

# Numbers 11:4-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/num/num-11/numbers-114-9/>

*Not only did the Israelites complain to the LORD. The “rabble” also voiced their demands and disappointments. The main complaint in this section was about food. The rabble and the Israelites bemoaned the lack of the type of food they had when in Egypt. The only food available to them was the manna which was given to them by the LORD.*

Apparently, the early complaint was not the only one expressed in this three-day journey from Sinai. In addition to the complaint in verses 1 – 3, *the rabble who were among them had greedy desires* (v. 4). The Hebrew word for “rabble” (“asaphsoph”) is used only here in the Old Testament. It may refer to other peoples (i.e. non-Israelites) who accompanied the Israelites when they left Egypt (Exodus 12:37 – 38).

The reference to *greedy desires* (Heb. “hithavvu taavah,” literally “desired a desire” or “craved a craving”) might imply that the other groups who escaped Egypt along with Israel had expectations of a better situation than what they were experiencing. They probably expected that, when the LORD blessed Israel, they themselves would have a more comfortable lifestyle with abundant food and a nice place to dwell. Instead, they lived in tents and ate manna day after day just like Israel.

Along with the *rabble*, *the sons of Israel wept again* (lit., “they returned and wept”) *and said, “Who will give us meat to eat?”* The Israelites seemed to be negatively affected by the griping of the *rabble*. The people of the LORD, like the *rabble*, were not content with His gracious provision of manna. They wanted a more lavish choice of food. They looked back and started to *remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt* (v. 5). The word translated “free” is an adverb, and can also be translated “freely.” However, the fish they ate in Egypt was eaten while not being free—they were slaves. It appears they had forgotten their oppression, and God’s deliverance from slavery (Exodus 3:7).

The people remembered not only the “fish” but also *the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic*. These were tasty things to eat with the fish. As a result of not having food that tasted good, the people said that *now our appetite is gone* (v. 6). In fact, they griped about the fact that *there is nothing at all to look at except this manna*. They mourned the fact that they were being deprived of tasty food, and they conveniently forgot that, while eating this food, they were slaves to the Egyptians.

In verses 7 – 9, Moses described the manna that the LORD had been providing for over a year. Moses stated that *the manna was like coriander seed* (v. 7), meaning that it was white in color. Also, Moses described *its appearance like that of bdellium*. *Bdellium* was a resin-like substance and probably sticky as well (see Exodus 16:31 – 36). So, manna (which means “what is it?”) was probably a flat, wafer-like food that was white in color and sticky with a fragrant, honey-like substance.

In order to prepare the manna for food, *the people would* (v. 8)

- *Go about and gather it*
- *Grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar*
- *Boil it in the pot and make cakes with it*

After all of this preparation, *its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil*. This implies that the manna was not tasteless—it was simply not elegant. Some have speculated that the LORD deliberately gave them plain-tasting manna in order to motivate them to get to the Promised Land (“flowing with milk and honey”) faster.

So it was that *when the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it* (v. 9). This is the same as was specified in Exodus 16:14.

The manna was the LORD’s gracious provision for His people as they journeyed to the Promised Land. Manna was a miraculous provision of nourishment (Exodus 16:11-16). Manna is a picture of Jesus, the “living bread that came down out of heaven” (John 6:48-51). To reject God’s provision of manna was tantamount to rejecting Him. This would also foreshadow Israel’s rejection of Jesus.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>4</sup>The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat? <sup>5</sup>We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, <sup>6</sup>but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna. <sup>7</sup>Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. <sup>8</sup>The people would go about and gather *it* and grind *it* between two millstones or beat *it* in the mortar, and boil *it* in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil. <sup>9</sup>When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it.**