

**Psalm 78:17-39**

After reading about the laws regarding leprosy in Leviticus 13, the continuation of Psalm 78 begins with Israel speaking against God (**verses 17-19**). God struck people with leprosy as a judgment on slander and rebellion against authority, according to the rabbis.

This also tells a tale about the weakness of the flesh - and leprosy is an outbreak to the surface of the flesh of the death that lurks within (**Isaiah 1:6**).

This references an incident in Numbers 11 in which the people complained about the manna, and wanted different food:

(read the whole chapter in **Numbers 11**)

**Numbers 11:1** - "And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp."

The whole chapter is remarkable. After the people complain, Moses complains to God about the people complaining, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me."

Then, at the same time God is planning to recompense the people for their complains, he also tells Moses to gather the elders together and says "they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone."

God takes the Spirit that was on Moses, puts it on the elders, and they prophesy "but did not do so again."

When word comes that two elders who did not go up to the Tabernacle were also prophesying, Moses reveals his humility: "Are you jealous for me? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Finally after supplying the people with more meat than they could stomach, he "struck the people with a very great plague." (**Numbers 11:33**)

They called the place *Kibroth-hattaavah* = "graves of lust"

**Psalm 78:22** - "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation"

Christ is the bread of life which came down from heaven, and the bread he gave for the life of the world was his flesh (**John 6:31-35**). Rejecting the manna was spiritually rejecting Christ/ Yeshua/ Salvation

**Psalm 76:25** - "Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full."

Targum: "the children of men did eat food, which came down from the habitation of angels;"

"Instead whereof thou feddest thine own people with angels' food, and didst send them from heaven bread prepared without their labour, able to content every man's delight, and agreeing to every taste." (**Wisdom 16:20**)

The "plague" may have sprung from the amount of fowls they consumed, when they were "exceedingly filled" and the meat was still in their mouths.

**Psalm 78:23** - "Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,"

This example of questioning whether God can provide food shows up again in the story of the four lepers during a siege of Jerusalem.

- **2 Kings 7:1-2** - "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

Sometimes God gives us what we want as chastisement:

- **Jeremiah 2:19** - "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts."

**Psalm 78:35** - "And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer."

The Masorah (the authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible) puts a note after **verse 35**: "half of the book" - i.e. half of the Book of Psalms ends here.

Masorah refers either to the transmission of Jewish religious tradition, or to the tradition itself, with the word taken from the binding in **Ezekiel 20:37** - "the bond of the covenant." The name was attached to the Masoretes, scribes who passed down the Masoretic text.

**Psalm 78:37** - "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant."

See previous on **Psalm 78:8** - "...a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God."

"set" = *kuwn* - to ready, prepare, establish, sometimes "to set your mind" to something

- **1 Thessalonians 3:13** - "so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."

**Psalm 78:38-39** - "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

Targum: "children of flesh"

Rashi - He remembers that they are flesh and that the evil inclination is hidden in their heart. [But] When they are resurrected, the evil inclination will have no control over them.

- **Genesis 6:3** - "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

The flesh - we are poor, frail, weak, mortal creatures, unable to bear the weight of his displeasure, with depraved natures inclined unto evil, impotent to that which is good, and unable to withstand temptations to evil - *John Gill's Commentary*

Compare:

**Psalm 103:14** - "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."