

Hymns: RHC 347 *Under the Care of My God*, The Almighty 348 *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* 349 *Surely Goodness and Mercy*

Numbers 11:4-15

4 And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6 But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes. 7 And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. 8 *And* the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. 9 And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. 11 And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? 12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, **as a nursing father beareth the sucking child**, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? 13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me. 15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

As a Nursing Father

OUTLINE

- (1) Carry Them in Thy Bosom
- (2) Notwithstanding their Weeping

INTRODUCTION

A baby cries for its needs without let-up until its needs are met. Such is the helpless state of babies. Whether it is a wet diaper or a hungry and growling tummy, the baby as it were instinctively sound out its discomfort and distress without a thought for the mother for the need to be met immediately. By the sound of the baby's cry, the mother realizes that the need is urgent and acute.

Isaiah 49:15 (KJV) Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

The mother's instinctive love to suckle the babe of her womb in its time of need is often regardless whether the mother is just dozing off for a lack of sleep or in at a distance hearing the crying baby flies to its side.

This was how God cared for Israel whilst they were in the wilderness - Deuteronomy 1:31 (KJV) And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God

bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

At no time the Lord, our heavenly Father, was not aware of the cries of the children of Israel, and thus, our cries.

Israel was a young people yet to receive nationhood – a people, a law and a land. They were en-route to the Promised Land, but not there yet.

The analogy of the baby describes the state of the nation, in her infancy.

Moses pleaded with God to help his people - 12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, **as a nursing father beareth the sucking child**, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

The description of the nation’s infancy requiring the nursing care of the father is alluded here by Moses.

(1) Carry Them in Thy Bosom

12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, **as a nursing father beareth the sucking child**, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

The tender care of the shepherd for its lamb is another imagery the Lord illustrates through the prophet Isaiah to demonstrate His care for His people. The shepherd gathers the little lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are young.

Isaiah 40:11 (KJV) He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

When Israel entered the Promised Land, He raised up David His servant to feed them and shepherd them.

Ezekiel 34:23 (KJV) And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His only begotten Son into the world to be a sacrifice to redeem them unto Himself.

John 10:11 (KJV) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

God called the Apostle Paul to gather Christ’s flock and to “tenderly care for” the flock He purchased with His own blood.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 (KJV) But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

It is a picture of tender loving care.

The children of Israel cried, “Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (v4). Triggered by the Egyptians who were in their company, it infected the children of Israel to recall their

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time in Egypt albeit perhaps untrue for those years when they were carrying heavy burdens for Pharaoh to build his cities after the death of Joseph and those who remembered his contribution to Egypt – “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick”

Recall the historical account for the facts - **Exodus 1:5-22 (KJV)** And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt *already*. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

There was a time when the children of Israel multiplied and grew in the land of Goshen till...

8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

The Pharaoh began to afflict them so that their lives became unbearable. To remember the good life in Egypt was just not a rightful assessment of their plight. They were subjected to hard bondage and even infanticide.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigour.

15 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live. **But the midwives feared God**, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women *are* not as the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. **Therefore God dealt well with the midwives:** and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, **because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.** And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

God preserved the infants that were born through the courageous Hebrew midwives who saved the babies that were born that Pharaoh ordered to be thrown into the

River Nile to feed the crocodiles. God kept and preserved these little ones that are now in the wilderness, having left Egypt at the behest of Moses.

There was a tinge of regret in the hearts of the children of Israel as they reflected upon the delicacies of Egypt that they once could enjoy. Now that they are in the wilderness, there was no “proper food”.

When the tempter came to Jesus after He was an hungered in the wilderness having fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus obeyed the Father than to fall into “divers lusts” (Titus 3:3, 2 Timothy 3:6). He defeated the tempter pointedly with these words - **Matthew 4:3-4 (KJV)** And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The children of Israel were taught this important lesson to do the will of the Father to rely upon the Father’s supply than to

Deuteronomy 8:3 (KJV) And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

The devil tempted Jesus, just as the mixt multitude tempted the children of Israel in the wilderness to think of the the fish, which they “did” eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.

William MacDonald observed well, “Our Lord’s example teaches that we don’t have to live, but we do have to obey God! Getting bread is not the most important thing in life. Obedience to every word of God is. Since Jesus had received no instructions from the Father to turn stones into bread, He would not act on His own and thus obey Satan, no matter how intense His hunger.”

The Lord had provided the children of Israel with manna which was the food of obedience that will nourish them well in the wilderness - 7 And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. 8 *And* the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. 9 And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

How often the believer would not partaker of the manna that God provides but succumb to the temptation of the evil one to crave for something out of the will of God that is good in his own eyes.

The green pastures that the shepherd prepared for the sheep was, as it were, rejected. A most unbecoming behaviour because that was the best pasture that is prepared painstakingly after much searching to best nourish his little ones.

Will the Father not give the best for His flock? Why were they dissatisfied? It was the sin of disobedience!

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This was the first sin that Adam and Eve committed that threw them out of the Paradise in Eden. The same sin of disobedience that the children of Israel will suffer for not obeying the Lord's command to march into the Promised Land.

Genesis 3:4-6 (KJV) And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die:** For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods**, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

It was that same sin of disobedience that Adam and Eve transgressed when they rebelled against the heavenly Father that day in the Garden.

Trusting the care of the Father for His children and willing to obey the Father and be under His care is the thought here. God's care is the best! Why did Adam and Eve sought for food outside what God has already provided for them in the Garden – ample variety and abundance. Why can't they see? Why can't the children of Israel see?

(2) Notwithstanding their Weeping

10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: ... 13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

God condescended to the weeping of the children of Israel. He would give them flesh to eat to their full though the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly (v10).

Numbers 11:18-20 (KJV) And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.* 19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; 20 *But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that **ye have despised the LORD** which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?*

The word "despised" or "rejected" the Lord and His care for them. They thought they knew better. Notwithstanding God condescended to hear their weeping and accede to their request.

The same happened when children of Israel asked for a king so that they would be like the nations around them, they rejected God's reign over them. From a theocracy, Israel will degenerate to a monarchy.

1 Samuel 8:7 (KJV) And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

God told Israel the consequence of having a king to lead them but the people insisted to be like the fallen nations around them.

1 Samuel 8:8-22 (KJV) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

God acceded to their request but sent leanness to their souls (Psalm 106:15). The psalmist pleaded for God's mercy upon His people plagued with that same sin of rejecting God's care for them - **Psalm 106:4-15 (KJV)** Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto thy people*: O visit me with thy salvation; That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel: 14 **But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.** 15 **And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.**

Israel had to grow and learn. God allowed them their request.

Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long,

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but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. **For a meal of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey.** What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly.

It embittered all. The meat was poison to them when it came without a blessing; whatever it might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the soul lean.

Is it not so also for the children of God today? How they sought the fish and the leeks and the onions when God has supplied the best food for them? We often reject God's will and sought their own to our own hurt!

If we must know scantiness, may God grant it may not be scantiness of soul: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner. To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase; but to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer! The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. We fret and fume till we have our desire, and then we have to fret still more because the attainment of it ends in bitter disappointment. [Treasury of David]

CONCLUSION

God allows His people by His permissible will to taste their own ways and their souls become leaner. Let us be willing to trust God and be grateful and satisfied with what He has given us in His perfect care for us rather than to sought our own which alas does not satisfy! May God's people be the wiser to choose to courts of the LORD - **Psalm 84:10 (KJV)** For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

May the Lord strengthen His people to thrive under His care rather than strive against His good will. Amen.