially recorded, only the most briefly relevant summary being contained in the text: but it is all we need. The Lord's answer impresses all of them both with His mercy and His justice. In His mercy, the leprosy is removed. In His justice, it is necessary for Miriam to endure one week of the circumstances of a leper. She would never forget this. It was a sure way of seeing that she remembered the

humiliation brought upon herself by haughtiness. Seven days outside the camp and in the company with others whose bodies were ravaged by such a dreadful disease would be quite long enough for her to learn this lesson. This was the same period of time required of any disrespectful one whose father was required to rebuke her publicly, see Deut. 25:9.

During Miriam's isolation, the people did not move. *RCP* understands this delay to have been a demonstration of God's reward for the time she had spent watching Moses when he was placed in the river (Ex. 2:4). The incident reminds us that she was, after all, only human, and that when she and Aaron were confronted forcefully with their sins, they were brought to repentance and a form of restitution before they could be reinstated in God's good graces.

Leaving Hazeroth, they come into the region of Kadesh, in the desert of Paran. It is on the southernmost border of the land of Canaan. They reached the spot just one and one-half years after leaving Egypt, and might as easily as not have crossed immediately into the Promised Land. The fact that they did not is a reflection upon their small faith.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

218. Why is it usually assumed that Miriam was the ring-leader in complaining about Moses' wife?
219. Is there a contradiction in the accounts which identify the wife of Moses as an Egyptian (our present passage), a Midianite (Ex. 2:21), and a Cushite (*RSV*)?
220. What were Miriam and Aaron attempting to accomplish or to prove by their words?
221. If Moses was truly meek, as v. 3 affirms, how could he possibly have written this of himself?
222. How might Moses himself have successfully answered his sister and brother?
223. Compare and contrast the manner in which God spoke with Moses with the more ordinary methods of communicating with the prophets.

224. Review the provisions which applied to an individual who was thought to have leprosy, and show how it was appropriate that Aaron should have made the discovery.
225. Why does Aaron ask Moses to intercede for himself and for Miriam, rather than directing his own prayer to the Lord.
226. Might a lesser man than Moses have refused this request?
227. For what probable reasons did God insist that Miriam's leprosy should remain upon her for a week?
228. What is the significance of the Lord's words about the time of isolation if one were spit upon by his father?
229. How important was the factor of repentance in God's dealings with the offenders?

II. THE PROMISED LAND REVIEWED AND REJECTED (13:1-14:45)

A. SELECTION OF THE SPIES, vv. 1-16

TEXT

Chapter 13:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. 5. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. 6. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 7. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. 8. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun. 9. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. 10. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. 11. Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. 12. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. 13. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. 14. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. 15. Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son