

“Elim! Sweet foretaste of rest and blessing:  
 Soon must be left for the lengthening way.  
 But it is well that the pilgrims may gather  
 Courage and strength for the wearisome day.”<sup>14</sup>

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
 TRANSLATION

**16** And they took their journey from E-lim, and all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between E-lim and Si-nai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of E-gypt. (2) And the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el murmured against Mo-ses and against Aar-on in the wilderness: (3) and the children of Is-ra-el said unto them, Would that we died by the hand of Je-ho-vah in the land of E-gypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

(4) Then said Je-ho-vah unto Mo-ses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. (5) And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (6) And Mo-ses and Aar-on said unto all the children of Is-ra-el, At even, then ye shall know that Je-ho-vah hath brought you out from the land of E-gypt; (7) and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Je-ho-vah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Je-ho-vah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? (8) And Mo-ses said, *This shall be*, when Je-ho-vah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that

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<sup>14</sup>From *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, Vol. II, p. 293.

Je-ho-vah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, Come near before Je-ho-vah; for he hath heard your murmurings. (10) And it came to pass, as Aar-on spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Je-ho-vah appeared in the cloud. (11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) I have heard the murmurings of the children of Is-ra-el: 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 Je-ho-vah your God.

(13) And it came to pass at even, that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp. (14) And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoarfrost on the ground. (15) And when the children of Is-ra-el saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Mo-ses said unto them, It is the bread which Je-ho-vah hath given you to eat. (16) This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded. Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an o-mer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent. (17) And the children of Is-ra-el did so, and gathered some more, some less. (18) And when they measured it with an o-mer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. (19) And Mo-ses said unto them, Let no man leave of it till the morning. (20) Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Mo-ses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Mo-ses was wroth with them.

(21) And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. (22) And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two o-mers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Mo-ses. (23) And he said unto them,

This is that which Je-ho-vah hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. (24) And they laid it up till the morning, as Mo-ses bade: and it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. (25) And Mo-ses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. (26) Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. (27) And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. (28) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? (29) See, for that Je-ho-vah 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. (30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

(31) And the house of Is-ra-el called the name thereof Man-na: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers *made* with honey. (32) And Mo-ses said, This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded, Let an o-mer-ful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread wherewith I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. (33) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Take a pot, and put an o-mer-ful of man-na therein, and lay it up before Je-ho-vah, to be kept throughout your generations. (34) As Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses, so Aar-on laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el did eat the man-na forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the man-na, until they came unto the borders of the land of Ca-naan. (36) Now an o-mer is the tenth part of an e-phah.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Into what wilderness did Israel go from Elim? (16:1)
3. How long did it take Israel to reach the wilderness of Sin? (16:1; 12:6)
4. Who participated in the murmuring in the wilderness? (16:2)
5. Why did Israel murmur? (16:2-3)
6. Where did the Israelites say that they wish they had died? (16:3)
7. What had Israel eaten in Egypt? (16:3; Numbers 11:5)
8. How much did Israel say they had to eat in Egypt? (16:3)
9. What was the purpose of the manna? (16:4; Deut. 8:3)
10. How much manna was to be gathered on the sixth day of each week? (16:5)
11. What would cause them to know that the LORD had brought them out of Egypt? (16:6)
12. What would Israel see in the morning? (16:7)
13. Against whom had Israel really murmured? (16:7-8)
14. How much bread would be provided for them? (16:8)
15. For what purpose were the Israelites summoned together? (16:9)
16. What did Israel see when they assembled? (16:10)
17. What would Israel know because they ate flesh and bread? (16:12)
18. How many quails came into the camp? (16:13)
19. What did Israel say when they saw the manna? (16:15, 31)
20. Do some research to discover what the word *manna* means.
21. How much manna was gathered for each man? (16:16)
22. Who gathered manna for each tent? (16:16)
23. Why did some gather more or less than others? (16:17)
24. What result happened, even though some gathered more and some less? (16:17)
25. What was the rule about leftover manna? (16:19)
26. What happened to leftover manna kept over to the next day? (16:20)

27. What happened to manna that was not gathered each day? (16:21)
  28. Who reported to Moses that twice as much manna was gathered on the sixth day? (16:22)
  29. How is the seventh day described? (16:23)
  30. In what ways could manna be prepared for eating? (16:23)
  31. Were the Israelites warned that there would be no manna on the seventh days? (16:25-26)
  32. Did all heed the warning about gathering manna on the Sabbath? (16:27)
  33. What was God's response to Israel's disobedience about gathering manna? (16:28)
  34. What restriction was imposed upon movements on the seventh days? (16:29)
  35. What did the house of Israel name the bread? (16:31)
  36. What did the manna taste like? (16:31; Num. 11:6-8)
  37. What is the true manna, or bread, from heaven? (John 6:49-51; I Cor. 10:1-3)
  38. Who gathered a pot of manna to be kept throughout future generations? (16:33)
  39. Where was the pot of manna to be kept? (16:34; Heb. 9:4)
  40. How long did the Israelites eat manna? (16:35; Neh. 9:20-21)
  41. Where did the manna cease? (16:35; Joshua 5:11-12)
  42. How much is an omer? An ephah? (16:36)
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#### EXODUS SIXTEEN: BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Murmuring in the Wilderness of Sin; 16:1-3.
2. God's promise of provisions; 16:4-12.
3. Quails and manna sent; 16:13-21.
4. No manna on the Sabbath; 16:22-30.
5. Pot of manna preserved; 16:31-36.

## EXODUS SIXTEEN: THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Given to the undeserving; 16:2-3.
2. Given as a test; 16:4, 28; Deut. 8:16.
3. Given to teach; 16:6, 12, 32; Deut. 8:3.
4. Given without fail; 16:35.

## GOD'S PURPOSES IN GIVING MANNA

1. To fill them with food; 16:12, 16; Matt. 6:31-33.
2. To see if they would walk in His laws; 16:4; Deut. 8:16.
3. To show that the LORD had led them out of Egypt; 16:6.
4. To show that He was Jehovah their God; 16:12.
5. To show God's glory; 16:7.
6. To silence their murmurings; 16:7, 8, 12.
7. To introduce the sabbath law; 16:23, 25, 29.
8. To humble them; Deut. 8:16, 3.
9. To teach that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; Deut. 8:3.
10. To point toward Jesus, the living bread from heaven; John 6:41, 48-51.

## MURMURINGS! (Ex. 16:1-3)

1. Murmurers forget past blessings.
2. Murmurers forget past pains; 16:2.
3. Murmurers accuse their true benefactors; 16:3.
4. Murmurers fear imaginary evils; 16:3.

## THE MANNA, A TYPE OF JESUS!

"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven"  
(John 6:51).

1. The manna met a need. Jesus meets our needs.
2. The manna came from "heaven." Jesus came from heaven.  
(Jn. 6:49-51)

3. The manna provided for ALL Israel. Jesus provides for ALL mankind.
4. The manna gave temporary life. Jesus gives eternal life.
5. The manna was not recognized or known. Jesus was not recognized or known. (Matt. 8:27; John 12:37)
6. The manna was a test for Israel. Jesus is the test of our relationship with God. (I Cor. 1:22-23)

#### THE MANNA: A TYPE OF GOD'S WORD

1. From heaven, not earth.
2. Came to the people.
3. Had to be eaten.
4. To be gathered (read) daily.

#### THE MEMORIAL MANNA (16:32-36)

What did the pot of memorial manna teach to Israel?

1. The infinite resources of God.
2. The goodness of God.
3. The faithfulness of God.
4. The abiding presence of God.
5. That they could trust God in the future.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 16?*

The entire chapter deals with the giving of the manna. We entitle the chapter **BREAD FROM HEAVEN**. See Neh. 9:15. The whole chapter directs our minds toward Christ Jesus, who is the living bread which came down from heaven.

2. *Where did Israel journey from Elim? (16:1)*

From Elim they first went to an encampment by the sea.

See Numbers 33:10. Going southward from Elim, Israel passed the mount now called the Mount of Pharaoh's Hot Bath (Jebel Hamman Farun) on their right (west). They came on into the Wady (valley) et-Taiyibeh, which provided an open course to the seaside. Travelers have made the trip from Elim to the seaside in seven and a half hours. It is about twenty miles and probably took Israel two days. This area by the sea at the mouth of the Valley Taiyibeh is a sandy plain extending some four or five miles from the shore, shut in by a range of wild cliffs. Here was room for a great camp. The modern town of Abu Zenima lies in this area.

From the encampment by the seaside, Israel could either have gone north and east, via the sandy table land of Debbet er-Ramleh; or they could have gone on southward across about five miles of hills into the plain of El-Murkhah. To us it seems much more probable that they went southward into the El-Murkhah plain, and that this plain is to be identified with the *Wilderness of Sin*.

The name *Sin* has no connection with the English word *sin*. The names *Sin* and *Sinai* are very similar. (The meaning of these names is uncertain.)

Admittedly the location of the Wilderness of Sin is rather debatable. As stated above, we feel that it is the dry barren coastal plain of El Murkhah. The modern town of Abu Rudeis is in this plain. The plain is about six miles EW and about fifteen miles NS. S. C. Bartlett<sup>1</sup> says that its surface is a dead level, covered only with occasional tufts of desert shrubs. It had a temperature of 96 degrees when he visited it in February. It would be a natural place for Israelitish murmuring. The plain extends on south to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, which is the largest wady in the southern part of Sinai, and was probably the passage route of Israel from the Red Sea coastal area up to Mt. Sinai.

In the El Murkha plain there is a spring about three miles from the sea, which is next in importance only to the Springs

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<sup>1</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), p. 213.



of Moses (*Ayun Musa*, near Israel's crossing place) and Elim (Gharandel). The traveller Burkhardt told of finding in this area many fissures in the rocks filled with winter rains.<sup>2</sup> Thus Israel probably had water in the Wilderness of Sin, but no food.

Other suggested identifications of the Wilderness of Sin include the interior desert tract called Debbet Er-Ramleh (mentioned above). This is a long desert area running SE-NW along the north side of the granite mountains of the Wilderness of Sinai. This is a possible location, but seems to us less likely than El Murkha, because to get to Debbet er-Ramleh from Israel's encampment by the sea would require considerable backtracking.

Another proposed identification of the Wilderness of Sin is the dry barren coastal plain of El-Qaa, north of the present city of Tor. But this lies much too far south to be on the route to Sinai.

Yet another proposed location of the Wilderness of Sin is the Wady Serabit,<sup>3</sup> containing the famous ruins of Serabit El Khadim. Serabit el-Khadim is sometimes proposed as the location of Dophka (Num. 33:12). The ruins there include a temple to the Egyptian goddess Hathor and abandoned copper and turquoise mines. Egyptian soldiers were stationed at Serabit el Khadim both before and after Moses' time. Some inscriptions in one of the oldest known alphabets known (similar to Hebrew) are found there. This route by Serabit seems very unlikely to us.

Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month of their journey, almost exactly a month after their departure. See Ex. 12:6. They had covered approximately 175 miles during that month.

3. *What did Israel complain about in the Wilderness of Sin?* (16:2-3)

They complained about lack of food. Observe that the

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179, proposes this as the site.

WHOLE congregation murmured. After seeing all the plagues in Egypt, and the crossing of the Sea, and the leading of the cloud, they still lacked faith in God.

Although their murmurings were directed against Moses and Aaron, they really were complaining against God. It was God himself who had promised to bring them to Sinai (3:12). How could God be God, and yet fail to keep His promise by letting them die of hunger on the way to Sinai?

This was Israel's third grumbling. They had already grumbled at the Red Sea (14:11) and at Marah (15:24). Moses could well say of them, "Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24).

Israel had left Egypt in haste and carried no leftover food. See 12:10-11, 33-34. Now a month later their food is exhausted. They still had livestock, but seemed very reluctant to slaughter their flocks for food.

In their bad state of mind they attributed the worst possible motives to Moses, as if he had deliberately set out to kill them. See 17:3. How utterly unreasonable!

In their distress they recalled only certain good things about Egypt, forgetting all their slavery and crying there (2:23-24; 4:31). They remembered only that they had had food in Egypt - fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic (Num. 11:5). But had they actually had bread to the FULL? Surely not! This was a thoughtless exaggeration, a propanganda blast to hurt Moses.

They even declared that they wished they had died in Egypt by the hand of the LORD, presumably in the ten plagues. Compare Num. 14:2. This statement cannot be taken as a serious wish, but only as a bitter emotional outburst.

It is a wonder that God did not rain fire and brimstone on them, instead of raining manna upon them. (Pink)

4. *From whence would God give Israel bread? (16:4)*

God would rain bread *from heaven* upon them. We suppose that this means from the atmospheric heavens, although the power that brought it about came from God's

abode in the heaven of heavens! Neh. 9:15: "Thou didst provide bread from heaven for them for their hunger." See Ps. 105:40.

This bread is called "angels' food" in Psalm 78:25. This expression could be translated "bread of God" or "bread of the mighty ones" (Heb., *elohim*). I Cor. 10:3 calls it "spiritual food."

In America bread is a side dish to the main meal. In countries of the Middle East, bread is the basic item in the diet of many.

5. *How much bread was to be gathered daily? (16:4)*

A day's portion was to be gathered on each day. This instruction reminds us that we are to pray for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). A day's portion of manna was an omer full (16:16). This would be approximately six and a half pints, about three-fourths of a gallon.

6. *What purpose besides nutrition would the bread have? (16:4)*

It was to be a *test*, whether they would walk in God's law or not. Would they gather just enough for each day at the start of every day? Or would they hoard it on some days because they did not completely trust God to provide more on subsequent days? Would they gather twice as much on the sixth days, when once they had learned that any excess collected on other days spoiled after one day? Would they rest on the seventh days, or go out searching for bread? These were God's tests! See Deut. 8:3, 16.

God reveals Himself here as a *tester* of men. Psalm 7:9: "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." No testing seems pleasant to those who are being tested. But we must expect testing. It is God's way with His people.

7. *What was Israel to know and see by God's providing food for them? (16:6-8)*

They were to know that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt! It surely had taken a long time for some Israelites to realize that they were truly OUT of Egypt, and that the LORD had delivered them. They would know this by events to occur yet that very evening.

Israel said, "Moses, YOU brought us out of Egypt to kill us." Moses said, "You shall know that the LORD brought you out." The exodus was not an event that had happened by chance. The LORD was not some incompetent deity.

Also Israel was to see the GLORY on the morning to follow. Moses did not specify at first exactly how this "glory" would be revealed to them. This glory was to be something visible, something they could see.

Verse seven emphasizes that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah at the very time when He was hearing their murmurings against Jehovah. The repetition of the name Jehovah in the verse stresses the fact that the murmuring was against Jehovah. God graciously hearkened to them even while they were murmuring.

Also in verse seven the word *WE* is stressed. This emphasizes the denials by Moses that their murmurings were against him and Aaron.

After his opening announcement in 16:7 that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah, Moses, like a skillful speaker, brought his speech to a climax by giving specific details of how they would see God's glory. The Lord would in that very evening give them flesh to eat, and on the next morning He would give them bread "to the full."

8. *How did Moses know what God would give Israel for food?* (16:9-12)

He knew it because God had revealed it unto him. (See 16:12) God communicated with Moses face to face (Num. 12:8). Note that the message which God told Moses to tell Israel (in 16:12) is the very message that Moses delivered (in 16:8).

Probably we should translate 16:11 to read, "Now Yahweh had spoken unto Moses, saying. . . ." Hebrew has no past perfect (pluperfect) tense form. The perfect tense (indicating completed action) sometimes had a past perfect significance (as in Isaiah 38:21; Gen. 6:6; Num. 22:2; and others).

Some critics have suggested that we should rearrange

the Biblical text, placing 16:9-12 before 16:6-8.<sup>4</sup> We have no evidence in ancient manuscripts that the text was ever so rearranged. We do not feel we should lay violent hands on God's word, to rearrange its contents or make emendations in its words just because our present limited knowledge and understanding hinders our ability to comprehend it in the way the ancient Hebrews grasped it.

The command to "Come near before the LORD" was God's call for all the Israelites to assemble together with Moses and Aaron, having the LORD on their minds, for the purpose of learning the LORD's will. Certainly we understand that the LORD is everywhere, but God provided a focus point to which Israel could assemble before Him. That focus point was near the glory cloud, and with His men Moses and Aaron.

When Aaron issued the call for Israel to gather, the "glory of Jehovah" appeared in the cloud which had been leading Israel. Probably this glory was a display of fire and lightnings. See 19:16 and 24:15-17, where God's glory is said to have been "like a devouring fire." The cloud stood apart from Israel, "toward the wilderness," probably toward the east and south.

Israel was at this moment in deep unbelief. God was extremely perturbed, and declared, "Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God" (16:12).

9. *When were quails provided for Israel?* (16:13)

In the evening the quails came up and covered the camp. Ex. 16:12 had said, "Between the two evenings ye shall eat flesh."<sup>5</sup>

In the spring each year quails migrate in great numbers from the interior of Africa and Arabia, across the Sinai peninsula and into southern Europe. They return from

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<sup>4</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 396, following the proposal of S. R. Driver.

<sup>5</sup>"Between the two evenings" is the exact phrase used to describe the hour of the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 12:6). As indicated before, this phrase is indefinite as to exact time, and refers only to the period near sunset.

the northern countries in autumn.<sup>6</sup>

The occurrence of quail in Sinai at the time the Israelites passed through was not unusual. The miracle consisted in the precise timing of their arrival, and the announcement of God beforehand that they would have flesh to eat that evening.

When the quails migrate across the Sinai peninsula, they often become exhausted; and when they alight they can be caught easily. The birds are good eating and were a favorite delicacy of the Egyptians.<sup>7</sup> Ancient Egyptian paintings show people hunting quails with hand nets thrown over the bushes where they were nesting.<sup>8</sup> See p. 444B.

Psalm 78:27: "He raineth flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea."

10. *When did the manna appear?* (16:13-14)

It became visible the next morning when the dew evaporated. The Israelites did not realize anything unusual had happened the next morning when they saw the usual dew on the ground. Numbers 11:9 says that when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it (the camp). (The presence of the dew shows that the Sinaitic peninsula is not a totally arid desert.)

The manna appeared as small, fine, flake-like fragments on the ground, as small as the crystals of hoarfrost (white frost).

In Psalm 78:24 the manna is called the "corn (food, or grain) of heaven." It is called "angels' food" (or "bread of the angels") in Ps. 78:25.

The manna was white, and resembled the coriander seed (a strong-smelling seed, which is about the size of a peppercorn.) It had the appearance of bdellium (Num. 11:7);

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<sup>6</sup>The fact that Israel encountered quail migrations in the spring does not support the theory that the Israelites travelled a route along the Mediterranean coast. Quails would have been found along the coast more probably in the autumn, as they started their return from Europe.

<sup>7</sup>Herodotus 2:27.

<sup>8</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

which seems to be a fragrant and transparent resin, resembling wax.<sup>9</sup> It had a sweetish taste, like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16:31), and like fresh oil (Num. 11:8). It could be baked or boiled, or ground in a mill (a stone hand grinder).

11. *What does the name MANNA mean?* (16:15)

Its name means "What is it?" When the Israelites first saw it, they did not know what it was, and said, "*Man Hu?*" These were Hebrew words meaning "What is it?" This question became the name for it: it was called "Whatizit?" The name was sometimes shortened to *Man* (as in Ex. 16:31), which just means "What?" (Most English versions translate the word in 16:31 as *manna*, but the Hebrew just has *man*.)

The usual Hebrew interrogative word meaning "What?" is *Mah*, rather than *Man*. But the form *man* is found in the El Amarna letters,<sup>10</sup> and is a recognized ancient form of the interrogative. The Greek O.T. renders *man hu* by the Greek words for "What is this?"

12. *How much manna was collected by each person?* (16:16-17)

The amounts varied somewhat from person to person, "each man according to his eating."<sup>11</sup> But generally it was an *omer* for each "head" (or person). As a unit of measure the *omer* was the tenth part of an *ephah* (16:36), that is about six and a half pints. The *omer* is referred to in the Old Testament only in this chapter.

An *omer* for each person for each day seems like a lot of food, but probably it was rather fluffy.

Each man gathered enough for all those in his tent. We do not suppose that every household in Israel possessed a pot holding exactly one *omer*. Thus, some gathered more and some less.

Pink calculates that at one *omer* a head daily, Israel would have collected twelve million pints, or nine million pounds daily, and over a million tons were gathered annually!

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<sup>9</sup>The exact identification of bdellium is uncertain. Many think it is a waxy-looking resin. Others think it is a precious stone or pearl. Gen. 2:12 suggests such a possibility.

<sup>10</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

13. *Was the manna a natural phenomenon?*

Certainly not. It was supernatural and miraculous. This is evident from several facts:

(1) The enormous volume of manna produced and consumed. The secretions of all the trees and insects in Sinai could never have produced such a mass of food.

(2) The fact that the manna was provided the year round for forty years. Secretions from trees that some people call manna only occur during brief seasons in some years.

(3) The fact that the manna first appeared on a particular day, the very day after God had predicted the appearance of it.

(4) The fact that the manna could be found for six days each week, but was not there on the seventh days (16:26).

(5) The fact that the manna spoiled after one day most of the week, but after two days following the sixth and seventh days (16:24).

(6) The fact that the manna could be *boiled* in cooking, but melted in the heat of the sun (16:21, 23).

Very many writers have said that the manna consisted of drops of sugary material exuded by certain kinds of aphids on the tamarisk bushes. In the hot desert air they become whitish or yellowish globules and fall to the ground where the ants get them. Arabs call them *bread (mann)* or bread of heaven. Others say that the droplets are produced by the exudations of the tamarisk itself. These are pea-sized or smaller. These droplets are abundant in the rainy season, but in many years cease altogether. They appear mainly in June for three to six weeks. At peak season of each year a steady worker could only collect about half-pound of the "manna" a day. It cannot be baked or boiled. It does not spoil and stink after one day. The droplets do not melt in the sun's heat, but only dehydrate and harden.

Some extreme writers have said that the unique aspects of the Biblical account of the manna are the result of later theological expansion of the original event.<sup>11</sup> No proof is

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<sup>11</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 398.



offered for such a dogmatic assertion. Also it makes the theologians sound bad, as if they were always exaggerators!

14. *How did the manna equalize out?* (16:18)

When the amounts which the people gathered were measured with an omer (a jar of that size), there was enough manna for each person, with none left over.

This verse is difficult to understand fully. Some have proposed that the Israelites pooled their manna collectively, and each kept the ration of an omer per head.<sup>12</sup> It is suggested that Paul seemed to understand it that way (II Cor. 8:14-15). But the idea of pooling the manna is not definitely stated in the verse. Also the enormous size of the Israelite camp (five or six miles across) and the number of people involved would seem to make pooling very difficult, inconvenient, and improbable. There would have been some large heaps of collected manna!

We doubt that every family went through a ritualistic check on the volume of manna it collected each day. Occasional spot checking would be all that is necessarily implied by the statement "When they measured it with an omer. . . ."

The way the manna supply in each home equalized out certainly hints at some degree of miraculous control of the matter.

The apostle Paul in II Cor. 8:14-15 refers to Ex. 16:18 as an illustration for Christians who have an abundance of this world's wealth to share with those who have needs. The comparison is not identical in every particular, since manna (unlike money) was freely available to everyone. They only had to go out and pick it up. Nonetheless, the fact that all Israelites had about the same amount of manna each day is a valuable illustration to us, urging us to share of our abundance with those in want, that there may be an equality.

It surely seems rather miraculous that the manna collected

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<sup>12</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 68.

by each family equalized out in the way it did, and everyone's needs were supplied, whether he gathered much or little of it. This seems to have been a rather obvious and noticeable fact. Their food supply, like their clothing (see Deut. 29:5!), was always adequate for the needs.

15. *Could manna be stored up?* (15:19-20)

No. This was prevented both by direct command and by the fact that any leftover manna became foul and bred maggots by the next morning. Like the flesh of the Passover lamb, there were to be no leftovers (12:10). They were to live in a situation wherein they had to depend on God every day for that day's needs. Do WE trust God enough to depend on HIM for every day's needs, one by one? (Matt. 6:34)

Some Israelites failed this first test with the manna. They tried (vainly!) to store some up. Moses became angry with these people.

The word *melted* in 16:22 may mean "became loathsome."<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word is similar to a word used in I Sam. 15:9, to refer to the *vile* and *worthless* animals of the Amalekites.

16. *How much manna was collected on the sixth day?* (16:22)

Two omers, or twice as much as usual. The manna was twice as plentiful on the sixth day as on other days (16:29). Ex. 16:22 refers back to 16:5. The scripture does not mention the fact that Moses told the people the words of 16:5, but we assume he did.

The *rulers* of the congregation reported to Moses that the people had collected twice as much. Perhaps Moses had requested them to report to him about this. The reference to these rulers raises questions about the organization of the Israelites. Ex. 34:31 refers to the rulers. We really know very little about the organization of the Israelites and their tribes.

17. *What was the seventh day called?* (16:23, 25)

The *sabbath*. *Sabbath* is a word derived from the Hebrew

<sup>13</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

*shabath*, meaning to cease or rest.

A stronger word, *shabbaton*, is used in 16:23 just before the usual word for *sabbath*. Elsewhere this word is used only of New Year's day and other particularly holy festivals.<sup>14</sup> By this word God stressed the great importance of this first sabbath rest day in the wilderness.

Here in Ex. 16:23 we have the first actual appearance of the word *sabbath* in the scriptures. Nehemiah 9:14 says that God *made known* the holy sabbath at Mt. Sinai. Certainly in Ex. 16:23 there is no general prohibition of all work, only of gathering manna. 16:29-30 indicates a more general cessation of work. This preliminary command concerning rest helped prepare the people for the comprehensive commandment about Sabbath given in Ex. 20:8-11.

We certainly agree with Keil and Delitzsch<sup>15</sup> that it is perfectly clear from the event that the Israelites were not acquainted with any sabbath observance at that time, and that it was only through the decalogue (the ten commandments) that the Sabbath was raised to a legal institution.

Modern religious groups which keep the seventh day (Saturday) as holy day of assembly and rest, generally seek to prove that the Hebrews (and their forefathers) know of a weekly Sabbath before Mt. Sinai. The sabbath is called *holy* in vs. 23, but it is NOT at all certain that it had been revealed or observed as a national sacred day before Sinai. For more on the sabbath, see notes on Ex. 20:8-10.

18. *Did the Israelites obey the sabbath law? (16:27-29)*

Not all did. Some went out to gather manna on the seventh day, as on the preceding six days. We marvel at their behavior. Had they not collected enough on the sixth day for two days? Were they frankly testing Moses' predictions and perhaps his authority? Why did they not yet have faith? Had they not considered the miraculous features about the manna that they had already seen?

<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.

God was angry because of the people's disobedience. He said to Moses, "How long refuse ye (plural) to keep my commandments?" Deut. 3:26 says "Jehovah was angry with me (Moses) for your sakes." Moses was not personally guilty of any wrongdoing. But the principle of collective guilt is quite frequently found in the scriptures. When one member of a people (or church) sins, the whole body shares its guilt and punishment to some degree. Thus God included Moses in His rebuke of Israel. Compare Joshua 7:1; II Sam. 21:1.

19. *How was the seventh day kept?* (16:29-30)

Every person was to abide in his own place (tent); and the people rested that day.

Regarding 16:31, see notes on 16:13-14.

20. *What memorial of the giving of the manna was kept?* (16:32-34)

An omer of manna was to be kept in a pot throughout the generations to follow. This was to be laid up "before Jehovah," "before the Testimony." Aaron was to do this.

The moral significance of the manna - that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God - was to be kept vivid for all future generations.

Heb. 9:4 says the manna was kept in a *golden* pot. This is also the Greek reading of Ex. 16:32.

The *Testimony* is a name applied to the stone tablets bearing the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 25:16, 21; Deut. 10:5.

"Before the LORD" refers to the same place as "before the Testimony," namely in the tabernacle, in the ark of the covenant. Ex. 40:20; Heb. 9:4.

Since the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were not yet constructed at the time of the giving of the manna, we realize that Ex. 16:33-34 tells of events occurring some months, or longer, after the original giving of the manna. But this is no problem. Not every event related in the Bible (or any other history book) is related in precise historical sequence. We should not expect to find every event in such order. But this does not discredit the Bible's accuracy or inspiration.

During later centuries the ark was moved about from place to place - from Shiloh to Ebenezer, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Beth-Shemesh, Kiriath-Jearim, Jerusalem. During that time the jar of manna seems to have been lost, as was Aaron's budded rod (Num. 17:10). Thus in Solomon's time there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there (I Kings 8:9).

21. *How long did the Israelites eat manna?* (16:35)

They ate forty years (Nehemiah 9:21). They ate manna until they entered the land of Canaan after the death of Moses and ate the fruit and produce of the land. Joshua 5:10-12.

Exodus 16:35 sounds as if it was written after the manna had ceased to be provided. If so, this one verse was inserted into Moses' book of Exodus by Joshua or some other writer after Moses' death. This probability no more casts doubt on the overall Mosaic authorship of Exodus than does insertion of the facts about Moses' death cast doubt on the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (Deut. 34:4-12).

22. *Why is the description of the omer inserted at 16:36?*

Possibly because the omer was a unit of measure not generally familiar to and employed by the Israelites. The word is used throughout this passage (16:16, 18, 22, 23); but it occurs nowhere else in the scriptures. Edward J. Young<sup>16</sup> says that the omer was not actually a measure, but a small cup; and it is perfectly understandable that Moses might have remarked upon the size of this cup when it was used to gather the manna.

Some writers assume that those acquainted with the exodus would have been acquainted with the omer; and that this tends to indicate a later date for composition of 16:36, or that the verse is a later explanatory addition.<sup>17</sup> This seems to us much less likely than our suggestion that the omer is described because it was not generally familiar to the

<sup>16</sup>*Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 77.

<sup>17</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 399.

Israelites (any more than it is to us now).

23. *What does the manna mean to Christians?*

The manna means to Christians everything it meant to the Jews. See the brief outlines after the questions on Ch. 16.

The manna is certainly a type of Jesus, the living bread who came down from heaven. (John 6:41, 48-51).

The Lord Jesus promises to give His people who overcome "the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). This seems to be a symbol of the blessings of our heavenly home.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**17** And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to the commandment of Je-ho-vah, and encamped in Reph-i-dim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people strove with Mo-ses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Mo-ses said unto them, Why strive ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt Je-ho-vah? (3) And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Mo-ses, and said, Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of E-gypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? (4) And Mo-ses cried unto Je-ho-vah, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they are almost ready to stone me. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Is-ra-el; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. (6) Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Ho-reb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Mo-ses did so in the sight of the elders of Is-ra-el. (7) And he called the name of the place Mas-sah, and Mer-i-bah, because of the striving of the children of Is-ra-el, and because they tempted Je-ho-vah, saying, Is Je-ho-vah among