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Graves of Greediness

11: 4-35



We observe with sadness that the memory of the cause of the burning at **Tav'erah** (**to see link click Bp - Complaining at Tav'erah**) seems to have been lost quickly. It was followed directly by another, even more serious attack on **God's** mercy in **the people's** rejection of **manna**, the bread of heaven. It is possible that there was a considerable lapse of time between **the complaining** that led to **the burning (11:1-3)** and **the complaining** that led to the plague of **quail (11:4-35)**, but the placement of these stories in abrupt linking suggests that the time lapse was insignificant. It seems that this new rebellion transpired during the next stop along the march.

There is symmetry in these narratives of rebellion in the TaNaKh. The scream for "real **food**" rather than the divine provision of **manna** takes us back to the initial complaint about **food** in **Exodus** (see the commentary on **Exodus Cq - If Only We Had Died by the LORD's Hand in Egypt**), where **God** began to provide **His people** with the wonder of **manna**; it also carries us forward to the last rebellion about **food** near the end of the generation in the wilderness, where **the people** rejected the **manna** as detestable, only to be forced to focus on the image that was truly detestable, **the serpent** (see **Di - The Healing Snake**), who was **their** only means of escape from **God's plague**.

Indeed, **ADONAI's** provision of **food** for **His people** (and **their** common actions of

ingratitude for **His** mercy) is one of the dominant motifs in the Bible. This began in the Garden of Eden teeming with all kinds of **food (Genesis 2)**; eating the forbidden **food** led to expulsion from Paradise (**Genesis 3**). And the Bible ends with a great banquet (see the commentary on **Revelation Fg - Blessed Are Those Invited to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb**). Along the way, on the journey from the paradise of **Eden** to **the Wedding Feast of the Lamb**, the provision of **food** is a mark of **God's** love and care for **His people**. **He provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever (Psalm 111:5)**. But there is more to eating than **food** for the stomach. This is why we must bless **God (Psalm 103:1-2)**, especially at meal times. Eating a satisfying meal provides the believer a wonderful reason to praise **YHVH**, who gives good gifts (**Deuteronomy 8:10**). Similarly, to blame **God** for a shortage of **food**, or for a lack of variety, is a cowardly act of irreverence. So, here, we learn the story of **the graves of greediness** in **11:4-35**.¹⁸⁰

These verses are displayed in a chiasmic fashion (see **Ac - Numbers from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: Chiasm and Introversion**). The inverted symmetry of this section of Scripture is clear. **ADONAI** punishes **the people's** complaint (**AA**) and that of **Moses (BB)**. In **c**, the divine reply of condemnation to both complaints, is pivotal, anticipating the punishment. **Moshe's panicky outburst bordering on heresy, is the main point.**

A. The people's complaint: meat (11:4-9)

B. Moses' complaint: assistance (11:10-15)

C. ADONAI'S response to both complaints (11:16-23)

a. ADONAI's response: superficially positive (11:16-20)

c. Moses' response: lack of faith (11:21-22)

b. ADONAI's response: restrained (11:23)

B. ADONAI assisted Moses by authorizing the elders (11:24-30)

A. ADONAI judged the people by supplying meat (11:31-34)

From Kivrot Ha'Ta'avah the people traveled to Harzerot, and they stayed there (11:35)