

Exodus 16

As the Israelites continued their journey to Mt Sinai, what happened in the desert (vv. 2-3)? Everyone complained against Moses and Aaron -- because of a lack of food. The Israelites selectively remembered their past and thought of their time in Egypt as the good old days. They also insisted that their leaders, Moses and Aaron, had evil motives. This kind of thinking is common among those who complain.

How did the Lord respond to the Israelites' complaints (vv. 4-5)? As He did with the peoples' complaint for water at Marah, the LORD immediately responded.....this time, by giving them bread from heaven which began the next day and continued for 40 years.¹ And He explained how they were to gather the manna....each day the people were to gather only enough bread for that day. On the sixth day they were to gather enough for that day and the next since the bread would not come on the seventh day.

How was this to be a test of the Israelites (v. 5)? It was designed as a test of their obedience. The test came on the *sixth day* when they were told to gather twice as much since none would be provided on the seventh day which would be designed as a day of rest. It was also a test of their faith -- they would have to trust the Lord to bring the food each morning!

What did Moses and Aaron say to the Israelites (vv. 6-7)? Moses and Aaron rebuked the people for their grumbling against them. And they promised them that they would see the glory of the LORD in the morning (v. 8).

They would not see the glory of God as in His enthroned radiance; but in His great, loving provision for His people. That is a *real* display of God's glory. Note that He did not demand that they stop their complaining before they ate. He fed them. Just like Jesus would later command us, God loved and fed those who acted like His enemies.

What did Moses also say to them (v. 8)? You will experience the goodness and grace of the Lord, whom you have been grumbling against, when He gives you meat in the evening and bread in the morning because He has heard your complaining. You may think you're complaining against us but really you are complaining against the Lord.

What did Moses tell Aaron to say (v. 9)? Have the people gather before the Lord. He had heard their grumbling and He was preparing to reveal His glory. **What did the Israelites see when Aaron was speaking to them (v. 10)?** The glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. Undoubtedly a reminder of His provision and care.

What did the Lord tell Moses to say to the Israelites (vv. 11-12)? In response to their grumbling, He reassured them that He would provide for their daily food needs and, by doing so, the community would know that He is the Lord their God,² i.e., He would be glorified.

What happened that evening and the next morning (vv. 13-14)? That very evening God miraculously provided quail in response to the people's request for meat. In the fall this small game bird, similar to grouse, migrates south from Palestine and Arabia to Central Africa, and in the spring it returns. Egyptian art depicts people catching the birds in hand nets.³ The next morning the bread came with the dew. When the dew was gone, thin flakes were on the desert floor.

What did the Israelites think (v. 15)? Never having seen this before, the people asked, "What is it?"

How did Moses explain it to them (vv. 15-16)? It is the bread that the Lord has provided especially for you. You are to take an omer for each family member. An omer is about two quarts dry measure. The omer is mentioned only here in this chapter in the Bible.

Did the Israelites follow Moses instructions (vv. 17-18)? Yes. They took an omer for each person in their family.

What further instructions did Moses give the Israelites (v. 19)? Don't keep any of it overnight.

Did the Israelites follow Moses instructions this time (v. 20)? Some of them did not. And the next morning the manna had turned to maggots and smelled nasty. Moses was angry with those who kept part of it overnight.

What was the routine the Israelites followed (vv. 21-22)? Every morning they gathered as much as they needed for that day. When the sun grew hot, the rest of the manna melted away. But on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as they needed because the seventh day was to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord (v. 26). No bread would be given on that day, but part of the bread of the sixth day was to be saved for the seventh day.

What further instructions did Moses give the people (v. 23)? Manna gathered on the day before the Sabbath could be baked or boiled and saved until the next morning without spoiling.

NOTE: The Israelites had not yet observed the Sabbath before now. As slaves in Egypt, they had probably worked seven days a week. However, God was blessing them with a day of rest, and was now preparing them for the giving of the fourth commandment (20:8-11). This was the first time God spoke to Israel about the Sabbath.

What did the people do (v. 24)? They saved the manna from the day before the Sabbath and ate it on the Sabbath and it didn't spoil. **What else did Moses tell them to do (vv. 25-26)?** Eat the manna today that you gathered yesterday because today is the Sabbath and there won't be any manna on the ground on the seventh day, the Sabbath.

What did some of the people do (vv. 27-28)? Disregarding God's instruction, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather the bread. Moses rebuked those who went out to gather it on the Sabbath.

What did the Lord explain to Moses and the people (vv. 29-30)? He explained the concept of Sabbath rest – a Holy day to the Lord -- relative to the gathering of manna. God essentially *forced* them to honor the Sabbath by not providing any bread from heaven on the Sabbath day.

What did the people call the bread and how was it described (v. 31)? The people called the bread "manna." It was in thin flakes (14), like white coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers. God gave Israel good tasting food. Since it could be baked like bread or cake (23), eating manna was like eating sweet bread every day.

What did Moses command the people to do (v. 32)? As God told Moses.....keep an omer of manna, in a jar as a reminder of God's goodness for future generations.

What did Moses tell Aaron to do (v. 33)? Fill a jar with an omer of manna, to be kept for the generations to follow. This jar, full of the bread from heaven, was later put into the ark of the covenant, alongside the two tablets of the Law referred to here as the Testimony (Hebrews 9:4).

What did Aaron do (v. 34)? Aaron obeyed this command later: when the Tabernacle was constructed (40:20).⁴ These objects memorialized God's faithful provision of both spiritual and physical foods (Deuteronomy 8:3).

How long did the Israelites eat the manna (v. 35)? They ate manna for forty years which was the length of time the Israelites would wander in the wilderness. The manna stopped coming when they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:12). Then they were weaned off the daily provision of manna and began to eat the produce of the land. This was the normal way God provided food -- through hard work farming the land – which in itself is a blessing of God.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Exodus, 2023 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 150.

² John D. Hannah, "Exodus," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 134.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Exodus, 2023 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 153.