

## **Taking Egypt out of Israel**

Scripture: Numbers 11:1 – 9

Humans have a tendency to always think that the past was much better than the present or future. We look back and remember the past as a much better time. For instance, we look back at the 1960's as a good period of time even though the 1960's was a time filled with great social unrest, massive protest marches, and violence. Oh yes, we always look back as if it was better then!

It is the same with the Israelite people who have left bondage in Egypt to freedom in the desert. They begin to think about how much better it was back in Egypt in slavery. Can you imagine that? Think about God's people looking fondly on slavery in Egypt rather than freedom in the desert. The people of God begin to think slavery in Egypt is looking pretty good!

Despite God's miraculous supply of provisions during their desert wandering, the Hebrews murmured. Despite God's supply of manna from heaven in their desert wandering, the Israelites complained.

Had they forgotten the incredible deliverance from Egypt? Had they forgotten their flight from the Pharaoh? Had they forgotten?

The memory of their indentured life in Egypt was now being looked at fondly. Moses had led God's people through the isolated wilderness but the people are longing for slavery back in Egypt. The people were miserable and they grumbled.

A scholar said this – It was easier to take Israel out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of Israel!

Escaping from Pharaoh's Army was not easy but it seems liberation from slavery was easier than erasing 4,000 years of entrenched Egyptian culture. Not only did Israel long for the 'comfort food' of Egypt, their hearts easily bowed to other gods as blatantly shown when Aaron fashioned the golden calf.

The people of God cried for the meat they got to eat in Egypt even though they ate very little meat in Egypt. They wept for the fish they ate in Egypt. They wept for the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic they ate in Egypt.

I have to say, I was happy the Israelites did not weep for peas because I hate peas, but they longed for the past. The scholar was right – It was easier to take Israel out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of Israel!

In the Old Testament you can find a litany of Israel's spiral into idol worship again and again. There was a continuous cycle of disobedience followed by repentance.

Like Israel, we too become impatient, reactionary, and petulant with God's provisions. I believe it is less difficult for us to be saved by God's grace than to be content on our spiritual journey. Let me repeat that - I believe it is less difficult for us to be saved by God's grace than to be content on our spiritual journey.

This was certainly true for Israel. Within our culture, it is easy to be swayed by familiar idols and we lapse into discontent. We often seek the comfort of the past which we remember fondly and we drift from God.

Israel's story should remind us that we can drift from God over and over again. We can drift from God's mercy over and over again. Today's Old Testament story should remind us to live in the present and pray for the future, and it should remind us of God's mercy.

God's compassion is reliable. God can restore within each of us a right spirit. If we deepen our faith in the one true God, the past may still look good but the present and future will look glorious.

With everything that has happened in 2020, I am sure each of us can look fondly in our past at better times. We can easily remember the 'good old days'. Let us rely on God as we move into the future. Why? Because God's compassion is reliable and his Holy Spirit can restore within each of us a deep faith in the one true God.

Michael Incitti will now share a song with us that speaks about the Israelites exodus from Egypt. Let us listen to this song about the Promised Land entitled 'The Exodus Song'.

Thank you, Michael!

Let us pray:

Sustainer of Life, keep us from yearning for the 'good old days'. May we always rely on you as we move into the future.

AMEN.