

THE DISCONTENTMENT OF THE ISRAELITES



Passages to Study: : Numbers 10:11-36; 11:1-35; Psalm 78:1-41

Read with the class: Numbers 11:1-6, 10-15, 31-35.

Texts for memorization:

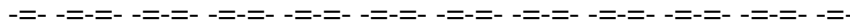
Younger: Hebrews 12:2

Older Isaiah 33:14. "Who among us shall dwell ..."



OBJECTIVES: To Teach:

1. That discontentment is dislike of what one has and a desire for something different.
2. That the human heart continues to be wicked despite all the kindness shown by God to the individual.
3. That God holds people responsible for their actions and there are consequences to pay.
4. That friends who have no appreciation of God’s blessings, will influence us towards evil.
5. That those who preferred the birds of earth (the quails), rather than the food from Heaven (the manna), did not please God.
6. That one must choose between Christ and the world.



SCENE No. 1 VISUAL AIDS: Figures showing the children of Israel beginning their journey through the desert guided by the cloud as they leave the region of Mount Sinai. Also a figure of Moses talking to his brother-in-law Hobab, inviting him to go with them. In a separate area of the flannelgraph board, put figures showing some of the blessings God had given the Israelites. For example, the manna, water from the rock, the two silver trumpets and the cloud and pillar of fire that guided them day and night.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Sug.** One way of introducing the topic could be by showing a glass half-full of water and asking the children to describe what they see. Some may see a glass half-full and others, a glass half-empty. Some people focus on the blessings they have and others on what they do not have. The children of Israel forgot their blessings and thought only about what they did NOT have.
- Sug.** Another way of making the point is to compose two lists, one containing what most children have (a home, food, clothing, etc.) and the other list showing things he thinks would be better to have (a new house, richer food and more fashionable clothing). Ask the children if this child is right to complain about what he/she does NOT have.
- After almost a year of living in their camp at the base of Mount Sinai, Israel begins to travel once again through the desert, heading towards Canaan, the promised land.
- God’s presence and guidance are seen in the cloud that protects and guides by day and the pillar of fire that gives light at night.
- Two silver trumpets are blown which audibly notify the people when it is God’s time for them to move on.
- These trumpets were blown by Aaron and the priests, since they were chosen to be in fellowship with God, and had the responsibility of making God’s will known to others.
- The clothing and footwear of the Israelites had not shown signs of wear since leaving Egypt, for God was caring for them in this matter also.
- Cmt.** Mention that this care was not only experienced at the outset of the journey, but was to prevail for forty years. (Deut.8:4)
- In addition to the above evidences of God’s care and presence with them, He daily provided manna, the bread from Heaven.

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Sug. Ask the children to think quietly for a few moments and have them name two or three of the blessings that God has given them personally. If it is necessary for the teacher to help them find an answer, suggest parents, freedom, air to breathe, food to eat, etc.

Cmt. The teacher will have to be ready to hear answers that may sound childish or ridiculous, but are important to the student. The idea is to awaken a feeling of thankfulness in them.

- News of the Israelites passage through the Red Sea and other evidences of the power of God has reached the ears of the surrounding nations.

Cmt. Even though the Israelites did not fully appreciate all this display of God’s power, other nations were conscious of it.

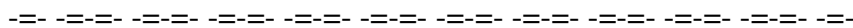
- At the time of the Israelites departure from Mt. Sinai, Hobab, Moses’ brother-in-law, was visiting and Moses invites him to come and share in the blessings that God will be giving Israel. In addition, he would have an opportunity to serve the Lord.

- Hobab wished to go back to his own land and relatives and we do not know whether he finally went with the Israelites.

- He would have been a valued guide since, due to his nomadic life in the Sinai peninsula, he knew the places where water and pasture might be found. (Ex.10:31 and Ex.3:1).

Cns. Hobab was like many who hear the gospel call but are turned aside by their attachment to family and friends.

Apl. It is good and right to have affection for family and friends, but the Lord must have first place in our hearts.



SCENE No. 2 VISUAL AIDS: Figures of discontented persons crying and complaining, and of Moses taking the problem to the Lord and telling Him all his concerns regarding the future.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The first time the people complain in Numbers 11, there is no apparent cause for it, for they have had the benefit of God’s care of them. He had taken care of every possible need they might have.
- “The people complained ... and the Lord heard it”. Even when their complaints may have been made privately, they reached God’s ears.

Apl. God hears what we say, even in secret.

- At one end of the camp “the fire of the Lord” begins to burn among the people, consuming some of the complainers.

- Moses responds to the request of the people and intercedes for them, for had this punishment continued, it would have destroyed a large number of them.

- The fire goes out and the place receives the name Taberah, meaning “Burning”, to remind them that all actions bring with them consequences according to the seriousness of the offence.

Cns. The experiences of life teach us through the law of sowing and reaping, that there are consequences for everything we do. It is a means whereby God can show the difference between “sowing to the flesh” or “sowing to the Spirit”.

Cmt. In a world which constantly seeks to avoid responsibility for actions taken, it becomes increasingly difficult for the teacher to present the truth of God’s righteousness as the standard by which all actions are judged. God’s righteousness must be recognized and He has a right to punish those who violate His holy law. Excuses are made like “childhood abuse”, or “he comes from a dysfunctional home” and it is implied, “it really isn’t his fault”, etc. These excuses are designed to remove the need to mete out punishment.

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- There are consequences to everything we do. Some are experienced immediately and others at a later date.

Ilu.. Carelessness by a driver can result in an automobile crash immediately. Homework left undone brings it's consequences later, at exam time.

- God had punished Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, with "fire from the Lord" but it seems the people had not learned to fear Him as they should.

- Before long the Israelites were murmuring once again, influenced by the "mixed multitude", who were non Israelites.

Cns. The non-Israelites had probably been impressed by seeing the power of God working on behalf of the Israelites, and had accompanied them out of Egypt.

- It would seem that these non-Israelites had not truly become people of God, and they now looked for some way to return to Egypt.

Apl. It is essential that we choose our friends from among those who love God, otherwise we may be influenced in ways that are not good by friends who have other goals in life.

- Influenced by the mixed multitude, the people "fell a lusting", that is, they had a strong craving, or were overcome by the desire to eat meat.

- They recalled the foods they once ate in Egypt and completely forgot about the slavery they had suffered while there and how they had called upon God for relief. (Ex.2:24)

- They had become tired of the manna, food that came from Heaven daily without any cost to themselves.

Apl. When desires and preferences of the world fill our minds, a believer stops enjoying the Lord, the only One who can truly satisfy the soul's thirst.

- The Israelites say "Who shall give us flesh to eat?", doubting God's power to continue providing for them.

- Perhaps they thought they were only complaining against Moses, but Psalm 78:18-19 says they "they spake against God", doubting His power and goodness.

Apl. Satan always tries to make people believe God does not love them, thus taking glory from Him Who rightly deserves our trust as the Everlasting Provider.

Cns. Satan did this with Eve in Genesis 3:1 and he will do it to us.

- All this complaining displeases Moses, but he takes the problem to God, who responds by giving him 70 men of the elders of the people to help him.

- God takes of the Spirit which is on Moses and puts it on these 70 men, for it would be impossible for them to carry out the work of God except in the power of His Holy Spirit.

- God also tells Moses to have the people sanctify themselves and He promises to give them meat to eat, sufficient for a whole month.

- Moses has a difficult time believing that God can keep this promise, for they do not even have enough animals with them to provide a month's supply of meat for this large number of people

- God takes on the challenge given Him by Moses and the people, reminding Moses that the Lord's hand had not "waxed short".

Apl. Even people of great faith can be surprised by what God can do, for He is greater and more able than we can imagine or understand.

