



## Lesson 57

# Israel's Sin of Discontentment

### Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Text:</b> Numbers 11:1-35</li><li>• <b>Setting:</b> circa 1446 B.C., in the Wilderness of Paran</li><li>• <b>Characters:</b> God and Moses</li><li>• <b>Plot:</b> The Israelites anger the LORD through their discontentment and suffer the consequences.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Key word(s)</b> “ _____ ” (vv 4, 13, 18, 21, 33)</li><li>• <b>Climax:</b> “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.” (v 23)</li></ul> |
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### Review

1. The Book of Exodus ends with the completion of the Tabernacle; the Book of Leviticus begins with God calling to Moses from within the Tabernacle.
2. Beginning in chapter 7, Numbers continues the historical narrative of Exodus with the Tabernacle consecration. In chapter 9 the Passover is celebrated, marking \_\_\_\_\_ since Israel departed out of Egypt. (Exo. 12) About one month later, the children of Israel depart from Mt. Sinai for the Wilderness of Paran (to the north).

### Complaining

3. (v 1) After leaving Mt. Sinai, the Hebrews began to complain – not just a grumble here and there, but vocal, rebellious \_\_\_\_\_. Though the text does not reveal the reason for the grumbling, we are amazed at how a people so miraculously delivered, so providentially fed, and so gloriously administrated could find anything to complain about!

APPLICATION➔ In their complaining, the Israelites give us an example of the ugly sin of discontent. Sinful discontent does not need a reason to complain – it \_\_\_\_\_ one. Matthew Henry remarks, “Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit will always find something or other to quarrel with, though the circumstances of their outward condition be ever so favourable.”<sup>1</sup>

*1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

4. The LORD sent fire to consume the complainers – a fire probably like the one that slew Nadab and Abihu, perhaps coming from the pillar of cloud that overshadowed the camp of Israel.
  - a. (v 2) The fire burned those on the outskirts of the camp, and the people cried out to Moses for help. “The discontent seems to have been confined to the extremities of the camp, where, in all likelihood, ‘the mixed \_\_\_\_\_’ [see on Ex 12:38] had their station.”<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Moses prayed and the punishing fire abated.

### Lusting

5. (vv 4-6) Later, the mixed multitude again grows in discontent and specifically lusted (or \_\_\_\_\_) for the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 199.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 1* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 102–103.

flavorful dishes they had known in Egypt. Having lived for a year on the divinely supplied manna, the tasty food of Egypt appealed to their ungrateful hearts.

APPLICATION → The Apostle calls the object of their craving (leeks, melons, etc.) “evil things” (1 Cor. 10:6) Though the food of Egypt was not inherently wicked, their lusting after made it an evil thing. Matthew Henry explains, “What is lawful of itself becomes evil to us when it is what God does not allot to us and yet we eagerly \_\_\_\_\_ it.”<sup>3</sup>

6. (vv 11-15) The complaining became too much for Moses. Up to this point, he had been their faithful interceder, but now he is at his wit’s end. He had become so discouraged that he prayed that God would kill him out of mercy (v 15).
  - a. (16-23) In response to Moses’ discouragement, the LORD puts His Spirit on the 70 elders of Israel to help Moses with leading Israel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. At that time, the LORD also determined to send the Hebrews meat to their filling – even until they would become sick of it – meat for an entire \_\_\_\_\_.
7. (26-30) When two of the elders (Eldad and Medad) prophesied within the camp (instead of around the tabernacle with Moses), Joshua became jealous for Moses’ sake.
  - a. Barnes explains Josuha’s reaction: “They [the Seventy] received ‘of the spirit that was upon him,’ and exercised their office visibly through and for him. Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp seemed to Joshua to be acting \_\_\_\_\_, and so establishing a separate centre of authority.”<sup>4</sup>
  - b. Moses responded, “would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” This would become an anticipated blessing of the \_\_\_\_\_. (cf Eze. 36:22-27)
8. The LORD did indeed send meat – by way of an enormous flock of quail.
  - a. The flock surrounded the Hebrew camp for miles on all sides. Providentially, the quail flew no higher than 2 \_\_\_\_\_ from the ground, making them easy prey for hungry Hebrews.
  - b. Though God sent the malcontents their meat, he also punished them with a plague, and in so doing we learn the meaning of the prosperity of sinners: “it is their preparation for ruin, they are fed as an ox for the slaughter.”<sup>5</sup> Their bellies were full of gracious provisions, but their hearts were lean of \_\_\_\_\_.

*Psalm 106: 15 And he gave them their request; But sent leanness into their soul.*

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**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Answer Key:** Key word(s): “flesh” • 2. one year • 3. discontent → manufactures • 4. a. multitude • 5. craved → desire • 6. a. spiritually; b. month • 7. a. independently; b. New Covenant • 8. a. cubits; b. gratitude

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**How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study:** (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. (Note: some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry, 199.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Exodus to Ruth*, ed. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (London: John Murray, 1879), 208.

<sup>5</sup> Henry, 201.