

# EXODUS

## Chapter 16

### *The Bread from Heaven*

They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” 8 And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.” 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” 10 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’” 13 In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. 14 And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’” 17 And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. 18 But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. 19 And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.” 20 But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. 22 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’” 24 So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. 25 Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it,

but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.” 27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? 29 See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. 31 Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” 33 And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.” 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept. 35 The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.)

**16:1** *from Elim ... to the Wilderness of Sin.* See Nu 33:10–11. The Desert of Sin was in southwestern Sinai (“Sin” is probably derived from “Sinai”) in the region today called Debbet er-Ramleh. (CSB)

*fifteenth day of the second month.* Exactly one month had passed since Israel’s exodus from Egypt (see 12:2, 6, 29, 31). (CSB)

One month had passed since leaving Egypt. A group of this size, with livestock, would likely have traveled no more than 10 mi per day and would have required intervals of rest. (TLSB)

**16:2** *grumbled.* Collectively, the nation once again showed its lack of confidence in God’s chosen leaders. (TLSB)

loon – To be very obstinate and grumble so much that it turns into a grudge. This word appears 8 times in vv 2,7,8,9,12. Complaining and blaming leaders is still true and will always be so as long as sinful people live on the earth. In today’s society there is not only grumbling but also a lack of responsibility for one’s own behavior. Everything needs to be perfect and instant and nothing is ever “my fault.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

Their dissatisfied complaint was directed against both leaders, and so against the divine act of bringing them out of Egypt, that is, against Jehovah Himself. (Kretzmann)

**16:3** *died by the hand of the LORD.* Israel tested God with illogical, unwarranted faultfinding. (TLSB)

*meat.* Nu 11:5 lists additional items of food from Egypt that the Israelites craved. (CSB)

Observe the unreasonable way in which the people complain. They inform Moses and Aaron that they wish God had killed them in Egypt, where they had lots of food, rather than live or actually die under such poor leadership. God’s people had praised Him as their strength, song and salvation (Ex. 15:2); now they have forgotten both God’s deliverance from their recent thirst crisis (Ex 15:22-27) and also the terror of life before God’s Passover (Ex. 1:1-16; 2:23; 3:7). The fickle faithless people dare to tell Moses and Aaron, “9[In Egypt] we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

They as slaves were not often given meat, so the people were fantasizing about the best moments of their life in Egypt. (TLSB)

*kill this whole assembly* – This was an unjust accusation bordering upon insolence and, moreover, with an amount of falsehood, for they still had at least some of their cattle with them, and the congregation was by no means on the edge of starvation. (Kretzmann)

**16:4** *I am about to rain bread from heaven* – Without rebuke God answers. This is often the pattern in Jesus’ ministry as well. He ignores the silly and stupid requests with loving responses often teaching (usually spiritually) people as he supplies their needs. By using this phrase he was pointing out that this food was not coming from anything man produced on earth but from above (God). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

*bread from heaven.* Jesus called himself “the true bread from heaven” (Jn 6:32), “the bread of God” (Jn 6:33), “the bread of life” (Jn 6:35, 48), “the living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51)—all in the spiritual sense (Jn 6:63). For a similar application see Dt 8:3 and Jesus’ quotation of it in Mt 4:4. (CSB)

God would provide bread through a daily miracle. This gift foreshadows the gift of Jesus as the bread of life (Jn 6:47–51). (TLSB)

*lechem*, “bread.” While certainly referring to a baked grain product, it also denotes a staple food of life. It is Jesus who, using the Septuagintal form *ho artos*, gives the manna (bread) its full significance, saying that “the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (Jn 6:33). This is certainly himself. Jesus is born in the house of bread (Bethlehem) and uses bread to be his body in the Lord’s Supper. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

*gather a days portion.* Probably the background for Jesus’ model petition in Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3. (CSB)

The Lord gave Israel specific instructions (Ex 15:26; 16:4) on what to do with the manna. They had to gather it early in the morning, for it would melt away when the sun got hot. They had to gather every morning for if they kept some till the next day, it would become infested with maggots. They were to gather only as much as they could use each day, amounting to roughly two quarts per person. (LL)

Several miracles by the Lord were involved with the manna. The first miracle was, of course, that God Himself sent it. It cannot successfully be identified with anything that occurs naturally. We must presume it was never seen before nor after the period of the Israelites’ wanderings in the wilderness: it was a special creation by God. Even though some people were more industrious and gathered more than the average, while others gathered less, no one had too much or too little. Twice as much manna appeared on Fridays, but none at all on the Sabbath. And although the manna would ordinarily spoil if kept from one day to the next, this did not happen to the portion kept from Friday to the Sabbath. (LL)

Moses had Aaron put a quart of manna into a jar to be kept as a lasting memorial for future generations, so they could believe that the Lord really fed Israel in the desert with miraculous bread. This manna never melted or spoiled over many generations (16:17-18, 23-30, 32-34).

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

*test.* God set simple rules about when and how to gather the bread to test Israel’s confidence in His daily care for them. (TLSB)

God sends times of trial to test our faith. Here he uses his answer to the pleas of the people of Israel as an opportunity for a test. He provides enough for each day and adds a promise that there will be enough again the next day. Faith would cling to God’s promise; unbelief would doubt God’s provision. In their gathering for more than one day, they reveal their sinful distrust of God’s Word. Likewise, when some go out to gather on the Sabbath, they find nothing. They should be at rest, as God was, on the seventh day of creation. They are bearing fruit according to their nature. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

The Lord intended to test their faith and obedience in connection with this miraculous gift of bread. (Kretzmann)

**16:5** *sixth day ... twice as much as they gather on the other days.* To provide for “the seventh day, the Sabbath” (v. 26), “a day of rest” (v. 23). See v. 29. (CSB)

The people were to gather twice as much on the sixth day so that they would not have to gather food on the seventh day of the week, which was the Sabbath. (TLSB)

**16:6** *know.* They would be given further unmistakable evidence that it was the Lord who had brought about their deliverance. (Kretzmann)

If they had eyes of faith to see and understand, they would see that God’s provision of food confirmed His intent to save and sustain Israel. (TLSB)

*it was the Lord* – It is pointed out to the people that by criticizing Moses and Aaron they are actually criticizing the Lord. It is also a reminder that God had already done great things and was therefore very capable to taking care of them. (CSB)

**16:7** *glory of the Lord* – They would be given definite proof of His almighty power and majesty, of His glorious presence. (Kretzmann)

The provision of bread should remind Israel of God’s presence. (TLSB)

*grumbling* - *alunnote*, “grumbling” (v 7). The root verb *lun* appears only one time outside the Pentateuch (Josh 9:18). The thirteen other instances are all in the Pentateuch, and the people of Israel are always the subject as they grumble for food, water, or over trials. The Lord always hears these cries but answers in different ways. To this first cry, he answers their request as if it were a prayer, giving them meat and bread. However, as they begin to grumble even about God’s answers to their requests, he disciplines them. They grumble about meat, and he gives them so much quail they become sick (Num 11:31–34). They grumble about a lack of water and how they tire of manna, and then fiery serpents descend upon them (Num 21:4–9). Later, in the New Testament, these answers to their grumbings are interpreted in light of Jesus (Jn 3:14; 6:32–33; 1 Cor 10:1–4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

*against the Lord* – Jehovah, the Son of God, who was the real leader of the people in its desert journey, 1 Cor. 10: 4. (Kretzmann)

**AGAINST US** – The persons of Moses and Aaron counted for nothing; it was as the ambassadors of Jehovah that they were here concerned; the people should realize that their complaint was directed against God. (Kretzmann)

**16:8** *meat ... in the evening and bread ... in the morning.* See vv. 13–14. (CSB)

*grumble against him* – Moses and Aaron acted by God's direction. The grumbling of the Israelites against them, were therefore in reality grumbling against Him who sent them. (Concordia Bible)

A sin against God, which He will judge. (TLSB)

“Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.” Moses and Aaron are the called servants of God to the people of Israel. Their complaints about food are really complaints about God's provision for their well-being, not a commentary on the leadership of Moses and Aaron. As they have been faithful in speaking God's Word and fulfilling their calling, they can do so with a clear conscience, knowing that it is not their word but God's. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**16:9** *Moses said to Aaron* – Aaron was the spokesman of Moses, was to make this announcement, giving the people the assurance that Jehovah had heard, and was ready to grant, the prayer included in their murmuring, in spite of the fact that it indicated a sinful weakness on their part. (Kretzmann)

*Come near before the LORD.* How this happened is not entirely clear. It seems that the Lord drew near to them in the cloud. (TLSB)

**16:10** *as soon as Aaron spoke* – As promised, the glory of the Lord appears to the people in cloud, quail and manna. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

Isaiah 65:24 “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”

*glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.* This appearance confirmed the reproof and the promise given by the mouth of the Lord's ambassadors, and incidentally indicated to them that God was able to manifest Himself in their midst even in the desert wastes which now lay before them (Kretzmann)

Here the words are used in connection with this bright cloud. As we continue our study of the book of Exodus, we shall see this expression used frequently. It was a visible sign of the Lord's burning determination to carry out His gospel promise. Usually the appearance involved a cloud of flame and smoke. Wherever it occurs, the Lord of grace and mercy makes His presence known to His people in a special way. We should watch for these words as they occur in Scripture and see how they emphasize the Lord's gracious abiding presence and help. (PBC)

**16:12** *shall know* – It would be another unmistakable proof of His almighty power. (Kretzmann)

God loves His people too much to ignore them. (TLSB)

**16:13** *quail covered the camp.* For a similar incident see Nu 11:31–33. (CSB)

Small game birds that migrate through this area in large numbers. Their migration was a mark of God's providence. (TLSB)

They arose on the horizon in great masses, like a heavy cloud, their usual number being much increased by a miracle of the Lord. (Kretzmann)

Quail are migratory birds which fly in vast numbers at certain time of the year. When they rest on the ground, it is easy for people to capture them by hand. In this case, however, the quail came at a time designated by the Lord. They came in sufficient numbers to satisfy two million people. Surely this did not happen without God's direction! (PBC)

**16:14** *fine flake-like thing...as frost.* Some scholars think this was a natural occurrence. However, no manna was found on the Sabbath, which makes a natural phenomenon unlikely. Moses, who had lived in the wilderness, simply noted that it was "bread that the LORD has given" (v 15). (TLSB)

It consisted of thin flakes like frost, was white like coriander seed, resembled resin, and tasted like wafers made with honey and olive oil – thus quite tasty! It could either be baked as cakes of bread or boiled in pots (Ex. 16:13-15, 23, 31; Num. 11:7-8). (LL)

**16:15** *What is it?* mawn - Literally a "whatness that is called manna. Much like an object lesson, the food illustrates the reality of God's loving kindness. This, again, proves that the help came from God and no human. Much like an object lesson, the food illustrates the reality of God's love. Or better put" the bread from heaven brought the reality of God's mercy into the lives of His people in a physical way, even as the Eucharist does in a greater way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

**16:18** See 2Co 8:15, where Paul quotes the heart of the verse as an illustration of Christians who share with each other what they possess. (CSB)

Whether by sharing or by God's unseen intervention, each person had just the right amount of manna to eat. (TLSB)

**16:19–20** The people were supposed to gather only enough manna for one day, but some disregarded the command and tried to hoard some for the next day. The rotting food revealed their disobedience. (TLSB)

**16:20** *it bred worms.* Probably maggots from flies. (TLSB)

**16:22–30** God used manna to teach Israel at least three lessons: (1) They were to rely on Him (gathering manna one day at a time). (2) They were to obey Him (not hoarding the manna). (3) They were to have special regard for the Sabbath (seventh-day exception to gathering). (TLSB)

**16:23** *Sabbath.* The first occurrence of the word itself, though the principle of the seventh day as a day of rest and holiness is set forth in the account of creation. (CSB)

The seventh day of the week had been set aside as a day of rest and holiness at creation, but it is first named here. (TLSB)

*Sabbath*. Hbr means “stop” or “rest.” (TLSB)

**16:26** *there will be none*. The Sabbath was for rest (vv 29–30). (CSB)

**16:27** *some ... went out to gather*. A sign of unbelief and disobedience. (TLSB)

**16:28** God challenged Moses over the people’s disobedience (v 27) because as the intermediary, Moses represented Israel. (TLSB)

**16:29–30** God explicitly commanded the people to rest rather than search for food on the Sabbath. They finally took God at His word. Their search was a symptom of arrogance rather than faith. (TLSB)

**16:31** *coriander seed ... wafers made with honey*. Because the Israelites did not know what it was, they described it by comparison. (TLSB)

**16:32** *kept throughout your generations*. Dt 8:3 explains the lesson God gave Israel in furnishing the manna; God directed that a portion be kept as evidence, or a testimony, for future generations. (TLSB)

**16:33** *jar*. Said in Heb 9:4 to be made of gold. (CSB)

*place it before the LORD*. Anticipating the jar’s preservation in the ark of the covenant. (TLSB)

**16:34** *Testimony*. Anticipates the later description of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments as the “two tablets of the Testimony” (31:18; 32:15; 34:29), which gave their name to the “ark of the Testimony” (25:22; 26:33) in which they were placed (see 25:16, 21) along with the jar of manna. (CSB)

The action probably took place after the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle were built. Moses would place the jar, the tablets of the Law, and Aaron’s rod that budded (Nu 17) in the ark of the covenant as a testimony to what God had done for Israel. (TLSB)

**16:35** *ate manna forty years ... until they came... Canaan*. The manna stopped at the time the Israelites celebrated their first Passover in Canaan (see Jos 5:10–12). (CSB)

Until they arrived in Canaan and could procure their own food. (TLSB)

**Ch 16** God meets Israel’s need for food with bread from heaven. However, when the Israelites ignore God’s simple rules for its collection and consumption, they provoke an exasperated rebuke from God (vv 28–29). Israel does not understand at the time, but God is blessing them through this experience, training them in the rhythms of work and Sabbath rest. These rhythms still apply for us today because we require both physical rest and rest from our sins through the righteous labors of Jesus. • Lord, lead us in productive labor and healing rest, even as You labored to grant us rest by Your cross and resurrection. Amen. (TLSB)