

Exodus Chapter 16

Exodus 16:1 "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."

“Wilderness of Sin”: More details of the camp sites in the journey from Rameses to Succoth and beyond are found (in Num. 33:5-11). That itinerary also lists the next stop as having been Dophkah (Num. 33:12), identifying it as an encampment of the Israelites in the wilderness. It was in the desert of sin, on the eastern shore of the western arm of the Red Sea, somewhere in the Wadi Feiran area.

We see from this that, the children of Israel had been on this trip exactly one month. The second month was Ziff, or May by our calendar. It seems they moved as a company and all were present at “the wilderness of Sin”.

Exodus 16:2 "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:"

“The whole congregation ... murmured”: What characterized them as a whole was this attitude of negativism. Faced with the scarcity of resources in the wilderness, they hankered after the abundant resources they had experience in Egypt. The country which had enslaved them looked good in comparison to the wilderness. Their complaining so soon after benefitting from the miracles done by the Lord on their behalf only goes to show their short-term memory and self-centeredness.

Gone from Egypt for only a month, the “whole congregation” accused Moses and Aaron of deliberately leading them into the wilderness to “kill” them (verse 3).

We see by this verse, that, these people did not learn a lesson at Marah, because we see them murmur again here. They blamed Moses and Aaron for their problem. When will they ever learn?

Exodus 16:3 "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."

“Died by the hand of the Lord”: Incredibly, Israel’s complaint still acknowledges the intervention of the Lord in their affairs. Sarcastically they voice a preference for dying in Egypt. The hand of the Lord which they had glorified in song (15:6), only a month beforehand, they now pretended would have been better used to kill them in Egypt.

No one put a gun to their head and made them go with Moses. They came of their own accord. They just had not learned their lesson yet and God allowed them to go through more problems to

teach them His ways. They had forgotten how terrible it was in Egypt and were looking back with fond memories of the past, because they had forgotten the taskmasters. It is easy to complain and find fault with the present circumstance and blame someone else, when the fault is right at home with your own self. They were even saying that God brought them out here to starve them.

Exodus 16:4 "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 every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."

“I will rain bread”: God’s gracious answer to their complaining was to promise an abundance of the bread they missed. God’s directions on how to gather it would also test their obedience to Him (verses 4-5, 16, 26-28; see note on 16:31).

For them to survive without food from any natural source required the Lord to do what only He could do. For five days each week, He delivered daily portions of “bread from heaven” for each individual.

We see that God would answer Moses' prayer for food. This would not be like bread they cooked at home, but would be a foodstuff, that would sustain them on their journey. Notice they were to gather this each day. This was another test from God to see if they would do as He said or not. There is an interesting Scripture reference to this manna from heaven (in John chapter 6:31-51). I will show just a few chosen verses of that here, but be sure to read all of it.

John 6:31-35 "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." "Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread." "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Be sure and read all of this from verse 31 through verse 51. I will give you one more verse of this and then go back to Exodus.

John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

You see, this manna that rained from heaven was miracle bread that would save their lives. I really believe this one day supply at a time indicates to me, our daily need for the Word of God (Jesus). We are told to eat the Word of God. Jesus is the Word. Read (John chapter 1), and you will see, that Jesus and the Word are the same.

Exodus 16:5, "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."

On the sixth day, there was a double provision; and on the seventh, there was none at all. What anyone needs to get through the “wilderness” is not available except from God Himself.

The same principal on a larger scale would feed the nation during and after the sabbatical year (Lev. 25:18-22).

This "twice as much" on the sixth day would carry them through their Sabbath. They were not to do any work on the Sabbath.

Exodus 16:6 "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:"

“Ye shall know”: Israel’s short-term memory loss would be short-lived because that very day of complaint would witness not only God’s provision for them but also would powerfully remind them of who had brought them out of Egypt, namely, the Lord their God (verses 11-12).

When God miraculously rained quail in the evening, they would realize that God Himself, had brought them out of Egypt and that He was a miracle God. He was teaching them to depend upon Him to have faith in Him.

Exodus 16:7 "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?"

“The glory of the Lord”: In seeing the start of the provision of daily bread on the next day, Israel would also see the Lord’s glory, an appropriate term to use because what He did showed His presence with them. “Glory” typically refers to God’s manifested presence, which makes Him impressive and leads to worship.

“Your murmurings”: Set in the context of instruction on how the Lord would act to provide for them, the 4-fold repetition of this phrase (verses 6-9), served to highlight God’s gracious response in contrast to their ungracious grumbling against Him. For an effective poetic presentation of this contrast, refer to (Psalm 78:17-25).

Really, these complaints or murmurings spoken to Moses and Aaron were against God. The children of Israel knew, undoubtedly, that Moses and Aaron were just God’s mouthpieces. Then these complaints were against God. This glory of the Lord, that they would see was the manna from heaven. God is always merciful. God is longsuffering toward us, who are His. Have you ever noticed how He will spare someone over and over? Most ministers will tell you, that even before they decided to accept the call of God, it seemed they had supernatural protection from God over their lives.

Exodus 16:8 "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 showed that the people's "murmurings", leveled at their human leaders, were actually "against the Lord". This is true anytime a child of God grumbles.

Moses made it very clear here, that they are not against him, but against the Lord. Then Moses told them that even though the Lord did not like their complaining, He was still going to send them meat in the evening and bread in the morning to eat. This was almost a warning from Moses, that they were about to push God too far.

Verses 9-10: The people had experienced the work of the Lord and had been under the word of the Lord; now they were to experience the wonder of the Lord. The revelation of His "glory ... in the cloud" was designed to instill confidence and to compel faithfulness.

Exodus 16:9 "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 who was God's prophet and spokesman to the people.

"Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel; to the heads of them, to as many as could conveniently hear him, and were to report what he said to the rest.

"Come near before the Lord": Who was in the pillar of cloud, which from the first appearance of it never removed from them, nor the Lord from that. Though some have thought, that before the tabernacle was built, there was some small tent or little tabernacle where the Shekinah was. But for this there is no foundation for that, there is for the other suggested.

"For he hath heard your murmurings": Which is repeated again and again, to observe to them the evil of it, and what notice the Lord took of it, though he indulged them in so gracious a manner as he did.

You remember, in the beginning, God called just Moses. Moses asked for help and got Aaron. The chain of authority then, was God to Moses, Moses to Aaron and Aaron to the congregation. God had heard their complaints and told them through Moses and Aaron, to come near before Him.

Exodus 16:10 "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."

This was before Aaron was finished speaking.

"That they looked toward the wilderness; they were already in the wilderness of Sin, and they looked straight forward toward that part of it which was yet before them, or to the wilderness of Sinai, which was right onward, and whither they were travelling.

"And, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud": Which went before them; there was a more than common brightness in it, an effulgence and beam of light and glory shining in it. Christ, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, appeared in it, in some visible displays of his majesty, which made it very observable to them.

We have already learned that the presence of the Lord was with them on this journey to the Promised Land. It appeared to be a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of smoke by day. Somehow, God made them aware of His presence in the cloud. Perhaps a bright light was present or something of that nature. God appears many times, in the form of a fire, such as at the burning bush. We do not know how He made the glory of the Lord known. We do know that He did.

Exodus 16:11 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Out of the bright and glorious cloud: saying; as follows:

Exodus 16:12 "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."

This gave proof of His power as the Lord, and His particular favor to them as their God; when God plagued the Egyptians, it was to make them know that He is the Lord. When He provided for the Israelites, it was to make them know that He was their God.

It seems to me, if they did not realize by now that this was God fighting for them and protecting them, they were very hard to convince. God raining meat (quail), in the evening and bread in the morning should be evidence enough. God also, had made them aware of the presence of the Lord when His glory appeared in the cloud. God wanted them to know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He is God and that they belong to Him. They were His chosen people.

Verses 13-16: The meal of "quails" were a miracle (Num. 11:31-35), but the "small round thing" was the greater surprise. The word "manna" comes from the question the Hebrew people asked that first morning: "what it was" (Hebrew, man hu). Manna would be their food for the next 40 years, until the new generation entered the Promised Land (16:35; Josh. 5:11-12). The amount of food the Lord provided was staggering: one day's "delivery" for more than 2-1/2 million people for nearly 40 years!

Exodus 16:13 "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."

"Quails": The psalmist removed all doubt about whether these birds of the partridge family were not real birds but something else, for he called them "winged fowl and in the preceding line of the parallelism referred to the coming of the quails as God having "rained meat" on them (Psalm 78:27). Upon return to their former habitat, these migratory birds would often fall to the ground,

exhausted from prolonged flight. In ancient Egyptian paintings, people were shown catching quails by throwing nets over the brush where they were nesting.

Exodus 16:14 "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."

To wit, into the air; or was vanished, "there lay a small round thing": According to (Numbers 11:9), there was dew which fell before the manna. For it is said, when the dew fell in the night, the manna fell upon it. But it appears here, that there was also dew upon it, which went up when the sun rose, so that the manna lay as it were enclosed. This might be designed to keep it pure and clean.

God is good for His word. The quails came that very evening. It seems they came in and landed, and sat there to be caught. This bread that fell from heaven looked like white frost. When the dampness of the morning was gone, there were left little round portions of bread, they would be Manna. At any rate, they were little tiny droplets of something that could substitute for bread. To feed 2-1/2 million people, there would have to be an abundance of quail and an abundance of manna. "Manna" means, what is it?

Exodus Chapter 16 Questions

1. Where was the wilderness of Sin located?
2. How long had they been on the journey, when they arrived at the wilderness?
3. What is the name of their month that is the same as our May?
4. Who did the children murmur to?
5. What ridiculous thing did the children of Israel say they wished had happened to them in Egypt?
6. What did they accuse Moses of bringing them out there for?
7. What had they forgotten about Egypt?
8. What did God tell Moses, that He would rain from heaven?
9. How often were they to gather it?
10. Why was God doing this?
11. What did John chapter 6 call it Manna, or Bread?
12. If we believe on Him, we shall _____.

13. What special gathering instructions did He give them for the sixth day?
14. Why?
15. What would the children of Israel know in the evening?
16. What was God teaching them?
17. These complaints slanted toward Moses were really against whom?
18. Moses and Aaron are just God's _____.
19. What will most ministers tell you about God and their call?
20. When Moses told them about the meat in the evening and the bread in the morning, it was almost a _____.
21. What was the congregation to do, to know this was God?
22. How did the Lord appear to them?
23. How had they known of His presence before?
24. What did God want them to know?
25. How many quail were there?
26. What shape was the Manna?
27. What did the Manna look like?