



Plants for Reflection: Alliums (Garlic, Leeks)

Alliums are a genus of flowering plants including many that are widely used in cookery. These include onions, shallots, leeks, garlic, and chives. They grow widely across the Northern Hemisphere.

Bible Passage: Numbers 11:5-6 (NRSV*)

They said 'We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.'

The book of Numbers is an account of a people who were often discouraged and afraid in the face of hardship, and who rebelled against God and against Moses whom God had appointed to lead them. In chapter eleven, verses five and six, we see their murmurings of discontent over manna, the food which God had provided to sustain them through their exodus and journey to the Promised Land. They were bored with the repetitive diet and longed for the food freely available in Egypt, thinking back to the "good old days" when fish, leeks and onions were plentiful.

Reflection: Thinking Globally

In this passage, the Israelites had set out from the Sinai Desert heading towards Canaan and the Promised Land. They had already been travelling over two years from Egypt. After just a few days they started complaining over their food. Was this just because they were tired of the seemingly endless journey, were they afraid of what lay before them, or had they lost faith in God?

Complaints over food often mask deeper concerns, as seen in prison protests and hunger strikes. We experience many ups and downs in life and often complain over trivial matters, wishing for the better times we had in the past.

When faced with difficulties, we might question if God has the answers to life's problems, but God wants us to reach out to him in faith, even when our faith feels very small. God wants us to trust him even when it seems there appears little reason to do so.

In the book of Numbers, God shows his faithfulness and persistent care for his people despite their doubts and complaints and leads them safely to Canaan.

* New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, © 1989, 1995, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Prayer

Dear God,

In this peaceful Bible Garden, let us count our blessings - that we live in a town far away from war and oppression; that we have more than enough to eat, time for leisure and a safe place to call home. Let us strive to share what we have with others who are oppressed and marginalised, with those who have lost their homes and livelihoods because of climate change and with those who do not have access to healthcare as we do. This is our commitment for life.

Help us campaign for economic and social justice, to end unfair trade deals which benefit those who already have so much, and to end crippling debts of the poorest countries with little means to repay them. This is our commitment for life.

Let us pray for Israelis and Palestinians who work for peace in the Holy Land. Let there be freedom for those blockaded in Gaza and for those imprisoned for refusing military conscription. We pray that refugees can return to their homes, that they can live in peace with their neighbours and share equally the resources of the land. This is our commitment for life.

Amen.

What we do: Working with *Commitment for Life*

Commitment for Life (C4L) is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme. It enables local congregations to be involved through their prayers, by campaigning for change, and by their donations. It supports development projects, helping some of the most vulnerable people in the world, working in partnership with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

Through C4L, our local congregation in Garstang can make a difference to the lives of some of the world's poorest people by raising money for the *Commitment for Life* programme.

Three-quarters of the money donated to C4L is given directly to Christian Aid to support projects in four partner countries: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Zimbabwe. Each church chooses one of these countries as its focus for prayer, giving and campaigning. We chose to support work in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Of the remaining money, 5% goes to Global Justice Now to support its stand against global poverty and 20% is used for administration, advocacy, education, and grants.