

## Exodus 16

**Exodus 15:25-27** So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, (26) and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you." (27) **Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.**

After they crossed over, we read the "Song of Moses", it was a song of triumph and victory of our God who caused the waters to part to allow His children to cross over on dry land and then drown all the Egyptians when the waters collapsed on them.

But it didn't take long for the Israelites to complain about the "bitter" waters of Marah. But our gracious LORD made the waters sweet by having Moses throw a tree into the water.

Then on top of that, He led them to Elim where there was an oasis of 70 palm trees and 12 wells of water. Seventy is an interesting number. Many believe that it represents fullness, restoration, and an endpoint of historical events.

We first encounter this number in Genesis where the "table of nations" is mentioned in chapter 10. The 70 nations and tongues were defined as the generations of Noah.

The number is mostly associated with the Jewish Nation :

1. 70 members of Jacob's family went to Egypt
2. 70 Elders were appointed in Numbers 11
3. 70 years was the total time the Israelites were exiled in Babylon
4. 70 years is a typical human life span in the Bible (Ps 90; King David was 70 when he died).
5. 70 years between the destruction of the 1<sup>st</sup> temple and the building of the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple.
6. 70 years from the UN vote to establish Israel as a sovereign state until President Trump declared the Jerusalem is Israel's capital in 2017 (from 1947).
7. Probably the most important prophesy for the Jewish nation is in Daniel 9:24-27: "*Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city (Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up (finish) vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy (Jesus Christ).*"

The number 12 is also important:

Twelve can be found in 187 places in God's word. Revelation alone has 22 occurrences of the number. The meaning of 12, which is considered a perfect number, is that it symbolizes God's power and authority, as well as serving as a perfect governmental foundation. It can also symbolize completeness or the nation of Israel as a whole.

1. 12 sons of Jacob who became the 12 tribes of Israel
2. 12 loaves of bread in the Holy Place.
3. 12 apostles
4. 12 years old when Jesus spoke His first recorded words
5. 12 thrones for the apostles
6. And many more...

So, the children came to this oasis which was a place of refreshment and rest. Little did Moses know how much these things would be played out in the history of the people he was leading.

(Exodus 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.

Moses and the gang have been on the road for 30 days. They have traveled to about half-way to Mt Sinai. They are now in the Wilderness of Sin (about half-way down the Red Sea coast line). This is, it is thought, a name of an Egyptian town. And, no, the name doesn't mean sin.

(Exodus 16:2) Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (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."

The Children of Israel came this far by the grace and mercy of God. But it wasn't good enough for them. They complained against Moses and Aaron. What they said made no sense but that didn't matter because there was a need for immediate gratification of their hunger! Once again, at the sight of some discomfort, which turned into fear, they wished they hadn't left Egypt. They said that it would have been better to die at the Hand of the LORD than come this far and starve to death.

(Exodus 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. (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."

Now comes the first test. God will provide the people with "bread" from heaven. The people are commanded to gather just enough for each day.

The only exception would be on the sixth day, they would be allowed to gather twice as much as they did on the other days.

Would they pass this simple test and obey the LORD? Part of the test is to simply obey Him without understanding the restrictions or that "sixth day" exception.

(Exodus 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. (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?" (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 and Aaron tell the people that the LORD will respond with meat in the evening (dusk) and bread in the morning (dawn). Each will be a sign that the LORD was the One who brought them out of bondage and that His glory will be evident.

He also tells them that their complaints were against the LORD and not himself or Aaron. I believe that Moses was trying to stress that complaining against the LORD was a dangerous thing to do considering Who He was. Add to that, that it was the LORD who brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and it was the LORD who parted the Red Sea and it was the LORD who led them, their complaints were faithless and baseless.

(Exodus 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.' "

The Biblical admonition to take your complaint to the source is show here (that is, if one sins against you, go to him or her alone. Do not gossip behind their back! (Matthew 18:15).

(Exodus 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 LORD appears in the wilderness. His glory is seen in the cloud. This is the same cloud that led them by day!

(Exodus 16:11) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (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.' "

The LORD Himself speaks. Whether or not the people can hear Him is unknown. But in His grace and mercy, He does not become angry but shows compassion on them. He will provide meat and bread. And, they will know that He is the LORD their God!

(Exodus 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. (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. (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.

The LORD fulfills His promise. The quails "came up" at dusk. Whether this was a total miracle and they simply appeared, or like the locusts, the LORD had them come out to the wilderness is not known. But, in whatever manner He chose, they were there in the camp.

"The bread from heaven was quite different. It was something "new" to the earth. It appeared

as a small round “thing” that looked like frost. They were dumbfounded and didn’t know what to do with it. Moses tells them, “This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat”. Before, Moses called it bread.

He then explains to them how they are to gather it.

(Exodus 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.’ “

One omer has been estimated by some to be about 3-quarts or 9.75 cups. This is the amount of “bread” that the household could gather per adult – **according to their NEED!**

(Exodus 16:17) Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. (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. (19) And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning."

The children were, evidently, obedient. Those who gathered more because they needed it had nothing left over. Those who needed less did not go hungry! Well, almost.

(Exodus 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.

The admonition not to save some for the next day was not obeyed. So, they quickly found out that the leftovers would be turned into maggots and unlike Lazarus’ dead body, they stinketh.

Moses was angry! He would get angry a lot with this crowd.

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

So each morning they gathered what they needed and when the sun rose up, it melted away.

(Exodus 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.

The LORD told Moses about gathering twice the amount on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Presumably, he told the people but without explanation. So, the leaders of the people came to Moses for an explanation.

(Exodus 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.' " (24) So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

Moses explains that the 7<sup>th</sup> day would be a Sabbath rest. The word means “intermission” or “break”. It will be a holy day dedicated to the LORD. This is all they needed to know **for now**.

The people stored the extra omers for the next day and sure enough, there was no odor nor worms!

(Exodus 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. (26) Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."

The LORD was very specific. You cannot gather on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. He ensured that they did not by withholding the bread on the 7<sup>th</sup> day!

(Exodus 16:27) Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. (28) And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do **you** refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? (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." (Exodus 16:30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

The LORD now refers to the 7<sup>th</sup> day as "**the**" Sabbath. (before, it was just **a** sabbath). This IS a special day in which no normal work is to be done – no gathering, no preparing, no butchering. Moses was told that the people had to "stay home and stay safe". And He meant it!

Thus, without detailed explanations, the LORD instituted the Sabbath rest. This was a new thing. Never before had any nation done so.

(Exodus 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.

The house of Israel called its name Manna. The Hebrew word is "Mawn". It literally means a **whatness** (so to speak). Today, it would be called a "whatchamacallit".

But it was sweet like honey and seemed to be made of seeds that looked like coriander.

(Exodus 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.' " (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." (34) As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

Moses told them that each household was to save an omer of manna. It was to be kept for subsequent generations as a reminder of how the LORD God fed them in the desert.

Even Aaron was to save an omer of manna. This was to be put into the Ark, also called the Testimony. Aaron did after the Ark was built.

(Exodus 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.

And, since Moses is writing this as history, he mentions that the LORD fed them manna for forty-years until they came to Canaan.

(Exodus 16:36) Now an omer *is* one-tenth of an ephah.

There you go...if I hadn't told you, Moses made sure you knew.

There's a lot in this chapter that is good to understand.

First, there's a beautiful picture of the Grace and Mercy of our God towards His chosen people. His compassion flows like a river and they need only to drink of it for its benefits. His anger is restrained at their murmuring and complaining. Their disobedience is not winked at but His Love for them is greater. He understands the human condition; He understands our fallen nature; But He is God and He needs to be respected and obeyed as their Creator and LORD.

The quail and manna were **unmerited** gifts. They certainly didn't deserve them. But the LORD knew they needed sustenance to survive in the wilderness. The people seem to have a very short memory about the plagues, the release from bondage, the Red Sea and the bitter waters made sweet to drink. Are they developing a "entitled" attitude? Seems so.

But the quail and the manna were also given to test them to see whether they will walk in His law or not. They get close. They took what they needed but tried to keep some for the next day and they went out to gather when they were told not to. The test wasn't just for their actions but more so for their hearts! Will they believe God and have the faith to know that when they awoke in the morning, fresh manna would be waiting for them??? That test they failed!

The test was also to make sure that they **KNEW** that He *was* the LORD their God. Saying it and understanding the character of God are two different things. They needed to know that He was a God of mercy and grace. They needed to know that He was the God who Provides. They needed to know that He was a God of compassion and love and patience. They needed to know that He was their Creator and therefore He had total ownership over His creation just as a King has sovereign rule over his subjects.

Why was this so important? Because they were going to learn about their special calling. Their calling was to be a Witness, a Testimony to the world that He IS. The world has gone off the deep end and the Children of Israel were the only people group left who believed in the One True God, Creator of heaven and earth. But in order for them to do that, they needed to have **Egypt** surgically removed from their souls. Most of the time that surgery was performed without anesthesia or pain meds.

That's what's at stake. But there's something else going on. Did you notice that the emphasis was on the manna and not the quail? Moses didn't limit the number of quail they could catch. It was all about this "Bread from Heaven". The fact that they had to make up a name for it testifies to its uniqueness – nothing like it was ever seen on the face of the earth! Add to that the directions for gathering it and using it and you truly have something brand new!

Next week, we're going to discuss this Bread from Heaven that sustained their lives. We're going to talk about the True Bread of Heaven and in chapter 17, we'll be introduced to the Rock from which living waters flowed.

I'd like to say that it will be a teaching on Bread and Water but that, in itself, doesn't sound so appetizing.