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ADONAI's Response

11: 16-35

ADONAI's response DIG: How did God respond to Moses' complaint of "I can't do it?" How did God equip the seventy elders? How did Joshua fight against what ADONAI was doing? How would God's varied responses to Isra'el and Isra'el's memorial death camp, help them succeed in their journey throughout their wilderness wanderings?

REFLECT: How important is the Ruach in your ministry, in the ministry of the Church? Have you ever fought against the purposes of YHVH because you didn't understand it? What did you learn in this chapter about the importance of contentment? How do you think God feels when we complain about our life?

A complaining tongue reveals an ungrateful heart.

Moshe was now at the place spiritually where **ADONAI** wanted **him** (**to see link click [Bs - Moses' Complaint about the People](#)**). **He** was ready for **his** next step of growth. For **his** own good, and for the good of **Isra'el**, **the leadership** needed to be shared. This is a critical lesson many spiritual **leaders**, rabbis and pastors need to learn. Sharing the spiritual **leadership** not only enhances the well-being of the sheep, it also protects **the leader**. That's what **Sha'ul** seems to imply in **First Timothy Chapters 3** through **5**, when **he** teaches that **the leadership** of **God's people** should not be one man, but a plurality of godly **leaders**.¹⁹⁵

Spiritual leadership (11:16-17): ADONAI responded to **Moshe's** frustration with a remedy for **leadership**. **He** instructed **him** to select **seventy** godly **leaders** to assist **him** in the spiritual oversight of the camp. **Moses** already had **leaders** to help **the people** settle **their** personal disputes (see the commentary on **Exodus [Cy - Moses Chose Men from All Isra'el](#)**), but these new **leaders** would have more of a spiritual ministry to **the people**. After all, the heart of every problem is a problem of the heart, and unless **people's** hearts are changed by **the Lord**, their character and conduct will never change.¹⁹⁶ Thus, **God said to Moses**, "**Bring me seventy of the leaders of Isra'el, people you recognize as experienced leaders of the people and officers of theirs. Bring them to the**

Tabernacle, and have them stand there with you in a supportive role. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the Spirit of God which rests on you and put it on them. Then they will carry the burden of the people along with you, so that you won't carry it yourself alone."

In the B'rit Chadashah, **the seventy-member Great Sanhedrin** was the equivalent of the Jewish supreme court (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**). Most of its members were guilty of handing **Yeshua** over to the Romans to be crucified. So, it is absolutely true that in the days of the apostles, it was misguided and mostly wicked. Yet, we must also remember that the vast majority of **Israelite** history is similarly tainted by corrupt **leadership**. Wicked kings rose and fell throughout Judah and **Isra'el's** history, but we do not demonize the institution of kingship because it was occupied by wicked kings. Also, the Christian Church has a sordid history of antisemitism (see the book *The Anguish of the Jews, Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism* by Edward H. Flannery, a Stimulus Book, 1985), yet we do not demonize the Church as all bad. All of this is to say that we need to re-examine the institution of the Sanhedrin and acknowledge that it is a biblical institution with **God-given** authority. Here in **Numbers**, a portion of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** was empowered into it simply on the basis that it was the ruling body over **Isra'el**. Thus, Caiaphas, as the high priest and head of the Great Sanhedrin, unwittingly prophesied regarding **the Messiah**, **"Do you not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish"** (John 11:50).

The punishment of abundance (11:18-35): There is a popular proverb that says, "Be careful what you wish for . . . because you might get it." Such was certainly the case with **Isra'el** in the wilderness. **Their** disdain for **manna** and **their** longing for the familiar led **them** to cry out for **meat**. While on the way to Mount Sinai, **the children of Isra'el** raised a similar cry, which the **LORD** answered by sending **quail** into **their** midst (see the commentary on **Exodus Cs - That Evening Quail Came and Covered the Camp**). But that was only a one-time event. A year later **the Israelites** had grown to despise **the manna** that **God** had given **them**, and **they** longed for **the quail** once again.¹⁹⁷

Tell the people, "Prepare yourselves for tomorrow, and you will eat meat; because you cried in the ears of ADONAI, "If only we had meat to eat! We had a good life in Egypt!" The contrast between the true source of blessing is emphasized further when **the people** proclaimed that **they** had it better **in Egypt**. When **the people** were preparing to leave Sinai, **Moses** told **Hobab** that **God had promised good things for Isra'el (10:29)**. But now **they** claimed things were better for **them in Egypt**. To attribute **goodness** to the land of bondage, oppression, and despair was blasphemous, evidence of **their** brazen

rebellion against YHVH. **They** had rejected **His goodness**. Now **He** would turn that which was formerly a means of great blessing into a means of cursing. **All right, ADONAI is going to give you meat, and you will eat it. You won't eat it just one day, or two days, or five, or ten, or twenty days, but a whole month! - until it comes out of your nose and you hate it! - because you have rejected ADONAI, who is here with you, and distressed Him with your crying and asking: Why did we ever leave Egypt (11:18-20)?**¹⁹⁸

The principle was not **meat**, of course. **ADONAI** explained to **Moses** that the real issue was that **the people** had rejected **Him!** **He** was near in grace, but **they** had turned **their** back on **Him**. **He** was in **their** midst, and **they** wished **He** were not so close. **He** had come down, and **they** wished **He** would go away. The issue was not just failure to demonstrate proper gratitude to **God**, who was in **their** midst and who was **their** constant source of **good**; it was turning from **Him** entirely and resentfully rejecting **His** many acts of mercy on **their** behalf. I suspect the only fitting comparison for us today would be to consider who has made a profession of faith in **Messiah** to say, "I wish **You** had not died for me! Leave me alone!" Only in these terms can we sense the enormity of the impact in the language of this verse.¹⁹⁹

But Moshe, with **his** head still reeling from the declaration that **the LORD** would provide **meat** for all **the people** for **a month**, reminded **God** of the numbers involved, saying: **Here I am with six hundred thousand men on foot, and yet you say, "I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!"** But the fact that **the people** were merely looking for an opportunity to complain about **their** lot in life, **he** noted: **If whole flocks and herds were slaughtered for them, would it be enough? If all the fish in the sea were collected for them, would even that be enough" (11:21-22)?** The familiar level of dialogue between **Moshe** and **YHVH** highlights the level of trust and relationship that **Moses**, **God's** servant, had with **His LORD**.

In **his** grief and disbelief, **Moshe** had challenged **God's** ability to meet the needs of **the people** in the wilderness. But **Ha'Shem** quickly and tersely responded with a rhetorical question: **Has ADONAI's arm grown short? Had the right arm of YHVH**, which had delivered **the Israelites** from the bondage of **Egypt** and brought them through the Sea of Reeds on dry ground, somehow been reduced in power and capability. Absolutely not! **Now you will see whether what I said will happen or not (11:23)!** So now the reluctant **Moshe** and **the** disobedient **people** were about to experience once more the magnitude of **God's** power. In spite of the numerous life illustrations **the Israelites** had experienced, **they** had not yet come to the realization of the promise **Paul** later echoed in **Philippians**

4:9, "My God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Messiah Yeshua."²⁰⁰

Moshe went out and told the people what ADONAI had said. Then he collected seventy of the leaders of the people and placed them all around the Tabernacle. ADONAI came down in the fire-cloud (see [Bk - The Pillar of Cloud and Fire](#)), spoke to Moses, took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy leaders. When the Spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied - then, but not afterwards (11:24-25). The Ruach Ha'Kodesh was given temporarily in the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on [Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah](#)). David pleaded: ADONAI, don't take Your Spirit from me (Psalm 51:11). Therefore, when those men prophesied, it was not a permanent gift, but a temporary one. All that was necessary was for their ministry to be publicly authenticated so the whole community could see that they possessed the same spiritual qualifications and authority as Moses himself.²⁰¹

To show that the bestowal of **the Spirit** was an act of **God** unrelated to **Moshe's** presence, **ADONAI** placed **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** on two men, **Eldad and Medad**, who had not joined **the others** at **the Tabernacle**. **They were among those listed to go there, but they hadn't done so, and they continually prophesied in the camp**. In fact, **they prophesied** so much that **Joshua**, thinking that something was out of order **ran and told Moshe**, "**Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!**" **Joshua, the son of Nun, who from his youth up had been Moshe's assistant, answered, "My lord, Moshe, stop them!"** **Joshua's** alarm was motivated by **his** loyalty to **Moses**. Here the true spirit of **Moses** is demonstrated. Rather than being threatened by **Edad and Medad's** spiritual gifts, **Moshe** replied, "**Are you so zealous to protect me? I wish all of ADONAI's people were prophets! I wish God would put His Spirit on all of them!**" This verse is a suitable introduction to the inexcusable challenge to **the leadership** of **Moshe** in **Numbers 12**. Then **Moshe and the leaders of Isra'el** withdrew from the entrance to **the Tabernacle** and **returned to the camp (11:26-30)**.



After **the seventy** had been selected and properly validated **the LORD** punished **the people** for **their** dissatisfied nature by sending an abundance of **quail**. **The manna** was withheld, and **the people** were given a **month's** supply (**11:20**). **ADONAI** sent out a **wind** (Hebrew: *ruach*) **which brought quails from across the sea and let them** miraculously **fall** around **the camp**. The normal flight pattern of these **quail** to this day is northeasterly, from the interior of Africa. **The wind** must have come from the southwest, a most unusual phenomenon, and drove **the birds** northwest across the Sinai.²⁰² Not only that, but when **they** got to **the camp**, **God** caused **them** to fly **about three feet above the ground** so **the people** could capture **them** or club **them** to **the ground**. The amount of **quail** was so widespread that **they** could be found **about a day's trip away on each side of the camp and all around it**. Soon after **the people** began **their** orgy of lustful gluttony. The scene must have been similar to a riot: people screaming, **birds** flapping their wings, everywhere the chaotic movement of a meat-hungry **people** in a sea of **birds**.²⁰³

The people stayed up all that day, all night and all the next day gathering the quails - the person gathering the least collected ten heaps or about sixty bushels of meat. The rabbis teach that each person gathered more than 300 gallons or a little over 1,000 pounds of quail. Then they spread them out for themselves all around the camp (11:31-32). Their sin was, in effect, a rejection of ADONAI and His generous provision in favor of an uncontrollable appetite. As Paul later said of the enemies of Messiah: Their god was their stomach (Philippians 3:9). These figures are staggering! In some ways it reminds us of the great provision of Yeshua in the feedings of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21) and the four thousand (Matthew 15:29-39). In those cases the feeding of many from God's plenty was a demonstration of God's grace; in the

instance here, it was a demonstration of **God's** wrath.

When **YHVH** really wants to judge **people**, **He** lets **them** have **their** own way (**Romans 1: 24, 26, and 28**). **So God gave them what they asked for, but He sent a plague along with it (Psalm 106:15)**. The word **plague** (Hebrew *makka*, meaning blow or stroke) is used in this sense in seven other places in the TaNaKh. In **Deuteronomy 28-29** the term parallels words for **sickness** or **disease**. In **First Samuel 4** the term describes **the plagues of Egypt**. The similar verb occurs in **Exodus 3:20** and **9:15** to describe these **plagues**. In the present context (a large supply of **meat**), the most natural conclusion is some sort form of food poisoning.²⁰⁴

The drama of the scene is superb: **But while the meat was still in their mouth, before they had chewed it up, the anger of ADONAI flared up against the people, and ADONAI struck the people with a terrible plague (Numbers 11:33; Psalm 78:23-31; First Corinthians 10:10)**. Like so many places in **Isra'el's** history, the names of places reflected their experience with **YHVH**. As **Bethel (house of God)** derived from **Jacob's** encounter with **God** in the central hill country, and **Tav'erah (burning)** reminded **the Israelites** of **God's** fiery holocaust, so now **the graves** of the ravenous would become a memorial to the results of the rebellion against **the LORD their God**.²⁰⁵ **Therefore, that place was named Kibroth-Hattaavah [graves of greed], because there they buried the people who were so greedy (11:34)**. Perhaps **the people** doubted the adequacy of the provision and rushed in a **greedy** manner upon **the quail**, each one trying to get more than **his** neighbor. **Greed** is clearly sinful (**Romans 1:29; Ephesians 5:3**). **Yeshua** called for contentment (**Luke 3:14**) and warned, "**guard against every form of greed**" (**Lk 12:15**).²⁰⁶ After a month of **quail**, those surviving were probably longing for **manna**.

ADONAI had warned **Isra'el** that the way **they** treated **their** daily **manna** would be a test of **their** obedience to **His Word (Exodus 16:4; Deuteronomy 8:3)**. By rejecting **the manna**, **Isra'el** was really rejecting **the LORD (11:20)**, and it was this rebellious attitude that invited the judgment of **Ha'Shem**. This reminds us that the way we treat **God's Word** is the way we treat **the Lord Himself**. To ignore **the Word**, treat **it** carelessly, or willingly disobey **it** is to ask for the discipline of **God** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children**). Instead of feeding **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life** that bring death (**First John 2:15-17**), we need to cultivate an appetite for the holy **Word of God (Job 23:12; Psalm 1:1; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 4:4; Luke 10:38-42; First Peter 2:1-3)**.²⁰⁷

In our lives we often experience the same dynamic. We find ourselves punished with

abundance. Abundance is not always a blessing. Materialism and **greed** are quick to follow. A culture with too much food eats too much and becomes obese and insensitive. A family with too much income begins to spend foolishly and finds it increasingly difficult to give the same proportion of work to **the Kingdom of God**. It is far easier to labor for **the Kingdom** when things are lean. **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Mt 19:24)**. **The Master** tells us that instead of seeking to store up **treasure** on earth (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon By - Solomon's Treasure**), we are to merely ask for our daily bread. That is to say, we should be asking that **the Lord** provide for us according to **His** measure of good purpose, even as **He** provided **bread from heaven** for **Isra'el** while **they** were in the wilderness.²⁰⁸

No doubt terrified from **their** experience, **the people moved from Kibroth-Hattaavah to Hazerot (11:35)**. **Moses** had been given assistance from **the seventy elders**, and we think perhaps **they** will be able to help **Moshe** keep the community on track and avoid any further rebellions. Or at least the rebellions would be confined to the outer fringes of **the camp**. That hope is soon dashed as we move to **Numbers 12**.²⁰⁹

*Dear Heavenly Father, Praise **You** that when I focus on eternity, there is great peace and joy. Life on earth will always be full of problems and trials, but the problems will soon be over. It is so much better to focus on **Your** awesome characteristics and **Your** unending love, than to mull over hard and painful times. Thank **You** so much for turning around the pain of hard times to bring eternal joy when I face the problems with a Godly attitude. Thank **You** that **You** both redeemed me from Satan's grip and **You** bless me with **rewards** for my heart attitudes! **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid - which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work - what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14)***

*The coming glory of heaven will be so great. I cannot even begin to imagine how wonderful heaven will be. So, I choose to turn from complaints to praising **You**, my **Great Savior**. **Things no eye has seen and no ear has heard, that have not entered the heart of mankind- these things God has prepared for those who love Him (First Corinthians 2:9)**. When hard times come, I will choose to bless and praise **You** for my wonderful redemption. In the power of **Yeshua Messiah's** holy **Name** and **Mighty Resurrection**. Amen*