

Exodus Chapter Sixteen

Read **Exodus 16:1-10** – Israel Murmurs for Bread

v.1 “AND THEY TOOK THEIR JOURNEY FROM ELIM, AND ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL CAME UNTO THE WILDERNESS OF SIN, WHICH *is* BETWEEN ELIM AND SINAI, ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE SECOND MONTH AFTER THEIR DEPARTING OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

See Map. Israel now moves again, leaving the oasis of Elim with its wells and palm trees and start their travel to the south to the twin mountains called Horeb and Sinai. As this map shows this “wilderness” was located along the eastern coast of the Red Sea on the western side of the Sinai peninsula. It is also called the plain of el-Markha. Secular sources indicate that the name Sin if translated would be Moon and this region was named for the moon god worshiped by many of the descendants of Shem. This moon god worship is also one of the sources of the current Islamic religion.

v.2 “AND THE WHOLE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MURMURED AGAINST MOSES AND AARON IN THE WILDERNESS:”

Just as they did before and will again, again and again the people become disgruntled and murmur against Moses and Aaron.

v.3 “AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SAID UNTO THEM, WOULD TO GOD WE HAD DIED BY THE HAND OF THE **LORD** IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, WHEN WE SAT BY THE FLESH POTS, AND WHEN WE DID EAT BREAD TO THE FULL; FOR YE HAVE BROUGHT US FORTH INTO THIS WILDERNESS, TO KILL THIS WHOLE ASSEMBLY WITH HUNGER.”

In spite of all of their oppression as slaves, in spite of the hard taskmasters that they had to endure, Israel will continually complain, wish that they were back in Egypt and some would try to return. They have now been traveling about six weeks and the bread and materials required to make bread are running out. They are facing a little hardship so they long for the flesh pots and bread of Egypt. What are the flesh pots? If you will remember, in our study of the Passover, Israel was commanded not to boil the lamb as was their custom. These flesh pots simply refer to the cook pots in Egypt that they used to prepare meat. Later they would complain again:

Numbers 11:4-5 “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? 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:”

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v.4 “THEN SAID THE **LORD** UNTO MOSES, BEHOLD, I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR YOU; AND THE PEOPLE SHALL GO OUT AND GATHER A CERTAIN RATE [a day’s portion] EVERY DAY, THAT I MAY PROVE THEM, WHETHER THEY WILL WALK IN MY LAW, OR NO.

God will provide. The people of Israel do have a legitimate need for food to sustain them during their journey. Therefore God will send them a form of bread, something that was not a product of the desert in which they were traveling but the product of a miracle.

In providing this food for them, God is going to also provide only a certain portion, sufficient for their needs for one day, or as in the case of the Sabbath, two days. The fact that God fed them in the wilderness was remembered throughout the history of Israel and we find this miracle used to challenge Jesus to do something similar to prove who he was:

John 6:30-31 “THEY SAID THEREFORE UNTO HIM, WHAT SIGN SHEWEST THOU THEN, THAT WE MAY SEE, AND BELIEVE THEE? WHAT DOST THOU WORK? OUR FATHERS DID EAT MANNA IN THE DESERT; AS IT IS WRITTEN, HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.”

We also see that God is going to use this situation to see if the children of Israel will “WALK IN MY LAW, OR NO”. What does he mean? God is going to see if they will obey a simple command to gather only the daily portion required and trust in Him to provide more again the next day.

v.5 “AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT ON THE SIXTH DAY THEY SHALL PREPARE THAT WHICH THEY BRING IN; AND IT SHALL BE TWICE AS MUCH AS THEY GATHER DAILY.”

The only exception to the daily gathering of manna was that on the sixth day of the week they were to gather a double portion so that they could have sufficient food to sustain themselves on the day of rest. Since the Mosaic Covenant, the Mosaic Law has not yet been given does this give us a hint that observing the seventh day of the week as a day of rest might have been practiced or even required during the times of the patriarchs? Yes, but if so, the scripture makes no mention of it beyond the fact that on the seventh day God rested.

v.6 “AND MOSES AND AARON SAID UNTO ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AT EVEN, THEN YE SHALL KNOW THAT THE **LORD** HATH BROUGHT YOU OUT FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT:”

“AT EVEN”, an event would occur that would cause them to know that it was God who brought them out of the land of Egypt.

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v.7 “AND IN THE MORNING, THEN YE SHALL SEE THE GLORY OF THE **LORD**; FOR THAT HE HEARETH YOUR MURMURINGS AGAINST THE **LORD**: AND WHAT *are* WE, THAT YE MURMUR AGAINST US?”

When the morning comes they will see the glory of God. Moses also tells them that their murmurings against him and Aaron are of no consequence because they are simply God’s messengers. They are really murmuring against God.

v.8 “AND MOSES SAID, *This shall be*, WHEN THE **LORD** SHALL GIVE YOU IN THE EVENING FLESH TO EAT, AND IN THE MORNING BREAD TO THE FULL; FOR THAT THE **LORD** HEARETH YOUR MURMURINGS WHICH YE MURMUR AGAINST HIM: AND WHAT ARE WE? YOUR MURMURINGS ARE NOT AGAINST US, BUT AGAINST THE **LORD**.”

Moses tells them that in the evenings that they will have flesh to eat and in the mornings, bread, which God will provide. Moses also warns them that their murmurings against God’s messenger’s, he and Aaron, are really murmurings against God himself. And the murmuring is just starting. Later when it reaches a point where they refuse to go forward into Canaan God seems to literally run out of patience with them.

Numbers 14:27 “HOW LONG *shall I bear with* THIS EVIL CONGREGATION, WHICH MURMUR AGAINST ME? I HAVE HEARD THE MURMURINGS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, WHICH THEY MURMUR AGAINST ME.”

And he fixed their punishment, right then and there:

Numbers 14:29 “YOUR CARCASSES SHALL FALL IN THIS WILDERNESS; AND ALL THAT WERE NUMBERED OF YOU, ACCORDING TO YOUR WHOLE NUMBER, FROM TWENTY YEARS OLD AND UPWARD WHICH HAVE MURMURED AGAINST ME.”

v.9 “AND MOSES SPAKE UNTO AARON, SAY UNTO ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, COME NEAR BEFORE THE **LORD**: FOR HE HATH HEARD YOUR MURMURINGS.”

Moses now instructs Aaron to call a gathering of all of the people of Israel before the Lord. Since God has heard their murmurings He wants to remind them that He is leading them, He is in control and He will provide for their needs.

v.10 “AND IT CAME TO PASS, AS AARON SPAKE UNTO THE WHOLE CONGREGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY LOOKED TOWARD THE WILDERNESS, AND, BEHOLD, THE GLORY OF THE **LORD** APPEARED IN THE CLOUD.”

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As Aaron speaks, Lord allows his glory to be seen of Israel, emphasizing and assuring them that the words that are being spoken do indeed come from Him.

Read **Exodus 16:11-21** – Quails and Manna

v.11-12 “AND THE **LORD** SPAKE UNTO MOSES, SAYING, I HAVE HEARD THE MURMURINGS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: SPEAK UNTO THEM, SAYING, 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.”

“THE LORD SPAKE”, one of the things that we need to keep in mind as we study the Old Testament books is that they confirm again, again and again that what we have here is indeed the Word of God. It is inspired, God breathed, recorded by faithful men as they were directed by the Holy Spirit. This kind of confirmation, “THE LORD SPAKE”, “THE WORD OF THE LORD”, “AND GOD SAID” is found no less than 2,000 times in scripture.

Israel will be given flesh to eat in the evening and bread in the morning; thereby they will know that God is Jehovah God.

v.13 “AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT AT EVEN THE QUAILS CAME UP, AND COVERED THE CAMP: AND IN THE MORNING THE DEW LAY ROUND ABOUT THE HOST.”

This miracle is recorded again in **Numbers 11** and commemorated by the psalmist in a psalm about God’s wondrous works in behalf of Israel:

Psalms 105:40 “*The people* ASKED, AND HE BROUGHT QUAILS, AND SATISFIED THEM WITH THE BREAD OF HEAVEN.”

v.14 “AND WHEN THE DEW THAT LAY WAS GONE UP, BEHOLD, UPON THE FACE OF THE WILDERNESS *there lay* A SMALL ROUND THING, *as* SMALL AS THE HOAR FROST ON THE GROUND.”

A small round thing, something that looked like the kind of heavy frost that occurs when the moisture in the air freezes on the surface of everything it touches. That is something probably unknown in this area but in Michigan when the fog freezes the result is a winter wonderland.

v.15 “AND WHEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SAW *it*, THEY SAID ONE TO ANOTHER, IT *is* MANNA: FOR THEY WIST NOT WHAT IT *was*. AND MOSES SAID UNTO THEM, THIS *is* THE BREAD WHICH THE LORD HATH GIVEN YOU TO EAT.”

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Adam Clarke in his commentary calls this verse a “most unfortunate translation”. The Israelites “SAID ONE TO ANOTHER, IT *is* MANNA” but they didn’t know what it was. It’s a contradiction in terms and the reason that Moses almost immediately tells them that it is the bread that God has sent them.

What was that wonderful substance that God provided? We don’t know. It was not something common to the wilderness where they were. It was not something that Israel recognized, that they had ever had any experience with. Moses confirmed this in:

Deuteronomy 8:3 “AND HE HUMBLLED 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 DOTHT NOT LIVE BY BREAD ONLY, BUT BY EVERY *word* THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE **LORD** DOTHT MAN LIVE.”

v.16 “THIS IS THE THING WHICH THE **LORD** HATH COMMANDED, GATHER OF IT EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS EATING, AN OMER FOR EVERY MAN, *according to* THE NUMBER OF YOUR PERSONS; TAKE YE EVERY MAN FOR *them* WHICH *are* IN HIS TENTS.”

Israel was to gather this bread “EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS EATING” or every man according to his need and the needs of his family. Then God gives them a measure that was known to them “AN OMER FOR EVERY MAN”. How much was an omer? Josephus records that an omer was equal to six half pints or a quart and one half. Adam Clarke in his commentary says that the omer was equal to three quarts in English measure. Cook in the Baker commentary states plainly that “the exact quantity cannot be determined, since the measures varied at different times.” Suffice to say, that each household was to gather only what was needed to sustain themselves for one day.

v.17-18 “ AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DID SO, AND GATHERED, SOME MORE, SOME LESS. AND WHEN THEY DID METE IT WITH AN OMER, HE THAT GATHERED MUCH HAD NOTHING OVER, AND HE THAT GATHERED LITTLE HAD NO LACK; THEY GATHERED EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS EATING.”

The children of Israel did so; they obeyed the commandment that God had given them. When “THEY DID METE IT WITH AN OMER” what does that phrase mean? When they measured it with an omer those who gathered much had nothing left over and those who didn’t gather very much had sufficient for their needs. When they kept God’s commandments, Israel was provided exactly what they needed.

v.19 “AND MOSES SAID, LET NO MAN LEAVE OF IT TILL THE MORNING.”

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They were to leave none of it for the morning; they were to depend upon God to send them this bread on a daily basis. This is reminiscent of the words of Jesus in the Model Prayer, teaching his disciples to pray to God for their daily bread.

v.20 “NOTWITHSTANDING THEY HEARKENED NOT UNTO MOSES; BUT SOME OF THEM LEFT OF IT UNTIL THE MORNING, AND IT BRED WORMS, AND STANK: AND MOSES WAS WROTH WITH THEM.”

While most chose to obey the words of God there were some who did not and tried to keep the manna until the next day. The result was something that was totally repulsive and they incurred the wrath of Moses. When they disobeyed God they suffered the consequences.

v.21 “AND THEY GATHERED IT EVERY MORNING, EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS EATING: AND WHEN THE SUN WAXED HOT, IT MELTED.”

The manna was there every morning. They gathered that which was sufficient for their needs for the day and when the sun became hot enough what was not gathered or needed just melted away.

Read **Exodus 16:22-31** – Manna and the Sabbath

v.22 “AND IT CAME TO PASS, *that* ON THE SIXTH DAY THEY GATHERED TWICE AS MUCH BREAD, TWO OMERS FOR ONE *man*: AND ALL THE RULERS OF THE CONGREGATION CAME AND TOLD MOSES.”

Having had the experience of the manna rotting and stinking and having had to endure the wrath of Moses; when the people gathered twice as much on the sixth day as they needed to sustain themselves for one day the elders come to Moses thinking that they have a problem. Apparently they did not understand, yet, the distinction that God has made of the seventh day of the week.

v.23 “AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, THIS *is that* WHICH THE **LORD** HATH SAID, TO MORROW *is* THE REST OF THE HOLY SABBATH UNTO THE **LORD**: BAKE *that* WHICH YE WILL BAKE *to day*, AND SEETHE THAT YE WILL SEETHE; AND THAT WHICH REMAINETH OVER LAY UP FOR YOU TO BE KEPT UNTIL THE MORNING.”

Here we see again that the Sabbath Day was consecrated by God as a day of rest and that it was so even among the patriarchs. Adam Clarke observes that God made the seventh day a day of rest at the very beginning of time, resting after his creation of the universe. He is demanding here before the giving of the Mosaic Law strict observance of the Sabbath here among the children of Israel and would make it a tenth part of the law under Moses.

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They were to gather however much they needed for two days, keep it, and it would not spoil as has that which was gathered and kept in violation of God's law.

v.24 "AND THEY LAID IT UP TILL THE MORNING, AS MOSES BADE: AND IT DID NOT STINK, NEITHER WAS THERE ANY WORM THEREIN."

So again when they obeyed God they prospered, here they had sufficient to eat during the celebration of the Sabbath without gathering manna during the day of rest.

v.25 "AND MOSES SAID, EAT THAT TO DAY; FOR TO DAY *is* A SABBATH UNTO THE **LORD**: TO DAY YE SHALL NOT FIND IT IN THE FIELD."

So Moses commands them to eat what was left over on the seventh day, because they would not find it in the field.

v.26 "SIX DAYS YE SHALL GATHER IT; BUT ON THE SEVENTH DAY, WHICH IS THE SABBATH, IN IT THERE SHALL BE NONE."

The commandment is repeated so that there is absolutely no excuse or claim that they did not know what God expected of them.

v.27 "AND IT CAME TO PASS, *that* THERE WENT OUT *some* OF THE PEOPLE ON THE SEVENTH DAY FOR TO GATHER, AND THEY FOUND NONE."

Some people just never either get the word or accept what they are told. Others are going to do their way or burst. The scripture doesn't tell us but it would be quite appropriate if those who did not gather sufficient on the sixth day of the week to carry them over the Sabbath to go hungry.

v.28 "AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, HOW LONG REFUSE YE TO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS?"

When God gives us law, he expects us to honor and obey that law. Here we can almost hear the frustration in the words that God spoke to Moses. He has manifested himself in the cloud that leads them. He rescued them from certain death or at the least captivity in Egypt again. He has provided them sweet water at Marah. He has provided them meat to eat by providing the quail and he has now provided them with bread by providing the manna. Yet, there are those among the children of Israel that just refuse to obey Him.

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v.29 “SEE, FOR THAT THE **LORD** HATH GIVEN YOU THE SABBATH, THEREFORE HE GIVETH YOU ON THE SIXTH DAY THE BREAD OF TWO DAYS; ABIDE YE EVERY MAN IN HIS PLACE, LET NO MAN GO OUT OF HIS PLACE ON THE SEVENTH DAY.”

God has given them the Sabbath; just as he has given so many new things to all mankind, especially those still obedient to Him. So now he tells them that “EVERY MAN” should “ABIDE IN HIS PLACE”. To emphasize He repeats “LET NO MAN GO OUT OF HIS PLACE ON THE SEVENTH DAY.” This prohibition was given because they went outside of the camp to seek manna. It was interpreted in various places and sundry times to mean not to go outside the village, city, or town. It became what we find in:

Acts 1:12 “THEN RETURNED THEY UNTO JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT CALLED OLIVET, WHICH IS FROM JERUSALEM A SABBATH DAY’S JOURNEY.”

Adam Clarke says that this was equal to one thousand cubits or about one English mile, but Mr. Clarke needs to recalculate. One thousand cubits at 18 inches per cubit is only 500 yards, or a little over a quarter of a mile. An English mile is 5,280 feet or 1760 yards, so 1000 cubits is less than 1/3 of an English mile.

We also note that the Sabbath restriction was given for man’s benefit:

Mark 2:17 “AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH:”

v.30-31 “SO THE PEOPLE RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY. AND THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL CALLED THE NAME THEREOF MANNA: AND IT **was** LIKE CORIANDER SEED, WHITE; AND THE TASTE OF IT **was** LIKE WAFERS **made** WITH HONEY.”

So the children of Israel rested on the seventh day. We remember once again that the Mosaic Covenant was not yet given. So the Sabbath as a day of rest predates the giving of the Ten Commandment.

We also see that the manna was like coriander seed, white and to a lover of honey like me it had a very pleasant taste. See pictures: the coriander blossom is white and a rather small flower. It’s seed is also small and each seed is about .12-.16 inches in diameter.

Read **Exodus 16:32-36** – The Memorial of Manna

v.32 “AND MOSES SAID, THIS **is** THE THING WHICH THE LORD COMMANDETH, FILL AN OMER OF IT TO BE KEPT FOR YOUR GENERATIONS; THAT THEY MAY SEE THE BREAD WHEREWITH I HAVE FED YOU IN THE WILDERNESS, WHEN I BROUGHT YOU FORTH FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

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First we have the commandment. They are to take an omer, about a quart and one half, of manna and preserve it for the generations to come. God wants Israel to remember his goodness, the care that he gave them, the frustration of putting up with them for the 40 years of wandering. He wants them to remember specifically the manna which he used to feed them during their wandering.

v.33 “AND MOSES SAID UNTO AARON, TAKE A POT, AND PUT AN OMER FULL OF MANNA THEREIN, AND LAY IT UP BEFORE THE **LORD**, TO BE KEPT FOR YOUR GENERATIONS.”

So Moses passes the commandment from God over to Aaron. Where would Israel keep this pot of manna? The Hebrew writer tells us:

Hebrews 9:4 “WHICH HAD THE GOLDEN CENSER, AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OVERLAID ROUND ABOUT WITH GOLD, WHEREIN *was* THE GOLDEN POT THAT HAD MANNA, AND AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDERED, AND THE TABLES OF THE COVENANT;”

v.34 “AS THE **LORD** COMMANDED MOSES, SO AARON LAID IT UP BEFORE THE TESTIMONY, TO BE KEPT.”

So Aaron preserved the omer of manna in the same manner as the tables of stone and Aaron's rod were preserved later. The Hebrew writer testifies that the pot that was used to store the manna that God wanted kept was made of gold. Unfortunately by the time of the dedication of Solomon's temple, the only thing left in the ark of the covenant was the tables of stone.

I Kings 8:9 “THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE ARK SAVE THE TWO TABLES OF STONE, WHICH MOSES PUT THERE AT HOREB, WHEN THE **LORD** MADE A COVENANT WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, WHEN THEY CAME OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.”

The golden pot of manna and the rod of Aaron had disappeared.

v.35 “AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DID EAT MANNA FORTY YEARS, UNTIL THEY CAME TO A LAND INHABITED; THEY DID EAT MANNA, UNTIL THEY CAME UNTO THE BORDERS OF THE LAND OF CANAAN.”

So God provided bread for the children of Israel throughout their entire wanderings in the wilderness. When Israel passed over the Jordan and camped in the plains of Jericho the manna ceased, it had served its purpose.

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Joshua 5:12 “AND THE MANNA CEASED ON THE MORROW AFTER THEY HAD EATEN OF THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND; NEITHER HAD THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MANNA ANY MORE; BUT THEY DID EAT OF THE FRUIT OF THE LAND OF CANAAN THAT YEAR.”

v.36 “NOW AN OMER IS THE TENTH PART OF AN EPHAH.”

God through his revelation wants us to understand the quantity of manna that each man should gather. Here we find a comparison of the omer to another unit of measure that was common in that day, the ephah. As we noted in our discussion of verse 16, Josephus said an omer was about six half pints, Adam Clarke says that the omer was about six pints or a quart and $\frac{1}{2}$. The dry measure chart in my Dickson Bible declares the omer to be 2 quarts or about four pints and the ephah as being 3 pecks and 1.44 pints.