

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 11

This chapter informs us of the complaints of the people of Israel, which brought the fire of the Lord upon them, and consumed many of them; and which, at the intercession of Moses, was quenched, and the place from thence called Taberah, (^{<0410>}Numbers 11:1-3); and of the lusting of the mixed multitude after flesh, to increase which, they called to mind their food in Egypt; and to show their folly and ingratitude in so doing, the manna is described, (^{<0410>}Numbers 11:4-9); and of the uneasiness of Moses, and his complaints of the heavy burden of the people upon him, (^{<0410>}Numbers 11:10-15); and to make him easy, it is promised, that seventy of the elders of Israel should partake of his spirit, and assist in bearing the burden, (^{<0416>}Numbers 11:16,17); and that the people should have flesh to serve them a whole month, (^{<0418>}Numbers 11:18-20); at which last Moses expressed some degree of unbelief, (^{<0421>}Numbers 11:21-23); however God fulfilled his promise with respect to both. Some of the spirit of Moses was taken and given to seventy elders, who prophesied, and two men are particularly taken notice of, who did so, (^{<0424>}Numbers 11:24-30); quails in great numbers were brought by a wind to the people; but while they were eating them wrath came upon them, and they were smitten with a plague, whence the place was called Kibrothhattaavah, (^{<0431>}Numbers 11:31-34); and from thence they removed to Hazereth, (^{<0435>}Numbers 11:35).

Ver. 1. *And [when] the people complained*, etc.] Or “were as complainers”^{f106}; not merely like to such, but were truly and really complainers, the **k**, “caph”, here being not a note of similitude, but of truth and reality, as in (^{<3510>}Hosea 5:10). This Hebraism is frequent in the New Testament, (^{<0445>}Matthew 14:5 ^{<0414>}John 1:14 ^{<0407>}Philippians 2:7). What they complained of is not said, it being that for which there was no foundation; it is generally supposed to be of their journey; but if they were come but eight miles, as observed on (^{<0403>}Numbers 10:33); they could not be very weary; and especially as they were marching towards the land of Canaan, it might be thought they would be fond and eager of their journey. Some think it was for want of flesh, being weary of manna, and that this was only

the beginning of their complaints on that head, which opened more afterwards; but if that is the case, one would think that the fire, which consumed many of them, would have put a stop to that. Jarchi says, the word signifies taking an occasion, and that the sense is, that these men sought an occasion how to separate from the Lord; they wanted to return to Egypt again, that was what they were meditating and contriving; so the Targum of Jonathan,

“and the ungodly of the people were in distress, and intended and meditated evil before the Lord:”

it displeased the Lord: a murmuring complaining spirit is always displeasing to him, when a thankful heart for mercies received is an acceptable sacrifice; murmurers and complainers God will judge at the great day, (^{<6014>}Jude 1:14-16);

and the Lord heard [it]: though it was an inward secret complaint, or an evil scheme formed in their minds; at most but a muttering, and what Moses had not heard, or had any knowledge of; but God, that knows the secrets of all hearts, and every word in the tongue before it is well formed or pronounced, he heard what they complained of, and what they whispered and muttered to one another about:

and his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burnt among them; from the pillar of fire, or from heaven, such as destroyed Nadab and Abihu, (^{<6000>}Leviticus 10:1,2); the two hundred fifty men that had censers in Korah's company, (^{<0465>}Numbers 16:35); and the captains of fifties that came to take Elijah, (^{<1204>}2 Kings 1:14); and might be lightning from heaven, or a burning wind sent by the Lord, such as is frequent in the eastern countries. Thevenot ^{f107} speaks of one in 1658, which destroyed at once twenty thousand men:

and consumed [them that were] in the uttermost parts of the camp; who very likely were the principal aggressors; or it began to arouse and terrify the body of the people, and bring them to repentance, who might fear it would proceed and go through the whole camp, the hinder part or rearward of which was the camp of Dan; and so the Targum of Jonathan.

Ver. 2. *And the people cried unto Moses,* etc.] And entreated him to pray for them, being frightened at the fire which consumed many of them, lest it should spread and become general among them:

and when Moses prayed unto the Lord; as he did, in which he was a type of Christ, the mediator between God and man, the advocate of his people, an intercessor for transgressors:

the fire was quenched; it stopped and proceeded no further; as through Christ's mediation God is pacified with his people for all that they have done, and his wrath, and all the effects of it, are turned away from them, and entirely cease with respect to them; or it "sunk down"^{f108} into its place, as the Targum of Jonathan, as if it rose out of the earth. This may serve to confirm the notion of its being a burning wind, to which the idea of sinking down and subsiding well agrees.

Ver. 3. *And he called the name of the place Taberah*, etc.] That is, "burning": Moses called it so; or it may be rendered impersonally, it was called^{f109} so in later times by the people:

because the fire of the Lord burnt among them; to perpetuate the, memory of this kind of punishment for their sins, that it might be a terror and warning to others; and this history is indeed recorded for our caution in these last days, that we murmur not as these Israelites did, and were destroyed of the destroyer, (~~400~~1 Corinthians 10:10,11).

Ver. 4. *And the mixed multitude that [was] among them fell a lusting*, etc.] These came out of Egypt with them, (~~028~~Exodus 12:38); having either contracted affinity with them, or such intimacy of conversation, that they could not part, or being proselyted to the Jewish religion, at least in pretence; these were not only Egyptians, but a mixture of divers people, who having heard or seen the wonderful things done for Israel, joined them in hopes of sharing the blessings of divine goodness with them; so the Targum of Jonathan calls them proselytes, that were gathered among them: these "lusted a lusting"^{f110}, as the words may be rendered; not after women, as some Jewish writers^{f111} think, even after such that were near akin to them, with whom they were forbidden to marry, and therefore desired to have those laws dissolved; but they lusted after eating flesh taken in a proper sense, as the latter part of the verse and the whole context show:

and the children of Israel also wept again; they lusted after flesh likewise, following the example of the mixed multitude; thus evil communication corrupts good manners, (~~453~~1 Corinthians 15:33); and a little leaven leavens the whole lump, (~~416~~1 Corinthians 5:6 ~~410~~Galatians 5:9); wicked

men prove great snares to, and do much mischief among good men, when they get into their societies, (^{<34B>}Jeremiah 5:26): and because the Israelites could not have what they would to gratify their lusts, they wept as children do, when they cannot have what they are desirous of; and they wept “again”, for it seems they had wept before, either when they complained, (^{<04C>}Numbers 11:1); or at Rephidim, where they wanted water, (^{<07C>}Exodus 17:1), as here flesh, or before that when they wanted bread, (^{<12C>}Exodus 16:3);

and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? shall Moses, or even the Lord himself? from lusting they fell to unbelief and distrust of the power and providence of God; for so the Psalmist interprets this saying of theirs, (^{<17B>}Psalm 78:19,20).

Ver. 5. *We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely*, etc.] Fish was food the Egyptians much lived upon; for though Herodotus says the priests might not taste of fish, the common people ate much; yea, he himself says that some lived upon nothing else but fish gutted and dried in the sun; and he observes, that the kings of Egypt had a great revenue from hence ^{f112}; the river Nile, as Diodorus Siculus ^{f113} says, abounded with all kind of fish, and with an incredible number, so that there was a plenty of them, and to be bought cheap; and so Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom interpret the word freely, of a small price, as if they had them for nothing almost; but surely they forgot how dear they paid for their fish, by their hard toil, labour, and service. Now this, with what follows, they call to mind, to increase their lust, and aggravate their present condition and circumstances:

the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; in the Hebrew language, the word for “cucumbers” has the signification of hardness, because they are hard of digestion In the Talmud ^{f114} they are so called, because they are as harmful to the body as swords; though it is said in the same, that Antoninus always had them at his table; and Suetonius ^{f115} and Pliny ^{f116} say, that they were in great esteem with the emperors Augustus and Tiberias; though some think what they call cucumbers were melons. We are told ^{f117}, that the Egyptian cucumbers are very different from our European ones, which in the eastern countries serve only to feed hogs with, and not men; but the Egyptian cucumber, called “chate”, differs from the common one in size, colour, and softness; and not only its leaves, but its fruit, are different from ours, being sweeter to the

taste, and of more easy digestion, and reckoned to be very wholesome to the bodies of men: and so their “melons” are different from ours, which they call “abdellavi”, to distinguish them from others called “chajar”, which are of little use for food, and not pleasant, and more insipid, and of a softer pulp^{f118}: as for the “leeks, onions, and garlic”, that these were commonly and in great plenty eaten of by the Egyptians appears from the vast sums of money spent upon the men that worked in building one of the pyramids, in radishes, onions, and garlic only, which Herodotus^{f119}, Diodorus Siculus^{f120}, and Pliny^{f121} make mention of. Indeed, in later times these were worshipped as gods, and not suffered to be eaten, as Pliny^{f122} and Juvenal^{f123} inform us; but there is little reason to believe that this kind of idolatry obtained so early as the time of Israel’s being in Egypt; though some have thought that these were cheaper because of that, and so the Israelites could more easily come at them; but if that had been the case, it is more reasonable to believe that the Egyptians would not have allowed them to have eat of them at all: however, these are still in great plenty, and much used in Egypt to this day, as Vansleb^{f124} relates, who says, for desserts they have fruits, as onions, dried dates, rotten olives, melons, or cucumbers, or pompions, or such like fruits as are in season: thus carnal men prefer their sensual lusts and pleasures, and self-righteous men their righteousness, to Christ, the heavenly manna, his grace and righteousness.

Ver. 6. *But now our soul is dried away*, etc.] Meaning their bodies, which, for want of flesh food, they pretended had no moisture in them, or they were half starved, and in wasting and consuming circumstances:

[there is] nothing at all besides this manna [before] our eyes; which in itself was a truth and matter of fact; they had nothing to look to, and live upon but the manna, and that was enough, and with which, no doubt, many of them were contented, and satisfied and thankful for it, though the greater part were not; and therefore this, though a truth, was foolishly and wickedly spoken, being said in disdain and contempt of the manna: so Christ, the heavenly manna, the antitype of this, of which (see Gill on “⁽²⁶⁴⁾Exodus 16:14-18”); is indeed the only food that is set before us in the Gospel to feed and live upon; nor is there anything at all besides him, nor do true believers in him desire any other, but pray that evermore this bread may be given them; but carnal men and carnal professors slight the Gospel feast, of which Christ is the sum and substance; and at least would have something besides him, something along with him, something of their own in justification for him, or to give them a right unto him, or to trust in along

with him; they cannot bear to have nothing at all but Christ; or that he, and he alone, should be exalted, and be all in all, as he is justification and salvation, and in the Gospel provision, in which nothing is set before us but him.

Ver. 7. *And the manna [was] as coriander seed*, etc.] Not in colour, for that is black or darkish, whereas the manna was white, as is generally observed; of which (see Gill on “⁽²¹⁶³⁾Exodus 16:31”); however it might be like the coriander, because of its form and figure, being round, and because of its quantity, being small, (⁽²¹⁶⁴⁾Exodus 16:14); Some think the mustard seed is meant, as Aben Ezra observes, which is the least of all seeds; it seems that the manna fell in small round grains, like to such seed. This, with what follows, is observed, to expose the folly and ingratitude of the Israelites, that having such bread from heaven, angels food, that they should slight it, and hanker after other food:

and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium; not an aromatic gum, which Pliny^{f125} speaks of, which is clear as wax, for that is black or blackish, and not white as the manna; besides, this should be read, not “bdellium”, but “bdeloah”, and is a precious stone, and, according to Bochart, the pearl; so Ben Melech observes, that it is a precious stone; some say the diamond, and others a round white stone, which they bore and join stones together, and make a chain of, he doubtless means a pearl necklace; though Jarchi says it is the crystal, and so the Jewish writers commonly; (see Gill on “⁽²¹⁷²⁾Genesis 2:12”); hence it appears the manna was very pleasant to look at, being of a round form, and of a pearl or crystal colour.

Ver. 8. *[And] the people went about and gathered [it]*, etc.] Went about the camp on all sides, where it fell in plenty; this they did every morning, and this was all the trouble they were at; they had it for gathering, without any expense to them:

and ground [it] in mills: in hand mills, as Aben Ezra; for though it melted through the heat of the sun, and became a liquid, yet, when gathered in the morning, it was hard like grains of corn, or other seeds, and required to be ground in mills:

or beat [it] in a mortar; with a pestle, as spices are beaten and bruised:

and baked [it] in pans; or rather boiled it in a pot, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, since it follows:

and made cakes of it; which were baked on the hearth; all which may denote the sufferings of Christ, who was beaten, and bruised, and broken, that he might become fit food for faith, (²⁸⁵⁴Isaiah 53:4,5,10);

and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil; which is very grateful and pleasant, as well as very fattening and nourishing; so that the Israelites had no reason to complain of their being dried away by continual eating of it; (see Gill on "²¹⁶³Exodus 16:31").

Ver. 9. *And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night*, etc.] As it usually, and even constantly did:

the manna fell upon it; as constantly, and had thereby a clean place to fall on; and then another dew fell upon that, which kept it the cleaner still, and from any vermin creeping upon it; (see ²¹⁶⁴Exodus 16:14); so careful was the Lord of this their provision, and so constantly every morning were they supplied with it: and which fell in the night when they were asleep, and at rest, and without any labour of theirs; and was ready to their hands when they arose, and had nothing to do but gather it; and yet were so ungrateful as to make light of it, and despise it.

Ver. 10. *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families*, etc.] So general was their lusting after flesh, and their discontent for want of it; and so great their distress and uneasiness about it, that they wept and cried for it, and so loud and clamorous, that Moses heard the noise and outcry they made:

every man in the door of his tent: openly and publicly, were not ashamed of their evil and unbecoming behaviour, and in order to excite and encourage the like temper and disposition in others; though it may have respect, as some have observed, to the door of the tent of Moses, about which they gathered and mutinied; and which better accounts for his hearing the general cry they made; and so in an ancient writing of the Jews it is said ^{f126}, they were waiting for Moses until he came out at the door of the school; and they were sitting and murmuring:

and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; because of their ingratitude to him, their contempt of the manna he had provided for them, and their hankering after their poor fare in Egypt, and for which they had endured so much hardship and ill usage, and for the noise and clamour they now made:

Moses also was displeased; with the people on the same account, and with the Lord also for laying and continuing so great a burden upon him, as the care of this people, which appears by what follows.

Ver. 11. *And Moses said unto the Lord, wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?* etc.] Or “done evil”^{f127} to him, that which was distressing to him, and gave him trouble; namely, setting him at the head of the people of Israel, and laying the government of them on his shoulders; which surely was doing him honour, though that is not to be expected without care and trouble; Moses does not seem to be in a good frame of spirit throughout the whole of this discourse with the Lord: the best of men are not always alike in their frames, and sometimes act contrary to that for which they are the most eminent, as Moses was for his, meekness and humility:

and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight; he had found much favour in the sight of God, to have so many wonderful things done by him in Egypt, to be the instrument of the deliverance of Israel from thence, to be the leader of them through the Red sea, to be taken up to the mount with God, and receive the law from him to give to that people; but the favour he complains of that was denied him, is, his not being excused, when he desired it, from taking on him the office he was called unto, of being the deliverer and ruler of the people, (^{<DISC>}Exodus 4:10-13);

that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? with respect to matters heavier and more difficult; for as to lighter and lesser things, he was assisted and relieved by the officers placed over the various divisions of the people at the advice of Jethro, (^{<DISC>}Exodus 18:21,22); government is a burdensome thing, and especially when a people are prone to mutiny and rebellion, as the people of Israel were.

Ver. 12. *Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them?* etc.] Conceived them as a mother, or begotten them as a father? am I a parent of either sort to them, in a literal sense, that I should have the like care of them as parents of their children? but though this was not the case, yet, in a civil and political sense, he was their parent, as every king and governor of a country is, or should be, the father of it, and should have a paternal affection for his subjects, and a tender care of them, and a hearty concern for their good and welfare: this, in a spiritual sense, may denote the weakness of the law of Moses, as Ainsworth observes, which has no concern in the regeneration of the spiritual Israel of God; who are born not of blood, nor of the will of men, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God; he

only does and can regenerate men by his Spirit and grace; and though ministers of the word are instruments, yet it is not through the law, but through the Gospel that they beget souls to Christ, even by the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation, by that word which lives and abides for ever; it is not through the doctrine of the law, but through the doctrine of faith, that the Spirit, as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, is received; faith, hope, and love, and every other grace, come the same way; (see ^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 4:15 ^{<4023>}1 Peter 1:23 ^{<5018>}James 1:18 ^{<4022>}Galatians 3:2);

that thou shouldest say unto me; as in (^{<0234>}Exodus 32:34); “go, lead the people unto the place”, etc. which words, Jarchi thinks, are here referred to:

carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest to their fathers? the land of Canaan: kings should be nursing fathers; civil governors should rule with gentleness and mildness; such are most beloved, and most cheerfully obeyed by their people: the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem interpret the word for “nursing father”, by “pedagogue”, which is the same word the apostle uses of the law, (^{<4024>}Galatians 3:24); that indeed was a severe schoolmaster, that menaced, whipped, and scourged for every fault, and not a tender nursing father; there is not one kind tender word in the law; it accuses of sin, pronounces guilty of it, curses and condemns for it; but the Gospel ministry, and ministers of it, use men gently; the apostles of Christ were gentle, as a nurse cherisheth her children, (^{<5007>}1 Thessalonians 2:7,8); fed men as they were able to bear it; and when they delivered out their charges, it was in a kind manner, and even their reproofs were in love; and especially Christ himself was so, by whose meekness and gentleness the Apostle Paul beseeches men, (^{<4001>}1 Corinthians 10:1); who gathers the lambs in his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young; and supplies them with food, and brings them all safely to Canaan’s land, the heavenly glory, where the law and the deeds of it will never bring men, (^{<2301>}Isaiah 40:11).

Ver. 13. *Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?* etc.]

This seems to countenance the Israelites in their lusting after flesh, as if it was no evil in them, and as if it was but right they should have what they desired, though it was out of his power to give it them:

for they weep unto me, saying, give us flesh, that we may eat; he seems to pity them, whereas he ought to have reproved them for their murmurings

and ingratitude, and put them in mind of the manna which was provided for them every day, and with which they ought to have been content.

Ver. 14. *I am not able to bear all this people alone*, etc.] The burden of government of them, to take care of them and provide sustenance for them; but he was not alone, for, not to take notice of the rulers and officers in the several divisions of the people that assisted and eased him in lighter matters, advised to by Jethro, (⁽¹²⁸⁾Exodus 18:21,22), the Lord himself was with him in all matters of moment and difficulty; to whom he could apply at any time for advice, and who had promised to supply and did supply the people with suitable and proper provisions every day:

because [it is] too heavy for me; to answer the requests, redress the grievances, and supply the necessities of this people.

Ver. 15. *And if thou deal thus with me*, etc.] Let the whole weight of government lie upon me, and leave the alone to bear it:

kill me, I pray thee, out of hand; take me out of the world at once, or “kill me now, in killing”^{f128}; dispatch me immediately, and make a thorough end of me directly:

if I have found favour in thy sight; if thou hast any love for me, or art willing to show me a kindness, to remove me by death, I shall take as one:

and let me not see my wretchedness; or live to be the unhappy man I shall be; pressed with such a weight of government, affected and afflicted with the wants of a people I cannot relieve, or seeing them bore down with judgments and punishments inflicted on them for their sins and transgressions I am not able to prevail upon them to abstain from: so the Targum of Jerusalem,

“that I may not see their evil, who are thy people;”

so Abendana, and in the margin of some Hebrew copies, it is read,

“this is one of the eighteen words, the correction of the scribes;”

who, instead of “my wretchedness” or evil, corrected it, “their wretchedness” or evil; but Aben Ezra says there is no need of this correction.

Ver. 16. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Without making any reflection upon him, or upbraiding him with his unbecoming speeches to him, but in a kind and tender manner directs for his assistance and case:

gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel; out from among them, such as were not only men in years, but men of gravity, prudence, and wisdom; elders there were among the people in Egypt, (^{<11816>}Exodus 3:16,18); and it was from among such as those the seventy men were to be taken; we read of seventy elders before this time, that went up to the mount with Moses, (^{<12411>}Exodus 24:1,9); but they are supposed only to be selected for that purpose at that time, and did not continue as a separate body, or in any office: according to this number seventy, the great sanhedrim, or court of judicature the sat at Jerusalem in later times, consisted of seventy persons, with a prince or president at the head of them, as Moses was at the head of those: and so our Lord, besides his twelve apostles, sent out seventy disciples to be assisting in his work and service, (^{<2101>}Luke 10:1);

whom thou knowest to be elders of the people; either in age, or in some sort of office and authority among them, or, however, to be good and just men, and had a considerable share of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom:

and officers over them; such as Jethro advised to constitute, (^{<12821>}Exodus 18:21,22); and it is not improbable that these seventy were chosen out of them:

and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee; and be seen by all the people what honour was done them, what authority was conferred upon them, and what gifts were bestowed on them, qualifying them for their office, in which they were to be treated with respect by them.

Ver. 17. *And I will come down and talk with thee there*, etc.] Descend from heaven, by some visible token of his power and presence, and in a friendly manner converse with him face to face; which was an instance of great condescension and grace, and especially when Moses had showed a very froward peevish spirit; yet all is overlooked, and the Lord vouchsafes the most intimate communion with him, and does him honour before the people:

and I will take of the spirit which [is] upon thee; the spirit of government, and the spirit of prophecy, the gifts of the spirit qualifying for these things, of which Moses had a large measure:

and will put [it] upon them; that is, gifts of the same kind with his; not that his gifts were diminished, or that properly speaking anything was taken from Moses and given to the seventy elders; but from the same fountain and fulness of the spirit Moses partook of, they were furnished with like gifts and qualifications, he having not at all the less for what was communicated to them; (see [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#) [2 Kings 2:9,15](#)); several of the Jewish writers, and particularly Jarchi, illustrate it by the lamp in the golden candlestick in the sanctuary, which was always burning, and at which all the rest were lighted, without any diminution of its light at all:

and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear [it] not thyself alone: assist in the government of them, take part in all weighty and difficult matters, hear the complaints of the people, and bear a share of the blame and reproach they at any time should cast upon their rulers.

Ver. 18. *And say thou unto the people*, etc.] For what follows respects them, as what goes before regarded himself:

sanctify yourselves against tomorrow; or prepare yourselves, as the Targums of Onkelos, and Jonathan, either to receive mercies, or to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments; so Jarchi interprets it,

“prepare for punishments,”

for what is said should be, and what they had, was not as a blessing, but in a way of punishment:

and ye shall eat flesh; which they lusted after, wept for, and could not be easy without:

for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord; complaining of him, and which he has taken notice of:

saying, who shall give us flesh to eat? for though they so earnestly desired it, they despaired of it, and even called in question the power of God to give it:

for [it was] well with us in Egypt; where they had their fleshpots, as well as their cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, (^{<21618>}Exodus 16:3); but they forgot how ill it went with them by reason of their hard bondage, when their lives were made bitter by it, notwithstanding their fleshpots, and of which there is not much reason to believe any great share came to them: like to them were their posterity in later times, (^{<24417>}Jeremiah 44:17,18);

therefore the Lord will give you flesh; to show his power:

and ye shall eat; to your shame and confusion, not for pleasure or profit.

Ver. 19. *Ye shall not eat one day*, etc.] Only, as in (^{<21612>}Exodus 16:12);

nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even thirty days, a whole month, as in (^{<24112>}Numbers 11:20).

Ver. 20. [*But*] *even a whole month*, etc.] So long the Israelites continued at Taberah or Kibrothhattaavah, as the Jews ^{f129} conclude from this clause:

until it come out at your nostrils; being vomited up, through a nausea of it, the stomach being overfilled and glutted with it; in which case, it will make its way through the nostrils, as well as out of the mouth:

and it be loathsome unto you; being surfeited with it; or it shall be for “dispersion” ^{f130}, scattered about from the mouth and nostrils:

because that ye have despised the Lord which [is] among you; who dwelt in the tabernacle that was in the midst of them, whom they despised by treating the manna with contempt he so plentifully spread about their camp, and by distrusting his power to give them flesh, and by murmuring and complaining against him on the account of their having none: the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan are,

“because ye have loathed the Word of the Lord, whose Shechinah (or the glory of whose Shechinah, as Jonathan) dwelleth among you;”

the essential Word, and who was figured by the manna they tasted and despised:

and have wept before him; complaining of him, and murmuring against him:

saying, why came we forth out of Egypt? suggesting it would have been better for them if they had stayed there; thus reflecting on the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, displayed in the deliverance of them, and for which they had the utmost reason to be thankful.

Ver. 21. *And Moses said*, etc.] By way of objection to what God had promised, distrusting his power to perform:

the people amongst whom I [am]; among whom he dwelt, of whom he was a part, and over whom he was a ruler:

[are] six hundred thousand footmen; that were able to travel on foot, and were fit for war: this was the number of them when they came out of Egypt, (^{<01237>}Exodus 12:37); they amounted in their last numbering to 3,550 more, which lesser number is here omitted, as Aben Ezra and Jarchi observe, and only the round number given: some say that all above the six hundred thousand were destroyed by the fire at Taberah, (^{<01101>}Numbers 11:1);

and thou hast said, one will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month; this Moses could not tell how to credit.

Ver. 22. *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them?* etc.] Suggesting that if all their cattle, their sheep, and oxen were killed, which they and the mixed multitude brought out of Egypt, they would not be sufficient for them to live upon a whole month; and intimating also, that it would be an unwise thing, and very improper, to slay them all, were they sufficient, since then they would have none for sacrifice, or to breed when they came into the land of Canaan; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“shall the sheep that are in Arabia and the oxen that are in Nabatea be slain for them, and be sufficient for them?”

or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them? of the great sea, as Jonathan; which, to gather together, is, humanly speaking, impossible; indeed, if it could be done, they would not suffice such a number of people a month together: Moses takes notice only of the flesh of beasts and of fishes, and seems not to have thought of the flesh of fowls with which, and not the other, the Lord afterwards fed them a whole month.

Ver. 23. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] In answer to his objection, without upbraiding him with his sin of unbelief:

is the Lord's hand waxed short? or his power diminished since the creation, when he formed all things out of nothing, and what is it then he is not able to do? or since he wrought the wonders in Egypt, divided the Red sea, rained down manna from heaven, and smote the rock at Horeb, from whence waters flowed sufficient for all this people, and their flocks and herds; and he that did all this could give them flesh that would suffice them a whole month, (see ²³⁰⁰Isaiah 59:1);

thou shall see now whether my words shall come to pass unto thee or no; whether I am able to make good my promise; a short time will decide it, it shall be seen presently whether I am and will do what I have said.

Ver. 24. *And Moses went out*, etc.] Either out of his own tent, about which the people assembled, complaining and weeping, (⁰⁴¹¹⁰Numbers 11:10); or rather, as Aben Ezra, out of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the sanctuary where he had been conversing with God, about the affairs complained of both by the people and by himself; so the Targum of Jonathan says, he went out of the tabernacle, the house of the Shechinah or divine Majesty:

and told the people of the words of the Lord; what he had ordered him to do for his ease in the government of them, and how he had promised to give them flesh on the morrow:

and gathered the seventy men of the elders of Israel; sent for them by name, and ordered them to assemble at such a time and place; and though two of them came not, after mentioned, (⁰⁴¹²⁵Numbers 11:26), yet the full number of seventy is given:

and set them round about the tabernacle; they seem to be set not promiscuously in a body together, but distinctly, one by another, in a circular form; that they might be seen, observed, and taken notice of by the people that came about the tabernacle, who they were, what were done to them, and what befell them.

Ver. 25. *And the Lord came down in a cloud*, etc.] In a cloud of glory, or a glorious one, as the Targums; either in the same that went before the people in the wilderness, or in one distinct from it, and only used on this occasion, as a visible token of the presence of God:

and spake unto him; to Moses, talked with him, as he said he would, (^{Q117}Numbers 11:17);

and took of the Spirit which [was] upon him, and gave [it] unto the seventy elders; (see Gill on “^{Q117}Numbers 11:17”);

and it came to pass [that] when the Spirit rested upon them they prophesied; either they sung the praises of God, which is sometimes the sense of prophesying, (^{R301}1 Chronicles 25:1-3); blessing God for the honour done them, and the gift bestowed on them; or they opened and explained the laws of God, in virtue of the gifts they had received, according to which they were to assist Moses in the government of the people, or they foretold things come: the Jews say they prophesied of the quails, but that is not very likely:

and did not cease; from prophesying; the spirit of prophecy continued with them, which, in some cases, might be necessary: or, they ceased not to prophesy all that day, though they afterwards did: and in the Hebrew text it is, “they added not”^{f131}, that is, to prophesy, and Jarchi says they only prophesied that day, as it is interpreted in an ancient book of theirs, called Siphre: wherefore this spirit of prophecy is thought only to be given them as a temporary thing, for the confirmation of their having received the spirit of government, or gifts qualifying them for that, and to make them respectable among the people, and to show that they were appointed it by divine authority, and that this was not a device of Moses to ease himself.

Ver. 26. *But there remained two [of the] men in the camp*, etc.] Of the seventy who were summoned, that came not out of the camp of Israel to the tabernacle when the rest did:

the name of the one [was] Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: who, according to the Targum of Jonathan, were brethren of Moses by his mother’s side; for it says, they were the sons of Elizaphan the son of Parnac, whom Jochebed the daughter of Levi brought forth at the time that Amram her husband dismissed her, and she was married to him before she brought forth Moses; but it is elsewhere said^{f132}, that Elizaphan married her after the death of Amram; and Eldad and Medad were born unto them:

and the Spirit rested upon them; as it did upon the rest of the seventy that came to the tabernacle; these two had the same gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon them as they had:

and they [were] of them that were written; among the seventy whose names were put down in the summons Moses gave them to attend the tabernacle; for as for the notion of the Jews about schedules and pieces of paper put into an urn to draw lots with, there is no foundation in the text:

but went not out unto the tabernacle; out of the camp to it, when they were summoned to come together; which they declined, as is commonly said, out of modesty, thinking themselves unfit for such an high office; and therefore, as Saul hid himself among the stuff when he was about to be chosen king, so did they, or something like it: the Targum of Jonathan is express for it, which adds, because they hid themselves to flee from government; but the Spirit of God found them out, and filled them with his gifts, and constrained them to prophesy, whereby they were discovered:

and they prophesied in the camp; perhaps in a private manner, it may be in their own houses; which, how it came to be known is after related: what they prophesied of cannot be said; according to the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, and other Jewish writers^{f133}, they prophesied of the quails, and of the death of Moses, and the succession of Joshua, of Gog and Magog, and their armies, and of their destruction by the Messiah, and of the resurrection of the dead; but these are things not to be depended on.

Ver. 27. *And there ran a young man*, etc.] From the camp to the tabernacle, who had heard Eldad and Medad prophesy; which he thought was not right, being done without the knowledge and approbation of Moses, and in a private tent in the tabernacle, not among the elders, but the common people: who this young man was is not material to know; some of the Rabbins, as Jarchi says, affirm he was Gershon the son of Moses; whoever he was, no doubt, it was with a good design, consulting the glory of God and the honour of Moses, and therefore in great haste ran to him with the information:

and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp; who seem by this, to be persons well known, and of some note and figure; since not only the young man could call them by their names, but there needed no other description of them to Moses and those with him.

Ver. 28. *And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses*, etc.] That waited upon him, and ministered to him, and executed his orders, especially in civil things, and was to be his successor:

[one] of his young men; not that Joshua was a young man in age, for he must be now between fifty and sixty years of age, (see Gill on “⁽¹²³¹⁾Exodus 33:11”); nor does the word necessarily suppose that those men were young among whom Joshua was; but choice excellent persons, the principal servants of Moses, at the head of whom Joshua was being his prime minister: the Targum of Onkelos and the Syriac version render it, “from his youth”, joining it with the word servant, as if he was the servant of Moses from his youth, or ever since he was a young man; but Moses had not been out of Midian but about two years, where he had kept his father’s sheep; however, he

answered and said, my lord Moses, forbid them; prophesying, restrain them from it, suffer them not to go on in it; he would have him exert his authority as the chief magistrate, which he thought was affected by their prophesying without his knowledge and consent; and because a word from the root here used signifies a prison, some here interpret it,

“put them in prison,”

which is a sense Jarchi mentions; but it can hardly be thought that Joshua meant that such rigorous measures should be taken, only that they should be rebuked for what they had done, and be charged for the future to be silent.

Ver. 29. *Moses said unto him, enviest thou for my sake?* etc.] Lest his authority should be weakened, and his honour lessened, because they began not to prophesy in his presence, and at the tabernacle, and among the rest of the elders, and so seemed not to have received of the Spirit that was upon him, and to be independent of him:

would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets; this is not to be understood in the most absolute sense, as if Moses wished that every individual person among the people of Israel were prophets, as the word may signify a set and order of men, and an office in the church or state, as ministers of the word extraordinary or ordinary; for then there would be none to prophesy to, or to teach and instruct; and so likewise not rulers, or helps and assistants in government, for then there would be none to be governed; but it is to be taken comparatively, and is designed to show how far Moses was from an envious spirit at the gifts of others, that he could wish, if it was the will of God, and consistent with the order of things, that every man had as great or greater gifts than he had, qualifying them for

public service and usefulness; such was the modesty and meekness of Moses: there is a sense indeed, in which all the Lord's people, all good men, are and should be prophets, and for which by the grace of the Spirit of God they are qualified; and should act as such, by praying and singing praises, which are sometimes meant by prophesying, and by spiritual conferences in private with one another, building up each other on their most holy faith, and by teaching and instructing all under their care in their families:

[and] that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them; the gifts of it, which are necessary to fit men for public service in church or state, or for private usefulness, (~~4817~~ 1 Corinthians 12:7).

Ver. 30. *And Moses got him into the camp,* etc.] From the door of the tabernacle, where he had been settling the elders in their office, and now betook himself to the camp of Israel, perhaps to look more particularly into the affair of Eldad and Medad, and settle that, and put them among the elders; for they were of them that were written, whose names were put down for elders in the paper Moses had written for that purpose, and in the summons that were given; or more generally to do public business, to exercise rule and government, with this new assistance granted him, as follows:

he and the elders of Israel; he went in company with them, to impart to them the honour and glory they were to share with him in the government, as Aben Ezra observes; or they went together, to observe what would be done for the people, according to the promise of the Lord, to give them flesh; who had made good his word to Moses, by taking of his Spirit and putting it on seventy men for his assistance; the other remained to be done, and was done as follows.

Ver. 31. *And there went forth a wind from the Lord,* etc.] Both an east wind and a south wind, according to (~~4786~~ Psalm 78:26); either first one wind, and then another; one to bring the quails, or whatever are meant, to a certain point, and then the other to bring them to the camp of Israel; or a southeast wind, as the Jewish writers interpret it: however, it was not a common wind, but what was immediately raised by the Lord for the following purpose:

and brought quails from the sea; the Red sea, from the coasts of it, not out of it. Josephus^{f134} says, there were great numbers of this sort of fowl about

the gulf of Arabia; and Diodorus Siculus ^{f135} says, near Rhinocalura, a place not far from those parts, quails in flocks were brought from the sea, which the people caught and lived upon. After Job Ludolphus, who has wrote a learned dissertation on locusts, many are of opinion with him, that locusts are intended here, and think that what is hereafter related best agrees with them; it is pretty difficult to determine which is most correct; there are learned advocates, and much to be said, for both ^{f136}:

and let [them] fall by the camp: the camp of Israel, and round about it on all sides, as follows; which agrees well enough with locusts, which are usually brought by a wind, as the locusts of Egypt were by an east wind, which fall, rest, and settle on the earth, and sometimes in heaps, one upon another; and these, whatever they were, fell as thick as rain, and were as dust, and as the sand of the sea. The Jewish writers, who understand them of quails, interpret this not of their falling to the ground, but of their flying low, two cubits from the earth, about the breast of a man, so that they had no trouble in taking them; so the Targum of Jonathan, Jarchi, Ben Gersom, and Abendana; but this seems to be without any foundation:

as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp; on the north side, and on the south side, as the Targum of Jonathan explains it; but it doubtless means on all sides, since they fell round about the camp; and from thence they lay thick upon the ground, a day's journey every way; which some compute at sixteen, others at twenty miles on which space there must be a prodigious number of quails or locusts; and it is certain the latter do come in great numbers, so as to darken the air, and to cover a country, as they did Egypt; and the quails also, in some countries, have been taken in great numbers; in Italy, on the coast of Antium, within a month, in the space of five miles, 100,000 quails were taken every day ^{f137}:

and as it were two cubits [high] upon the face of the earth; as they fell they lay one upon another, the height of two cubits; which it is thought better agrees with locusts than with quails, since the quails, by lying one upon another such a depth, must be suffocated; whereas the locusts, through the length of their feet, and the thinness of their wings, would not.

Ver. 32. *And the people stood up all that day*, etc.] The day on which they fell in the morning:

and all [that] night; the night following:

and all the next day; after that, even the space of thirty six hours:

and they gathered the quails; not took them flying, as the Jewish writers suggest, before observed, but from the earth where they fell, in order to lay them up as a provision for time to come; or otherwise, had they taken them only for present use, they would not have been so long in gathering them; but they seemed greedy of them, and therefore took up all they could, or knew what to do with:

he that gathered least gathered ten homers; or so many ass loads, as some interpret it; the words for an ass and an homer being near the same: an homer in measure is the same with the “cor”, and held ten ephahs; and, according to Bishop Cumberland^{f138}, contained seventy five wine gallons, seven pints, and somewhat more, which must hold a vast quantity of quails; though not the measure, but the number of fowls, is commonly given. Some render the word “heaps”, as in (^{<0004>}Exodus 8:14); and is supposed better to agree with locusts; but then it will be difficult to assign a reason why the number of them should be given, since heaps might be greater or lesser:

and they spread [them] all abroad for themselves round about the camp; according to some, they were taken alive, and put into cages, which were hung round the camp, so that all places were full of them, in which they were kept, and used as they wanted them; but they seem rather, be they what they will, to be dead, and to be spread about to be dried in the sun, being salted; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders the word, “and they dried them”^{f139}; and agrees both with quails, which, according to some writers^{f140}, used to be salted for food for time to come; and with locusts, on which the inhabitants of some parts of Ethiopia always lived, as Pliny^{f141} says, being hardened in smoke, and with salt, and was their food for the year round. And this custom was used in Arabia; for Leo Africanus^{f142} relates, that the people of Arabia Deserta, and of Lybia, reckon the coming of the locusts an happy omen; for either boiled, or dried with the sun, they beat them into meal (or powder) and eat them: and of the Nasamones, a people in Africa, it is said^{f143}, that they hunt locusts, and dry them in the sun, and grind them, and then, sprinkling milk upon them, sup them up.

Ver. 33. *And while the flesh [was] yet between their teeth*, etc.] When they had just got it into their mouths, and were about to bite it:

ere it was chewed; or “cut off”; or cut into pieces by the “incisores”, or fore teeth, and then ground by the “molaes”, or grinders, and so became fit to be swallowed. Both quails and locusts were eaten as food; the former is a fat and delicious fowl, and the latter, some sorts of them, at least, were allowed clean food for the Jews, and were fed on by many people:

the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people; for their lusting after flesh, and despising the manna:

and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague; the pestilence, as Aben Ezra; or with fire, as Bochart^{f144}, who gives the following reasons why the people were so severely punished now, and not before, when they murmured on a like account; because their sin’s were greater, and more aggravated, they falling again into the same sin which had been forgiven them; and besides, they were before pressed with famine, now they had a plenty of manna every day; and also were better instructed, having received the law, which was not yet given when they were just come out of Egypt. Sulpitius^{f145} the historian says, 23,000 perished at this time.

Ver. 34. *And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah*, etc.] That is, Moses called it so, or it was called by the children of Israel, and by others in later times, by this name, which signifies “the graves of lust”; dug by lust, or which lust was the cause and occasion of, and where those that indulged it were buried, as follows:

because there they buried the people that lusted; not all that lusted, for the lusting was pretty general; but all that died through their gluttony and intemperance, and the judgment of God on them; or who were the most inordinate in their lust, and encouraged others in it, and were the ringleaders in the murmur and mutiny.

Ver. 35. *[And] the people journeyed from Kibrothhattaavah unto Hazeroth*, etc.] After having stayed there a month or more, as is gathered from (⁴⁰¹¹³Numbers 11:20);

and abode at Hazeroth; at least seven days, as appears from (⁴⁰¹²⁵Numbers 12:15,16); which, according to Bunting^{f146}, was eight miles from Kibrothhattaavah, or Taberah, which were the same place.