



Church of God Sunday School

THE PEOPLE MURMUR AND COMPLAIN

Exodus 15:22 — 17:16

The children of Israel were free! God had delivered them out of Egyptian slavery. He had opened up the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground. God then closed up that same sea on Pharaoh and his army, drowning them. The people of Israel joined with Moses to sing a wonderful song of victory and deliverance.

Moses, following the cloud that went before them, led the children of Israel from the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur (*SHUHR*). After three days of traveling, the Israelites could not find any water. When they came to a place called Marah (*MAIR-uh*), there was water, but they could not drink it. It was bitter! The people began to grumble and complain and said, "What shall we drink?" Moses cried unto the Lord. God showed him a tree, and when Moses cut it down and threw it into the water, it made the water good to drink.

Then the Israelites journeyed a little farther and entered into the wilderness of Sin. Again, the people began to murmur against Moses. And this time they also murmured against Aaron. They said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we . . . did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

God heard what the people said. He knew their murmuring was really not against Moses and Aaron, but against Him. Aaron told the people, "Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings." At that very moment, "the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud."

Then God told Moses to tell the people, "At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God." So in the evening God sent quails into the camp. They covered the camp, and the Israelites had meat.



Then in the morning, after the dew was gone, something small, white, and round was on the ground. The Israelites called it *manna*, which meant "what is it," because they did not know what it was. Moses told them it was bread from the Lord. Manna tasted "like wafers made with honey." The Israelites gathered it quickly in the morning, because when the sun shone on it, it melted away.

Moses told the people to gather an omer (5.1 pints) for every person. When they finished gathering the manna, some had more and some had less. But when they measured it, the one who had gathered much had nothing left over and the one who had gathered little had enough. The people were warned not to keep any manna overnight. Some disobeyed and did keep it overnight. The manna became wormy and smelled bad.

On the sixth day, the people were supposed to gather two omers (*OH-muhrs*) of manna per person because there would not be any on the seventh day. The manna that was left over from the sixth day would stay good for the seventh day. It would not have worms in it, and it would not smell bad.

The seventh day was to be a day of rest. The people were not supposed to do any work. Still, some went out the seventh day to gather manna anyway. Did they find any? No. Moses had told them they wouldn't. God scolded the children of Israel and commanded them not to go out on the seventh day.

The Lord told Moses to take an omer of manna and put it in a pot. This pot was to be kept "before the Testimony" (stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, which God would soon give to Moses). The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to the land of Canaan.

The children of Israel left the wilderness of Sin, and soon they were without water once again. The people murmured and complained against Moses. He said, in so many words: "Why do you find fault with me? Why

do you tempt the Lord and try His patience?" Then Moses asked God, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

The Lord told Moses to take his rod and go ahead of the people to Mount Horeb (*HOR-uhb*). There God would be standing upon the rock. Moses was to strike the rock with the rod, and water would flow from it. Moses did as God had said, and the people had water to drink! Moses called this place Massah (temptation) and Meribah (contention), because Israel had found fault with the Lord. They had tempted Him by saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

Although the children of Israel often murmured and complained, God continued to provide and protect them. The Amalekites (*uh-MAL-uh-kites*) attacked the Israelites from the rear of the camp (where the women, children, and sick people were; Deuteronomy 25:17-18).

Moses told Joshua to choose men and go fight the Amalekites. As they fought, Moses, Aaron, and Hur stood on a hill, overlooking the battlefield. When Moses held up the rod, Joshua and the Israelites drove

the Amalekites back. But when Moses' arms became tired, he could not hold up his hands. Then the Amalekites would drive the Israelites back!

Moses could not continue to hold up his arms, so Aaron and Hur brought a large stone for Moses to sit on. Then they held up his hands until the evening, when the battle ended. God gave Israel the victory.

However, God was not pleased with how the Israelites had murmured against Him. Their grumbling hindered their progress of obtaining what God wanted to provide for them: a land of plenty. This should be a lesson for God's people today. The Lord does not want His children to grumble, murmur, or complain when things happen that they do not understand or cannot do anything about. Instead, God wants them to pray to Him, to believe Him, and to trust Him.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And the whole congregation . . . murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness."*

*—Exodus 16:2*  
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