



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 16:1-36

Topic

The Israelites are astonished
by the appearance of manna to feed them

Title

"Manna Mia!"

On April 5, 1887, Anne Sullivan made a breakthrough with her blind and deaf pupil, Helen Keller, when she taught her the meaning of the word "water" spelled out in the manual alphabet.

When she was just 19 months old, an unknown disease left Helen deaf and blind. She became an unruly child who often lashed out in anger at her inability to communicate and her failure to comprehend the world around her.

Anne Sullivan, a teacher at the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, was hired to tutor Helen. Sullivan spelled words into Helen's hand and tried to help her connect letters and words with objects' names. Helen memorized words but failed to understand that they had meaning.

On April 5, 1887, Anne took Helen to an old pump house. She put Helen's hand under the stream and began spelling "w-a-t-e-r" into her palm, first slowly, then more quickly.

In a breakthrough moment, Helen suddenly understood that everything had a name. She would later write in her biography, "As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten - a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that 'w-a-t-e-r' meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!"

<http://www.findingdulcinea.com/news/on-this-day/March-April-08/On-this-Day--Helen-Keller-Comprehends-the-Word--Water-.html>

Anne Sullivan broke through to Helen Keller. **I suggest that God needed to break through to the Israelites.** There were things about His nature that they had not yet comprehended.

Think about it: Moses appeared before Pharaoh to speak for God, saying, "Let My people go." The Israelites witnessed God perform ten signs:

1. He turned water into blood.
2. He multiplied frogs.
3. He multiplied lice.
4. He multiplied flies.
5. He diseased livestock.
6. He brought boils upon men and animals.
7. Hail fell, killing all in the open fields.
8. He brought locusts.

9. There was oppressive darkness for three days.
10. At the last, the Angel of the Lord killed the firstborn who were not 'covered' by the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

This series of plagues upon Egypt was followed by the parting and un-parting of the Red Sea, drowning the entire Egyptian army.

If you're trying to communicate omnipotence, you've certainly succeeded. But what about other attributes, like "... merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy" (Psalm 103:8)?

Providing bread from Heaven to a hungry people is going to be an object lesson of those attributes of God.

It doesn't end with providing bread in the wilderness for Israel. Bread from Heaven was a favorite theme of Jesus' in order to convey His mission as Savior of the world. He said of Himself, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), and, "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven" (John 6:51).

Let's think about our daily spiritual bread as we work through the story about the manna. I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Daily Bread Is Your Sustenance As You Journey Homeward, and #2 Daily Bread Is Your Testimony As You Journey Homeward.

#1 Daily Bread Is Your Sustenance As You Journey Homeward

(v1-31)

Bruce Wayne of Tiffin, Ohio - not to be confused with Bruce Wayne of Gotham City - set his sights on crushing the previous

record of 425 consecutive days of eating at Chipotle. He surpassed the record on December 30, 2017.

The January 2018 article I read indicated he was going to continue eating at Chipotle indefinitely.

Could you eat at the same place everyday? What about eating the same meal everyday? I could eat spaghetti everyday.

Believe it or not, it is somewhat trendy to eat the same food everyday:

- Celebrities like Jennifer Gardner and Eve Mendes claim to eat the same foods everyday.
- Regular people are claiming extreme weight loss, while maintaining health, by eating the same foods everyday.

The Israelites were about to be introduced to a new food - a new diet, really - **that they would eat everyday for the next forty years.**

BTW: Rabbinical literature claims that manna produced no waste, “encapsulating its eater's nutritional needs so precisely that after the body absorbed what it needed there was nothing left...” Meaning that, “none of them needed to answer nature's call during all those forty years.”

Exo 16:1 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.

Whatever food they had brought with them into the wilderness, it was now six weeks into their journey, and provisions were depleted.

Exo 16:2 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The Israelites were definitely united; but it certainly wasn't "good," and it wasn't "pleasant." Theirs was a unity that caused division.

It may seem obvious, but I'll say it anyway. Don't join in a unity that causes division. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Exo 16:3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

They believed that God was going to kill them. I think we'd agree that their knowledge of the nature of God was severely limited.

Since they believed God was going to kill them, they thought they'd have been better off dying in Egypt. At least there they would have gotten a last meal.

What would you choose as *your* last meal? While you're deciding, here are a few of the last meals death row inmates requested:

- In 2009, Bobby Wayne Woods requested 2 chicken fried steaks, 2 fried chicken breasts, 3 pork chops, 2 burgers, 4 slices of bread, a half pound of French fried potatoes, half pound of onion rings, chocolate cake, and two pitchers of milk.
- In 1982, Velma Barfield requested Cheez Doodles and a Coke.
- In 1963, Victor Figuer requested a single olive.
- In 1990, James Edward Smith requested dirt in order to perform a voodoo ritual. It wasn't on the approved menu, so they substituted yogurt.

I'd request... Spaghetti. Several plates, each with a different sauce. And Topo Chico sparkling water to drink. Don't forget the cannoli.

The Israelites had an inflated view of their previous conditions. When they were enslaved by Egypt, were they really coming home each day to overflowing pots of meat and all the fresh bread they could eat? I don't think so.

If you're saved, you have power over Satan and sin; you will not be subject to the second death, but will live forever in a perfect, glorified body in a perfect Heaven. Don't exaggerate how good you had it before you were saved just because the road homeward is perilous.

Exo 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.

Those of you who are deeper into fitness, or are training for an event, e.g., a marathon... Do you not put yourself on a different diet to perform your best?

God's diet would sustain them physically, but it could also bring out their spiritual best, if they obeyed its rules.

Exo 16:5 And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

We already know why: Because the seventh day was the Sabbath. But I'm going to show you in a moment that the Israelites knew **nothing** about the Sabbath until this moment.

Exo 16:6 Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Exo 16:7 And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what *are* we, that you complain against us?"

Exo 16:8 Also Moses said, "*This shall be seen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what *are* we? Your complaints *are* not against us but against the LORD."

Moses let them know that by complaining against he and Aaron, they were complaining against God. Two things stand out about that:

1. First, good for Moses, in that he took it in stride, rather than taking it personally.
2. Second, it's good to call your behavior what it really is.

You and I must learn to not take everything so personally. Don't get me wrong - sometimes people *are* attacking you. But when they are attacking God through you, Keep Calm and Carry On.

Exo 16:9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.' "

Exo 16:10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to 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.

The pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night, was guiding them. It was a visible manifestation of God. From this day forward, it would be cloudy with the chance of bread falling.

Exo 16:11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Exo 16:12 "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God.' "

Note that even though what they did was wrong, even though it was a "complaint," God gave them what they asked for. He gave them much more than they asked for, and in a way that would help them grow, if they received it.

Contrary to our way of thinking, God can bless when you are disobedient, and He can withhold when you are obedient. Grace is funny that way as God seeks to teach you it is always sufficient.

Exo 16:13 So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.

They'd get quail one more time after this. This reads like a last meal of meat before they went on the manna diet.

Exo 16:14 And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as fine as frost* on the ground.

Exo 16:15 So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it *was*...

The word manna means, "What is it?" It reminds me of *It's-It Ice Cream*. As the story goes, in 1928 George Whitney placed a scoop of creamy vanilla ice cream between two freshly baked large old-fashioned oatmeal cookies, and then dipped the sandwich into fine dark chocolate. The delicious combination of savory sweetness was declared by all to be "IT!" Hence, *It's-It*.

Exo 16:15 So when the children 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, "This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

We will be told in verse thirty-one that "it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Numbers 11:7 states that manna's appearance was like "bdellium" which is a resin. Psalm 78:24 refers to manna as "grain from heaven," and the next verse calls it the "bread of angels."

Exo 16:16 This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.' "

Don't know what an "omer" is? Easy - according to verse thirty-six, "Now an omer *is* one-tenth of an ephah."

Here's a quote about the omer: "In traditional Jewish standards of measurement, the *omer* was equivalent to the capacity of 43 eggs, or what is also known as one-tenth of an ephah. In dry weight, the *omer* weighed between 1.560 kg to 1.770 kg." (About 60 ounces, if I did the math correctly).

Exo 16:17 Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.

Exo 16:18 So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

This seems to be a miracle within the miracle. Whatever quantity each person had gathered, when he measured it in his tent, he found that he had just as many omers as he needed for the consumption of his family.

Exo 16:19 And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning."

Exo 16:20 Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

Moses could be cranky. Even though he was "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3), his temper would get him into trouble.

The passage isn't really teaching this, but you should not overlook what you consider to be small sins. They can suddenly overtake you.

Exo 16:21 So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

With apologies to those who weren't morning people, manna had to be gathered early in the day or you'd not have food to sustain you.

Exo 16:22 And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

Why gather twice as much? Well, it was because the seventh day was the Sabbath. Except until that moment - **the seventh day wasn't the Sabbath.**

Had the Israelites been keeping the Sabbath throughout their generations, they would have not needed the explanation in verse five to gather twice as much on the sixth day. They'd have known gathering was prohibited as work.

No where in the Old Testament prior to this did anyone keep the Sabbath. Even sabbatarians concede this.

What about God resting on Day Seven of creation week? Sabbatarians say it established a pattern all men were to follow. But that's an assumption, an argument from silence at best.

God did not command man to rest on the seventh day. In none of His instructions to *any* of the patriarchs does He ever tell any of them to keep the Sabbath. He gives them plenty to follow, e.g., circumcision. But **nothing** about the Sabbath, not until the exodus.

Exo 16:23 Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' "

Exo 16:24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

Exo 16:25 Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field.

Exo 16:26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."

Verse twenty-three is the first occurrence of the word Sabbath in the Bible. This was all brand new to them. It was their orientation to the Sabbath.

Exo 16:27 Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none.

No Jew would have done this if they had been keeping the Sabbath prior to this.

Exo 16:28 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?

Exo 16:29 See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

I belabor the point by saying it, but this is when God gave Israel the Sabbath. The Sabbath was, and is, part of God's covenant with Israel.

Exo 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

Gentiles were never commanded to keep the Sabbath. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament as instructions in righteousness for the church.

The only one that is not repeated is the Sabbath. In fact, we are warned to not be subject to days and rituals which were a mere shadow of the reality that we have in Jesus.

Exo 16:31 And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it *was* like white coriander seed, and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey.

I found this interesting quote by Spurgeon: “According to the Apocrypha, which is not to be received as Scripture, but still is often valuable in some respects, each man tasted the manna according to his own liking. There was something about it that enabled the mouth to give its own flavor to it.”

It tasted like spaghetti.

The Israelites could see in this provision God’s providence. They could see His mercy... His tenderness... His compassion. They could see many attributes of God that they had not previously been made aware of.

He wasn’t just omnipotent and omnipresent and omniscient. There was a fourth ‘omni’ - **He was omnibenevolent.**

The word *omnibenevolent* comes from the Latin word *omni*, meaning “all,” and the word *benevolent*, meaning “good” or “charitable.”

When we say that God is omnibenevolent, we are saying that God is absolutely good and that no action or motive or thought or feeling or anything else about Him is not purely good. He is “all-good.”

Among all the other things manna was for them, its appearance could have served as a breakthrough moment. Hopefully you have had such moments, when you are overwhelmed by the grace of God.

#2 Daily Bread Is Your Testimony As You Journey Homeward

(v32-36)

Speaking of bread, “Boudin's sourdough bread's unique tangy taste and chewy center has been a hit with San Francisco residents since the bakery first opened in 1849.

A big part of brand's success has been due to its unyielding consistency - a feat only accomplished because the company is still using the same yeast culture that Isidore Boudin collected 160 years ago.”

It's a running joke among Pensiero's that all sourdough bread everywhere has molecules from the original starter.

Manna wouldn't last overnight, unless it was sixth-day manna. That is, except for one particular manna which would be placed in the Ark of the Covenant and be there for centuries as a testimony.

Exo 16:32 Then Moses said, "This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' "

Exo 16:33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations."

Exo 16:34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

The “testimony” is a reference either to the Ark of the Covenant, or to the entire Tabernacle that housed the Ark and its other symbolic furnishings. The Tabernacle plans had not been given. This is commentary by Moses on what would occur later.

Manna in that jar, in the Tabernacle, would be a testimony for generations to come.

Exo 16:35 And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

That’s a long time to eat something that isn’t spaghetti. It reminds me of the lembas bread of the Elves in the Tolkien stories.

At one point in the movie trilogy, in *The Two Towers*, Frodo asks what they have left to eat. Sam says, somewhat disdainfully, “Lembas bread, and look, MORE lembas bread.”

The Israelites did have different ways of preparing manna. We read it could be baked or boiled, for instance. Manna recipes were made famous by Keith Green in his song, *So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt*: Manna waffles... Manna burgers... Manna bagels... Fillet of manna... Manna patty... BaManna bread.

Their food was part of their testimony. Your food is a part of your testimony - because Jesus is your spiritual manna.

- Just as God provided manna to the Israelites to save them from *starvation*, He has provided Jesus Christ for our *salvation*.
- The manna temporarily saved the Israelites from physical death. The spiritual manna permanently saves us from eternal death.

Jesus said, “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die” (John 6:49-50).

When you and I live according to God’s Word... When it is our standard of measure, and our absolute rule of life... It gives the world the testimony that “ 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD' ” (Matthew 4:4).

Like Jesus, we show that we, “have food to eat of which [the nonbeliever does] not know. Our “food is to do the will of” God (John 4:32 & 34).

Whether your go-to meal is spaghetti, or something else - Jesus is your go-to for spiritual sustenance. When His Word is your standard, and you do His will, you give testimony to His grace. Your testimony can strengthen other believers.

And it can challenge nonbelievers by showing, “he who believes in [Jesus] has everlasting life“ (John 6:47).

Adopt and maintain a Word-based diet. If someone asks you how you eat, tell them you’re a Manna-eater.

