

BOOK OF NUMBERS

Lesson 4: Kibroth Hatta'avah, Part 2

Introduction

Review Numbers 11:4-10:

- The mixed multitude have given in to intense craving and are agitating to go back to Egypt.
- We sympathized with them and identified with them.
- We have been swayed by their skewed comparison between God and Egypt. God's manna has become loathsome to us in light of Egypt's variety of choices.
- We have gone back to the world's definition of glorious living and given up pursuit of the Promised Land.
- Everyone is standing around the tents weeping and feeling sorry for themselves.

Leadership's Reaction (v10): God' anger is greatly aroused (He is flaring His nostrils); Moses is displeased.

Study for today will cover **Numbers 11:11-34**

- Leadership meeting between God and Moses (v11-23)
 - Moses' complaint over bearing the responsibility of so many people
 - Moses' struggle to meet physical need
- God's response (v24-34)
 - Seventy elders appointed (v24-30)
 - Sending the quail (v31-34)

In the shoes of the children of Israel, we are going to see two things happen as a result of that leadership meeting (v24):

1. Moses is going to call seventy men from the congregation to the Tabernacle
2. Moses is going to give us a message from God concerning our craving for meat

Appointing of the 70 elders

Read Numbers 11:24-30.

As a rule, who are the only ones allowed to approach the Tabernacle?

The Levites.

Boundaries in the camp:

- Around the Tabernacle was the courtyard fence – physical fence
- Outside the fence were the Levite camps – a people fence
- Purpose was to keep the general population from coming near the Tabernacle.

These seventy elders are crossing that boundary.

- They are stepping into the domain of the Levites.
- They are being called along side the Levites in service.
- Any time you cross a boundary, it represents a change in status for better or worse.
In this case, the elders are entering a more glorified status.

Moses positions them around the Tabernacle.

The Lord places the Spirit on them and they prophesy.

Appointing of the 70 elders

Who is missing? (v26) Eldad and Medad.

Where are they and what are they doing?

They are in the camp and they are prophesying.

Joshua's reaction (v28): *"Moses my lord, forbid them!"* Shut them up, restrain them.

Parallel picture: Mark 9:38-40

A disciple named John has a reaction one day to a lone man who is not a part of the group casting out demons in Jesus name.

Mark 9:38 "...Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."

Why do Joshua and John have a problem with what these men are doing?

- These men aren't where they are supposed to be.
- They aren't associating with the approved group.
- They aren't under the supervision of the correct authority.
- They are acting independently, presumptuously and without restraint

Joshua and John want these men to be put in their place.

Can we create boundaries for ministry that the Lord never intended?

Does ministry only happen within church walls?

Is ministry reserved for those of the inner circle?

Do you have to be part of a particular congregation or denomination to be approved for ministry?

Appointing of the 70 elders

Pitfall in the Journey: Be careful where you root your identity. Be rooted in a spiritual God. We are not to root ourselves in physical places or people.

- Do not root yourself in a physical place like a Tabernacle court or **church** building. Don't think that ministry only happens within church walls.
- Do not root yourself in a human **leader**. Don't lift human leaders up as rivals to God's leadership.
- Do not root yourself in a group identity such as a church **denomination** or ministry team.
- Do not group people into categories of approved or unapproved workers based on their **group** affiliations. God works through individuals.

Physical things come and go.

If you root yourself in physical things, you will lose your identity at some point on this journey.

In regards to Eldad and Medad:

Sometimes, it suits God's purpose to move people out of their assigned place to act as catalysts – they cause a reaction in the people around them.

Our reaction reveals attitudes or ways of thinking that God wants corrected.

Joshua's words reveal a wrong heart attitude and Moses addresses the heart attitude that (v29).

Why would Joshua be zealous (jealous) for Moses' sake?

In Joshua's eyes, they are rivals to Moses.

These two out-of-place men have revealed the fact that Joshua has idolized Moses.

Moses holds the wrong place in Joshua's estimation and understanding, and he needs to bring Joshua back into balance.

Appointing of the 70 elders

Moses' response (v29):

"...Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

- Whose people are they? Who is the one giving the Spirit?
- Casts the vision of all God's people being given the Spirit – the goal is for all God's people to be glorified
- Foreshadowing of the Day of Pentecost

Where do Moses and the elders at the Tabernacle go? (v30)

Out to the camp.

Jesus' Response: Mark 9:40-41

"But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.'"

- What this man is doing doesn't take any honor or glory away from Him.
- It is not diminishing or demeaning Jesus in any way.
- It does not matter that this man is not one of "the group."
- What this man is doing is aligned with God's will and glorifying to God.

If we go out into this world and minister in a way that brings glory to God and aligns with His purpose, then our ministry is approved.

Comparison between the Levites and the elders:

- The Levites are appointed to Aaron. The elders are appointed to Moses.
- The Levites are called by blood. The elders are called by the Spirit.
- The Levites serve the priesthood within the Tabernacle courts. The elders serve the congregation in the field.

Message from God concerning our cry for meat

Read Numbers 11:18-20

“Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow and you shall eat meat...”

What does it mean to “consecrate yourself”?

Consecrating yourself is supposed to be an act of setting yourself apart, making yourself holy and clean, so that you may receive a blessing.

What is the blessing God proposes?

You will eat meat the way you ate manna – until you are sick of it. (The manna was never the problem.)

We have one night to think about it...

Read excerpt from Exodus 16:1-18 (see handout)

Read Numbers 11:31-34.

Where do the quail come from this time? (v31)

Quail blown in by the east wind. A deluge of quail.

Where are they in relationship to the camp?

Quails fluttering near the camp (outside the camp), a day’s journey all around the camp.

What is God telling us about our spiritual direction?

Our cravings are taking us into the camp of the unclean.

How much do we gather this time? (v32)

Each man gathered for two days and a night – ten homers per person

We gather the quail and spread them out for ourselves where?

Around the camp.

What have we just done?

Defiled our camp.

Kibroth Hatta'avah: Graves of Cravings

What is God's response? (v33-34)

Sends a plague on those that gave in to craving

Kibroth Hatta'avah means graves of craving

Explanation of God's response: Read James 4:1-4.

What does it mean to ask "amiss"?

Amiss, Greek *kakōs*, means to be **sick or diseased**, and it is sickness that is born of evil.

That sickness communicates itself in **what we ask for** and **how we ask it**.

God very pointedly returns the sickness from which it came – through our mouths.

He makes our hidden sickness outwardly apparent in the form of plague.

Consequences:

- Death has entered the camp body.
- Those who gave in to cravings have died.
- They are not the only ones affected.

What happens when you are near someone when they die, when you have to handle a dead corpse to bury them?

Camp rule #1: If you are defiled by death, you have to go outside of camp until a priest comes and cleanses you.

How do you learn self control

The mixed multitude lives life to extremes, but God has called us to **moderation**.

You can become a **slave** to extreme living.

- Extreme living can lead you into **addictions** that you cannot break yourself of.
- Extreme living can bind you in a way that you become very **inflexible** and that inflexibility can be a hindrance to the work the Lord gives you to do.

If you have identified something in yourself that is an unhealthy extreme, how do you moderate that in your life?

- A period of abstinence is needed to break a behavior.
- Permanent abstinence may be needed in dealing with addictions.
- Sometimes simply going to an opposite extreme can help.

Why abstinence fails:

- We treat abstinence as a **punishment** instead of a agent for change or a way of separating ourselves to God's purpose.
- Severe abstinence can produce severe **craving** beyond what you can control.

When God sends you to extremes:

Experiencing one extreme and then another can bring this journey into **perspective**.

The point is to learn how to be **content** in the place where He has put you, and how to live for God's glory regardless of which extreme you are experiencing.

Philippians 4:11-13

Lessons from leadership: standing in Moses' shoes

Read Numbers 11:11-23

The Big Picture

- Moses is God's chosen leader of the children of Israel for this journey.
- He is God's representative to the people – the go-between guy.
- He is also the go-to man when it comes to hearing complaints, interceding, judging, giving direction, coordinating camp life for 600,000+ people.
- There is a lot of responsibility in this position, but also a lot of personal glory. Moses has been lifted up to a very high degree.
- Over a period of time, Moses has come to be seen as the great problem solver for the nation.
- When his solution doesn't meet expectations, then he gets the blame.

Two points of failing on the people's part:

- They have shown up on Moses' doorstep with an **unrealistic expectation** over their physical needs.
- They have **lifted Moses up** to position of authority and responsibility that the Lord never intended he should have to shoulder.

Moses' reaction: Read Numbers 11:11-15

What kind of emotions is Moses experiencing?

- Anger with the people and with God
- Self-pity. Manifests itself in his words – complaining, sarcasm, resentment, depression
- When faced with complaining, demanding, self-absorbed people, we ourselves often react with our own self-absorbed complaining and demanding.

Lessons from Leadership: managing the burden of responsibility

Moses' complaint:

- Struggling to bear the burden of responsibility (v11-12)
- Struggling to meet the physical needs of the people – (v13)

Moses' Complaint #1: Needing help with the burden of responsibility

This is not the first time Moses has struggled with this burden of responsibility. **Read Exodus 18:13-26.**

Jethro's solution to managing the burden of responsibility is by numbers – more is better.

Consider the numbers of rulers needed for 600,000 people:

- Rulers of 1,000s – 600 administrators
- Rulers of 100s – 6,000 administrators
- Rulers of 50s – 12,000 administrators
- Rulers of 10s – 60,000 administrators

Total = 78,600 lawyers

The world's solution:

- Having a **gigantic bureaucracy** makes the burden of responsibility manageable.
- The **quality and effectiveness** of this solution really **rests on the character** of the men you pick for those positions

God's solution:

He chooses 70 men from among the people and fills them with the Spirit.

Learning to walk without crutches:

Moses' crutch is his Midianite mentor

Read Numbers 10:29-33.

Lessons from Leadership: help with unrealistic expectations

“Where am I to get meat for all these people?” This is not the first time the children of Israel have cried for meat, and this isn’t the first time Moses has had to answer them.

Exodus 16:7-8 Moses makes no pretense to solve the problem of meat for Israel. He points them to the Lord and says, in essence, “The Lord Himself will take care of you. This isn’t our responsibility, and complaining to us or about us isn’t going to get you anything.”

Numbers 11:13-14 The people have placed a humanly impossible demand on Moses, and Moses has let them. Moses has assumed that mantle of being the camp problem solver.

God’s solution to the cry for meat (v18): I will give them meat, My way.

God takes the responsibility of Moses completely. He will deal with the people himself.

Moses’ response (v21-23): What do you want me to do?

Even though the Lord has taken the responsibility off Moses, Moses is still in there trying to act as go-between and do something.

When you go to God for help with people’s unrealistic expectations, you should be prepared to step out of the picture and let God have the glory of dealing with the problem His way.

Lessons from Leadership: Meeting Other People's Expectations

Common Expectations (of husbands, parents, children, bosses, co-workers, friends, church, etc.)

- Expectations for basic human needs: food, clothing, medical care, emotional care
- Expectations for managing time and relationships:
 - How much time we are expected to spend with people
 - How much time we are expected to spend on activities
- Big expectations
 - How we live our lives – lifestyle choices
 - How we conduct our business
 - What worldview we embrace
 - How we fit into social conventions
- Biggest expectation – what the Lord expects of us

Lessons from Leadership: Meeting Other People's Expectations

Expectations can be unrealistic.

- They can demand more **resources** than we are physically, mentally or emotionally able to give.
- They can demand more **time** of us than there are hours in a day

Expectations can be out of place.

- A relationship can exceed its natural boundaries of authority or influence
 - People lift you up beyond the role God meant for you
 - Idolize leadership
- A relationships can assume a greater **priority** than it should
- Authorities may be **competing** in your life

Trying to meet unrealistic expectations or wrongly-placed expectations robs us of **glorious living**.

Insisting on dealing with these things ourselves can keep us from giving **glory** to God and giving God His proper **place** in our lives.

Lessons from Leadership: Meeting Other People's Expectations

The Enemy's strategy:

- Warp our expectation of ourselves
 - Get us to embrace the unrealistic expectation and be the problem-solver
 - We get swamped by our own weakness; the burden of responsibility overwhelms us
 - We react with distress, anger, resentment, complaining, self-pity and depression.
- Gets us embroiled in conflict when expectations are misplaced
 - Priorities and boundaries get screwed up
 - We lose perspective of our own place in these relationships
 - We take blame for things we have no control over
 - We allow others more authority over us than they should have, to lift us up or put us down

Lessons from Leadership: Meeting Other People's Expectations

Dealing with unrealistic expectations.

- Take those to God
- Acknowledge our own weakness and inability to meet these needs instead of trying to shoulder the responsibility without Him.
- Redirect the expectations back to God if possible.

Dealing with expectations that are out of place.

- Re-establish boundaries (very tough but necessary)
- Be prepared for the reaction
- A person who has assumed an inappropriate authority or priority in your life will fight before relinquishing it.
- Be prepared for backlash (guilt, threats, being fired.)
- Be firm in your understanding of God's expectations of you and your place in His camp.
- Ask God for His help and intervention, and trust Him

Why we don't deal with the issue

- Avoid conflict – all you do is internalize it
- We don't want to give up the glorious feeling of being lifted up by others
- We don't want to accept the humbling of stepping down
- Our identity has become rooted in our role, status or place
- Our own ego can keep us from living gloriously
- Our own ego can set us up in rivalry to God