

Adult Bible Class
The Book of Numbers
Lesson #6, Chapters 9, 10 & 11

Numbers Chapter 9

The Second Passover

Numbers 9:1 (NLT) A year after Israel's departure from Egypt, the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. In the first month of that year he said, ²“Tell the Israelites to celebrate the Passover at the prescribed time, ³ at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. Be sure to follow all my decrees and regulations concerning this celebration.”

The night before the Israelites left Egypt, God commanded them to keep the Passover. They were to slaughter a lamb or young goat “at twilight” (about 3:00 p.m.). They were to put the blood of the animal on the doorposts of their houses. God said, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13), saving the firstborn of that home from death. There was to be one animal for each family, and families were to share a lamb if there were not enough people to eat it all. They were to eat the lamb roasted along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. They were commanded not to break any of the bones of the Passover lamb. They were to eat the meal with their traveling clothes on and walking stick in hand. The Israelites were getting ready to leave Egypt in the morning (see Exodus 12).

In Numbers 9 we read that it had been about a year since the children of Israel left Egypt. God brought them through the Red Sea on dry ground in a mighty deliverance. In the desert, God provided water and food for them. He led them through the desert to Mt. Sinai where He gave them the Ten Commandments and His laws (they were still camped at Mt. Sinai at this time).

God established His plan of approaching Him, worshiping Him, and obtaining atonement for sin. God gave specific instructions concerning how to build the Tabernacle and its furniture. God established the priesthood through Aaron and his descendants. God established the tribe of Levi to be substitutes for the first born of all Israel - to be helpers to the priests to accomplish the tasks of the tabernacle ceremony and to carry the tabernacle on their journeys.

During this past year the people sinned greatly against the Lord by making an idol god in the form of a golden calf. They murmured and complained about hardships; but because of the intercession of Moses, God spared them. Now they were ready to leave Mt. Sinai and begin traveling toward the Promised Land. But first, God wanted them to celebrate the Passover again - it was the time of year to do so.

There is no record in Scripture of the Israelites celebrating the Passover again until after they crossed over the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10).

Numbers 9:4 So Moses told the people to celebrate the Passover ⁵ in the wilderness of Sinai as twilight fell on the fourteenth day of the month. And they celebrated the festival there, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. ⁶ But some of the men had been ceremonially defiled by touching a dead body, so they could not celebrate the Passover that day. They came to Moses and Aaron that day ⁷ and said, "We have become ceremonially unclean by touching a dead body. But why should we be prevented from presenting the Lord's offering at the proper time with the rest of the Israelites?"

⁸ Moses answered, "Wait here until I have received instructions for you from the Lord."

God commanded His people to observe the Passover feast. He also commanded that they be ceremonially pure as they observe it. However, one way to be ceremonially unclean was to touch a dead body (it took seven days to be cleansed after touching a dead body). What if someone did their proper duty by caring for the body of a dead relative during burial? Should this person be punished for it by not being allowed to be a part of this great feast? It was a good question!

Numbers 9:9 This was the Lord's reply to Moses. ¹⁰ "Give the following instructions to the people of Israel: If any of the people now or in future generations are ceremonially unclean at Passover time because of touching a dead body, or if they are on a journey and cannot be present at the ceremony, they may still celebrate the Lord's Passover. ¹¹ They must offer the Passover sacrifice one month later, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the second month. They must eat the Passover lamb at that time with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. ¹² They must not leave any of the lamb until the next morning, and they must not break any of its bones. They must follow all the normal regulations concerning the Passover.

The Passover was a feast that was meant to be kept by the whole nation of Israel together. However, a concession was made for those who, through no fault of their own, could not be a part. While the feast was meant to be kept by the nation as a whole, yet individual souls were important and God made a way so everyone could take part. This shows that while God esteems His ways highly, yet He is a loving Father, and anything that can be done will be done to help His children. This is the nature of our God.

Numbers 9:13 "But those who neglect to celebrate the Passover at the regular time, even though they are ceremonially clean and not away on a trip, will be cut off from the community of Israel. If they fail to present the Lord's offering at the proper time, they will suffer the consequences of their guilt. ¹⁴ And if foreigners living among you want to celebrate the Passover to the Lord, they must follow these same decrees and regulations. The same laws apply both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you."

God knows when people *can* be a part *but don't*. There is a big difference between someone who ignores God's laws and ways, purposefully or haphazardly, and someone who is hindered by circumstances beyond his control.

It is usually true that when someone experiences a hardship in life that keeps him from the house of God or keeps him from being a part of the Lord's work - when that trial is over, that person appreciates the ways of God all the more.

People need to be a part of God's kingdom, His work, and His ways. It had been a year since the Israelites left Egypt, but think of what had happened in that year! There had been miraculous works of God, but there had also been fiery judgments of God against those who esteemed His ways lightly.

It was important that all the people celebrate the Passover. It was a celebration of the Lord's deliverance from bondage in Egypt. As a nation they all needed to look back on God's great deliverance. Then, as a nation, they all needed to look to the future - the Promised Land.

The Fiery Cloud

Numbers 9:15 On the day the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it. But from evening until morning the cloud over the Tabernacle looked like a pillar of fire.¹⁶ This was the regular pattern—at night the cloud that covered the Tabernacle had the appearance of fire.¹⁷ Whenever the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent, the people of Israel would break camp and follow it. And wherever the cloud settled, the people of Israel would set up camp.¹⁸ In this way, they traveled and camped at the Lord's command wherever he told them to go. Then they remained in their camp as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.¹⁹ If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed and performed their duty to the Lord.²⁰ Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days, as the Lord commanded. Then at the Lord's command they would break camp and move on.²¹ Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and lifted the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and moved on.²² Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.²³ So they camped or traveled at the Lord's command, and they did whatever the Lord told them through Moses.

Even though Israel has not yet broken camp and begun their journeys from Mt. Sinai, we are given a paragraph describing what led them on their future journeys - it was the cloud and the pillar of fire which was the Lord leading them.

God led the Israelites through all of their journeys on the way to the Promised Land. Whether it was day or night, God ordered their steps.

Paul wrote about the Israelites journey and gives teaching to New Testament Christians - that what happened to them is a warning to us:

Lessons from Israel's Idolatry

1 Corinthians 10:1 (NLT) I don't want you to forget...about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground.² In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses.³ All of them ate the same spiritual food,⁴ and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.⁵ Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

⁶ These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did,⁷ or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry."⁸ And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day.

⁹ Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites.¹⁰ And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death.¹¹ These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

¹² If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.¹³ The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Numbers Chapter 10

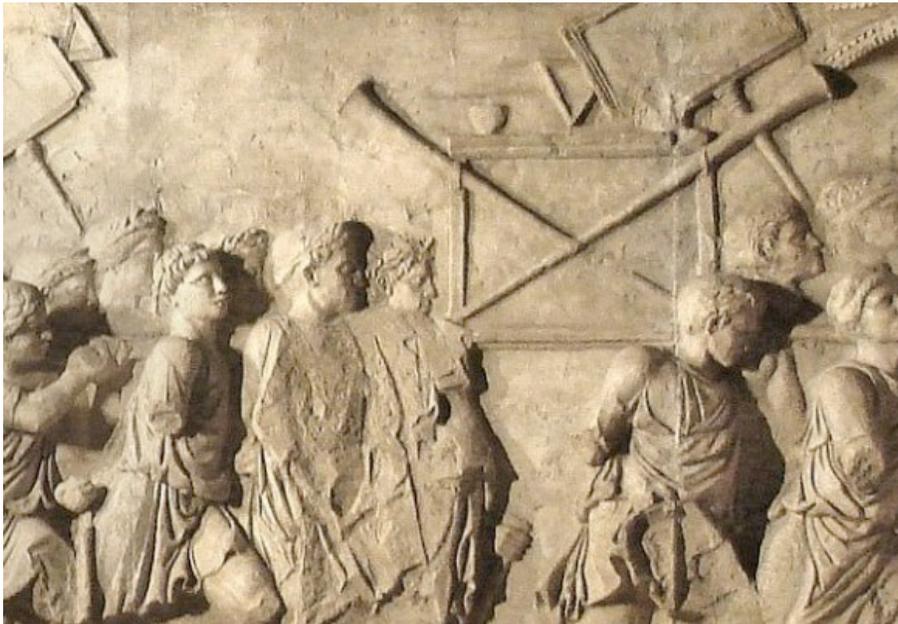
The Silver Trumpets

Numbers 10:1 (NLT) Now the Lord said to Moses, ²“Make two trumpets of hammered silver for calling the community to assemble and for signaling the breaking of camp. ³ When both trumpets are blown, everyone must gather before you at the entrance of the Tabernacle. ⁴ But if only one trumpet is blown, then only the leaders—the heads of the clans of Israel—must present themselves to you.

⁵“When you sound the signal to move on, the tribes camped on the east side of the Tabernacle must break camp and move forward. ⁶ When you sound the signal a second time, the tribes camped on the south will follow. You must sound short blasts as the signal for moving on. ⁷ But when you call the people to an assembly, blow the trumpets with a different signal. ⁸ Only the priests, Aaron’s descendants, are allowed to blow the trumpets. This is a permanent law for you, to be observed from generation to generation.

⁹“When you arrive in your own land and go to war against your enemies who attack you, sound the alarm with the trumpets. Then the Lord your God will remember you and rescue you from your enemies. ¹⁰ Blow the trumpets in times of gladness, too, sounding them at your annual festivals and at the beginning of each month. And blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and peace offerings. The trumpets will remind your God of his covenant with you. I am the Lord your God.”

Israel had used the *shofar*, or the ram’s horn trumpet before. But now God commanded that they fashion silver trumpets. The Arch of Titus in Rome pictures these trumpets.



The blowing of the trumpet is to us a picture or type of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice that only the priests, Aaron’s sons, were allowed to blow the trumpets. When the word of God comes forth from anointed men of God, it gives a clear call and a clear sound to the church, giving direction. Anointed preaching is powerful and purposeful.

The trumpets were sounded for the following reasons:

- 1) For the calling of assemblies

- 2) For the journeying of the camps
- 3) To motivate and encourage the armies when they went out to battle
- 4) To call Israel to their sacred feasts (one of them was called the “Feast of Trumpets”)

The Israelites Leave Sinai

Numbers 10:11 In the second year after Israel’s departure from Egypt—on the twentieth day of the second month—the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the Covenant. ¹² So the Israelites set out from the wilderness of Sinai and traveled on from place to place until the cloud stopped in the wilderness of Paran.

¹³ When the people set out for the first time, following the instructions the Lord had given through Moses, ¹⁴ Judah’s troops led the way. They marched behind their banner, and their leader was Nahshon son of Amminadab. ¹⁵ They were joined by the troops of the tribe of Issachar, led by Nethanel son of Zuar, ¹⁶ and the troops of the tribe of Zebulun, led by Eliab son of Helon.

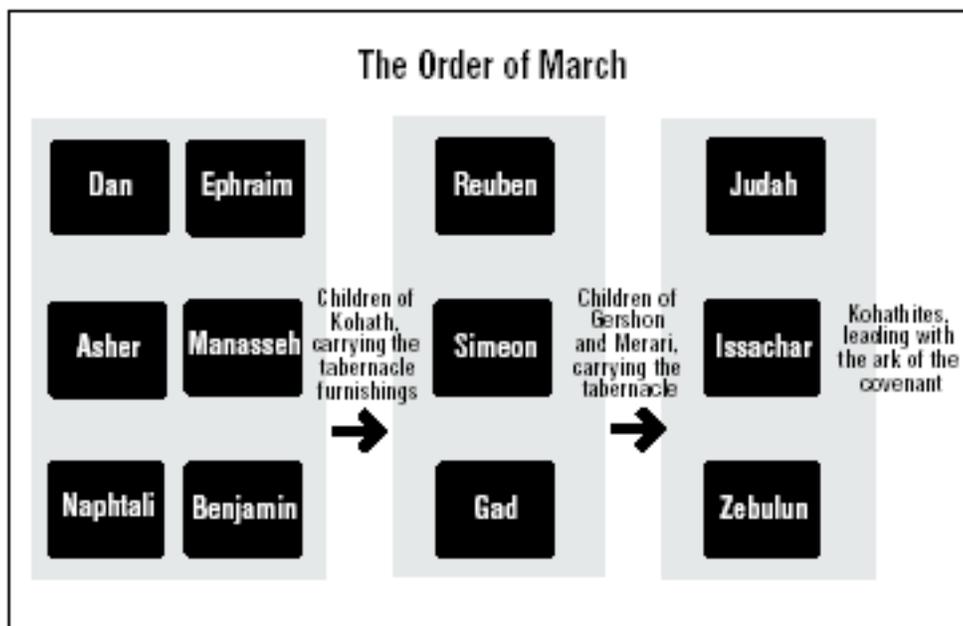
¹⁷ Then the Tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonite and Merarite divisions of the Levites were next in the line of march, carrying the Tabernacle with them. ¹⁸ Reuben’s troops went next, marching behind their banner. Their leader was Elizur son of Shedeur. ¹⁹ They were joined by the troops of the tribe of Simeon, led by Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, ²⁰ and the troops of the tribe of Gad, led by Eliasaph son of Deuel.

²¹ Next came the Kohathite division of the Levites, carrying the sacred objects from the Tabernacle. Before they arrived at the next camp, the Tabernacle would already be set up at its new location.

²² Ephraim’s troops went next, marching behind their banner. Their leader was Elishama son of Ammihud. ²³ They were joined by the troops of the tribe of Manasseh, led by Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, ²⁴ and the troops of the tribe of Benjamin, led by Abidan son of Gideoni.

²⁵ Dan’s troops went last, marching behind their banner and serving as the rear guard for all the tribal camps. Their leader was Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. ²⁶ They were joined by the troops of the tribe of Asher, led by Pagiel son of Ocran, ²⁷ and the troops of the tribe of Naphtali, led by Ahira son of Enan.

²⁸ This was the order in which the Israelites marched, division by division.



Numbers 10:29 One day Moses said to his brother-in-law, Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, "We are on our way to the place the Lord promised us, for he said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will treat you well, for the Lord has promised wonderful blessings for Israel!" [KJV: come thou with us, and we will do thee good].

³⁰ But Hobab replied, "No, I will not go. I must return to my own land and family."

³¹ "Please don't leave us," Moses pleaded. "You know the places in the wilderness where we should camp. Come, be our guide. ³² If you do, we'll share with you all the blessings the Lord gives us."

³³ They marched for three days after leaving the mountain of the Lord, with the Ark of the Lord's Covenant moving ahead of them to show them where to stop and rest. ³⁴ As they moved on each day, the cloud of the Lord hovered over them. ³⁵ And whenever the Ark set out, Moses would shout, "Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered! Let them flee before you!" ³⁶ And when the Ark was set down, he would say, "Return, O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel!"

Numbers Chapter 11

The People Complain to Moses

Numbers 11:1 (NLT) Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the Lord heard everything they said. Then the Lord's anger blazed against them, and he sent a fire to rage among them, and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.

The Lord had *overlooked* previous times of complaining by the people of Israel, *helping them* after they complained. Look at these examples:

Exodus 15:22 Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the desert of Shur. They traveled in this desert for three days without finding any water. ²³ When they came to the oasis of Marah, the water was too bitter to drink . . .

²⁴ Then the people complained and turned against Moses. "What are we going to drink?" they demanded. ²⁵ So Moses cried out to the Lord for help, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and this made the water good to drink.

Exodus 16:1 Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there...one month after leaving the land of Egypt. ² There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

³ "If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

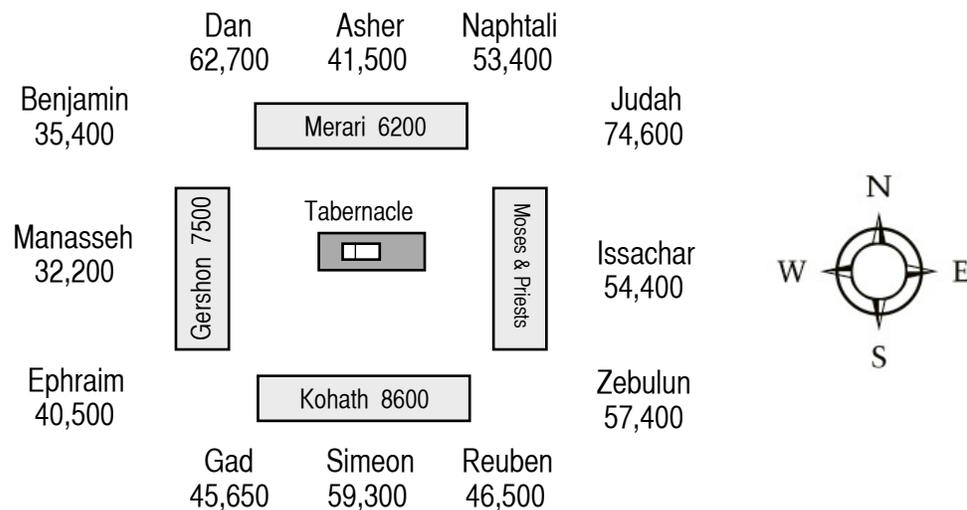
⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.

What was the difference between the earlier times when God overlooked the complaining - and now, when God judged their complaining severely?

The people had been following the Lord for a year now after He delivered them from Egypt. Since then, God had shown His love, power, goodness, and ability to take care of them. In addition, the people of Israel had entered into a covenant relationship with God at Mt. Sinai. Things truly were different now. The people had a responsibility to have faith in Him because of all that had transpired since they left Egypt.

Secondly, Israel had just about lost everything during the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 32). At that time, they were very close to being annihilated, but God relented because of Moses' intercession for them. But because of their terrible behavior in the golden calf incident, and because they should have shown some spiritual maturity because of all they had been through and all they had learned about the Lord, God now had little patience with them. What they got by with before, they were not going to get by with now. What God *overlooked* before, He now was going to judge in a certain manner. Revelation says of John's vision of Jesus, "...his eyes were like flames of fire" (Rev. 1:14b).

God sent fire among them "*and he destroyed some of the people in the outskirts of the camp.*" These people were the farthest away from the presence of the Lord which was in the center of the camp. Look at the camp setup below:



We can imagine that the people who were complaining the most were the farthest away from the center of the camp - where the Tabernacle was located with the ark and its mercy seat where God dwelt.

Numbers 11:2 Then the people screamed to Moses for help, and when he prayed to the Lord, the fire stopped. ³ After that, the area was known as Taberah (which means "the place of burning"), because fire from the Lord had burned among them there.

When the people came to their senses, they cried out to Moses. The reason the people came to their senses was that God sent His fire. God's judgments are meant to turn people to Him. Moses, as Mediator, prayed and interceded for the people and then the fire stopped. God responds to prayer and repentance.

Numbers 11:4 Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt.

The only other place in Scripture that mentions these foreigners who were with the Israelites is as follows:

Exodus 12:37 That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. ³⁸ A rabble of non-Israelites went with them, along with great flocks and herds of livestock.

The KJV calls this group a “mixed multitude,” which leads us to believe that they were Egyptians or perhaps other nationalities that were former slaves (we don’t know for sure). We surely get a negative connotation by the term “rabble” (meaning, “a disorderly crowd or mob”). As we continue to read in Numbers, we see that this “rabble” had an effect on the Israelites:

Numbers 11:4b And the people of Israel also began to complain. “Oh, for some meat!” they exclaimed. ⁵ “We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted. ⁶ But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!”

Apparently the fire that had just destroyed the complainers on the outskirts of the camp did not put the fear of God in everyone. Right away, we see another group of complainers, led on by the “rabble.” Here, they are remembering their slavery in Egypt as if it was something glorious. What terrible memories! Here they are discounting the manna - bread that came down from heaven every day from God Himself - as if it was something to be loathed. Here they are glorifying in their minds something that formerly had them enslaved. Their memories are no doubt grossly exaggerated in their minds!

In addition, the foods mentioned are Egyptian foods, not the kind of food that would be sought by an Israelite. Why is an Israelite pining away for onions and garlic? Were they delivered from Egypt, but still retaining the heart of an Egyptian? It is one thing to miss the garlic and onions while they were out in the wilderness where no such foods were available, but to behave as if their lives were ruined because they lacked Egyptian foods was ridiculous. God was daily giving them good, nourishing food straight from heaven. Yes, they might have missed the flavoring of garlic and onions, but they were well fed with bread. Yes, they no longer had the fish from the Nile River, but to treat God’s great deliverance, His miracles, His laws, His covenant, and His person with no respect was going too far.

The people were complaining. But this was not just a complaint about the hardships of their journey. It wasn’t just a complaint about missing their favorite condiments for their food (O, for some ketchup and mustard!). It was a complaint about God Himself!

When God delivers people from sin, He goes about the process - through His Spirit - of changing their appetites. The things that a sinner just had to have - he loses his appetite for them now that he is serving God. Paul said:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When Jesus Christ saves us and brings us “out of Egypt” (out of sin), we should expect that His Spirit would lead us to be different. In order for the Israelites to be delivered from slavery they had to leave Egypt with all of its ways, customs,

and appetites. God was taking them to their own country where they were supposed to live according to His ways, His customs, and His appetites. However, the Israelites were not allowing God to shape them and mold them. The Israelites were not willing to lay down old ways, old customs, and old appetites.

They asked for meat to go along with their manna. Why didn't they just ask instead of complaining? If God could do one thing, could He not do another?

Psalm 78:14 (NLT) In the daytime he led them by a cloud,
and all night by a pillar of fire.

¹⁵ He split open the rocks in the wilderness
to give them water, as from a gushing spring.

¹⁶ He made streams pour from the rock,
making the waters flow down like a river!

¹⁷ Yet they kept on sinning against him,
rebellious against the Most High in the desert.

¹⁸ They stubbornly tested God in their hearts,
demanding the foods they craved.

¹⁹ They even spoke against God himself, saying,
"God can't give us food in the wilderness.

²⁰ Yes, he can strike a rock so water gushes out,
but he can't give his people bread and meat."

²¹ When the Lord heard them, he was furious.
The fire of his wrath burned against Jacob.

Yes, his anger rose against Israel,

²² for they did not believe God
or trust him to care for them.