

Leanness of Soul

*They soon forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
¹⁴ But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tested God in the desert.
¹⁵ And He gave them their request,
But sent leanness into their soul.
Psalm 106:13-15*

As we continue our journey, the Israelites have crossed the Red Sea where they saw the Lord's miraculous intervention when He destroyed Pharaoh and his army. They complained of thirst, and the Lord provided water and rest in Elim. As they continue their journey through the wilderness, they must face new trials; just like we must face trials as we travel through this life.

Exodus 16:1-30; 35

And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. ² Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Although they had just been refreshed, they now complained against Moses and Aaron. They have shifted their focus from the Lord and placed it on Moses and Aaron as if they were responsible for all that the Lord had done. The people were experiencing hunger, and rather than praying for the Lord to provide, they began to long for the meat and bread they had as slaves in Egypt. Moreover, they accused Moses and Aaron of trying to kill them by starving them to death in the wilderness. They had forgotten their past suffering at the hands of the Egyptians and were now focused on their current affliction.

When we first become believers in Jesus Christ, one of the hardest things to learn is to place our trust in the Lord rather than our worldly coping mechanisms. When they were in

Egypt, they trusted in the provision that the Egyptians made for them. But now that they were in the wilderness, they were learning to place their trust in the Lord.

⁴ Then the **Lord** said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, **that I may test them**, whether they will walk in My law or not. ⁵ And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”

The Lord hears the people’s complaints and makes provision for them to test them. The Lord wanted to see whether they would follow His commands or not. Just like in the Garden of Eden when the Lord gave Adam and Eve one simple command, He gives the Israelites two simple commands: 1) only gather a certain amount of bread every day, and 2) on the sixth day gather enough for 2 days.

⁶ Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷ And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what *are we*, that you complain against us?” ⁸ Also Moses said, “*This shall be seen* when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what *are we*? Your complaints *are* not against us but against the Lord.”

Moses and Aaron deliver the Lord’s message to the people, but first they made it clear that it was God who is in control, and it was God who provides. It is the Lord who brought them out of Egypt, not Moses and Aaron, so when they were complaining about their circumstances, they were complaining against the Lord. Likewise, when we complain about our slight afflictions, we need to be careful that we are not complaining against the Lord. We should reflect on why we are upset and take that to the Lord in prayer. Ask for wisdom on how the Lord wants you to handle the situation, or if he wants you to intervene at all. The Lord told Moses and Aaron exactly what to say to the people and how to handle the situation.

⁹ Then Moses spoke to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your complaints.’ ” ¹⁰ Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I *am* the Lord your God.’ ” ¹³ So it was that quail came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as* fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it *was*.

So, the Lord hears their complaints and provides meat at twilight in the form of quail. Twilight is the time of day when the sun is going down and transitioning to evening. Although there is also a period of twilight in the morning, this refers to the evening as seen in verse 13. Even now, if you have trees near your house, you can hear the birds gather at twilight as they go through their daily ritual to prepare for evening. The Lord provided meat in the form of quail.

And Moses said to them, “This *is* the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those* who *are* in his tent.’ ”

¹⁷ Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need. ¹⁹ And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it till morning.” ²⁰ Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

So, the Lord provided manna for them to eat in the morning while they were in the wilderness, but He gave specific instructions as to how much each person was allowed to gather. One omer per person is about half a gallon per person. Each man was supposed to gather half a gallon per person in their tent, and they were not supposed to save any for the next day. However, some men did not follow the Lord's specific instructions and tried to keep some for the next day. Any leftovers got worms and stank. We know food that is left out in the open will attract bugs and will stink after a few days, but this happened very quickly, overnight. Therefore, it was easy for Moses to determine who did not follow the Lord's commandment, and he became angry because of their lack of obedience.

²² And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. ²³ Then he said to them, "This *is what* the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' " ²⁴ So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. ²⁵ Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."

²⁷ Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. ²⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? ²⁹ See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

³⁵ And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan

It was clear that the manna was from the Lord because He made provision for them for the Sabbath. Since they were not allowed to work on the Sabbath, the Lord commanded them to gather enough for two days on the sixth day so that they could rest on the seventh day. But still, there were some who disobeyed and went out to look for food on the seventh day but did not find any. Their disobedience showed their lack of faith. Some of the people did not trust that the Lord was going to make provision for the next day, so they relied on their own strength and tried to store up what they could when they weren't supposed to. Others didn't trust that there would be enough for two days, so they went looking for more food when they were supposed to be resting.

They were learning to trust God in every circumstance, but it was harder for some than for others. When we first come to the Lord, it is in faith. However, learning to lean on the Lord in every circumstance often requires many trials before we finally arrive at that place where we can recognize His voice, obey His commands, and fully trust that the Lord is in control of all things.

Numbers 11:4-15; 31-33

Numbers 11 takes place one year after the Israelites have left Egypt as they wander in the wilderness. Although the Lord had been providing manna for them every day, they begin to complain again.

⁴Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? ⁵We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶but now our whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes!"

⁷Now the manna *was* like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. ⁸The people went about and gathered *it*, ground *it* on millstones or beat *it* in the mortar, cooked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. ⁹And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

After a year of eating manna, the “mixed multitude” begins to complain. These are the people who went along with the Israelites when they saw the Lord’s great power during the plagues in Egypt. These people begin to have “intense cravings” for the food they had in Egypt. They were bored with what the Lord had provided and wanted something different. They longed for the homecooked meals from Egypt. They were not satisfied, so they began to complain to the point that they were literally crying. Like all complaining, it became contagious, and the Israelites complained again and asked for meat.

¹⁰ Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. ¹¹ So Moses said to the Lord, “Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? ¹² Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,’ to the land which You swore to their fathers? ¹³ Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ ¹⁴ I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!”

¹⁶ So the Lord said to Moses: “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone.

This time, the Lord heard their complaint and became angry as did Moses. Then Moses also complained to the Lord about the responsibility that the Lord had entrusted him. He wanted to know why the Lord had burdened him with a bunch of whiny crybabies. He is clearly

frustrated and says the burden is too heavy for him. Moses would rather die than endure these people.

Being a leader in any capacity is difficult because criticism and complaining are inevitable. It is impossible to please everyone, and sometimes we do things that people disagree with. Moses went to the Lord, but not with the right heart. It was no longer about what the Lord wanted, but why the Lord burdened him with these people. He was discouraged, so the Lord provided him helpers to help carry the burden.

¹⁸ Then you shall say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing 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 five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, ²⁰ but *for* a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, “Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?” ’ ’ ”

²¹ And Moses said, “The people whom I *am* among *are* six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat *for* a whole month.’ ²² Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?” ²³ And the Lord said to Moses, “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not.”

³¹ Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left *them* fluttering near 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 two cubits above the surface of the ground. ³² And the people stayed up all that day, all 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 But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. ³⁴ So he called the name of that

place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.

So, the Lord provided meat for the people once again in the form of quail, and they stayed up two days and one night bird hunting. He provided so many quail, that they gathered more than 5 gallons full of birds. But before they were done eating, the Lord made them sick. Those people who craved more than what the Lord had provided and hoarded the birds died in wilderness and were buried in that place.

Although it seemed like the Lord was blessing the complainers with an excessive amount of birds, it was really curse. They were supposed to eat birds “*for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you.*” He gave them exactly what they wanted until it made them sick because they showed that they despised the Lord by complaining about the freedom and provision that the Lord had given them. As believers in Jesus Christ, we must learn to trust the Lord and be satisfied with His provision.

¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. Philippians 4:12