

# CHAPTER 16

This chapter gives us an account of the victualling of the camp of Israel.

- I.** Their complaint for want of bread (v. 1-3).
- II.** The notice God gave them beforehand of the provision he intended to make for them (v. 4-12).
- III.** The sending of the manna (v. 13-15).
- IV.** The laws and orders concerning the manna.
  - 1.** That they should gather it daily for their daily bread (v. 16-21).
  - 2.** That they should gather a double portion on the sixth day (v. 22-26).
  - 3.** That they should expect none on the seventh day (v. 27-31).
  - 4.** That they should preserve a pot of it for a memorial (v. 32, etc.).

## ~~16:1~~ EXODUS 16:1-12

### THE ISRAELITES MURMUR FOR BREAD

The host of Israel, it seems, took along with them out of Egypt, when they came thence on the fifteenth day of the first month, a month's provisions, which, by the fifteenth day of the second month, was all spent; and here we have,

- I.** Their discontent and murmuring upon that occasion, v. 2, 3. The whole congregation, the greatest part of them, joined in this mutiny; it was not immediately against God that they murmured, but (which was equivalent) against Moses and Aaron, God's vicegerents among them.
  - 1.** They count upon being killed in the wilderness — nothing less, at the first appearance of disaster. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he could easily have done that in the Red Sea; but then he preserved them, and now could as easily provide for them. It argues great distrust of God,

and of his power and goodness, in every distress and appearance of danger to despair of life, and to talk of nothing but being speedily killed.

**2.** They invidiously charge Moses with a design to starve them when he brought them out of Egypt; whereas what he had done was both by order from God and with a design to promote their welfare. Note, It is no new thing for the greatest kindnesses to be misinterpreted and basely represented as the greatest injuries. The worst colours are sometimes put upon the best actions. Nay,

**3.** They so far undervalue their deliverance that they wish they had died in Egypt, nay, and died by the hand of the Lord too, that is, by some of the plagues which cut off the Egyptians, as if it were not the hand of the Lord, but of Moses only, that brought them into this hungry wilderness. It is common for people to say of that pain, or sickness, or sore, of which they see not the second causes, "It is what pleases God," as if that were not so likewise which comes by the hand of man, or some visible accident. Prodigious madness! They would rather die by the fleshpots of Egypt, where they found themselves with provision, than live under the guidance of the heavenly pillar in a wilderness and be provided for by the hand of God! they pronounce it better to have fallen in the destruction of God's enemies than to bear the fatherly discipline of his children! We cannot suppose that they had any great plenty in Egypt, how largely soever they now talk of the flesh-pots; nor could they fear dying for want in the wilderness, while they had their flocks and herds with them. But discontent magnifies what is past, and vilifies what is present, without regard to truth or reason. None talk more absurdly than murmurers. Their impatience, ingratitude, and distrust of God, were so much the worse in that they had lately received such miraculous favours, and convincing proofs both that God could help them in the greatest exigencies and that really he had mercy in store for them. See how *soon they forgot his works, and provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea,* ~~PAGE~~ Psalm 106:7-13. Note, Experiences of God's mercies greatly aggravate our distrusts and murmurings.

**II.** The care God graciously took for their supply. Justly he might have said, "I will rain fire and brimstone upon these murmurers, and consume them;" but, quite contrary, he promises to rain bread upon them. Observe,

**1.** How God makes known to Moses his kind intentions, that he might not be uneasy at their murmurings, nor be tempted to wish he had let them alone in Egypt.

**(1.)** He takes notice of the people's complaints: *I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel*, v. 12. As a God of pity, he took cognizance of their necessity, which was the occasion of their murmuring; as a just and holy God, he took cognizance of their base and unworthy reflections upon his servant Moses, and was much displeased with them. Note, When we begin to fret and be uneasy, we ought to consider that God hears all our murmurings, though silent, and only the murmurings of the heart. Princes, parents, masters, do not hear all the murmurs of their inferiors against them, and it is well they do not, for perhaps they could not bear it; but God hears, and yet bears. We must not think, because God does not immediately take vengeance on men for their sins, that therefore he does not take notice of them; no, he hears the murmurings of Israel, and is grieved with this generation, and yet continues his care of them, as the tender parent of the froward child.

**(2.)** He promises them a speedy, sufficient, and constant supply, v. 4. Man being made out of the earth, his Maker has wisely ordered him food out of the earth, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 104:14. But the people of Israel, typifying the church of the first-born that are written in heaven, and born from above, and being themselves immediately under the direction and government of heaven, receiving their charters, laws, and commissions, from heaven, from heaven also received their food: their law being given by the disposition of angels, they did also eat angels' food. See what God designed in making this provision for them: *That I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no.*

**[1.]** Thus he tried whether they would trust him, and walk in the law of faith or no, whether they could live from hand to mouth, and (though now uneasy because their provisions were spent) could rest satisfied with the bread of the day in its day, and depend upon God for fresh supplies to-morrow.

**[2.]** Thus he tried whether they would serve him, and be always faithful to so good a Master, that provided so well for his servants; and hereby he made it appear to all the world, in the issue, what an ungrateful people they were, whom nothing could affect with a sense of obligation. Let

*favour be shown to them, yet will they not learn righteousness,* <sup><2830></sup>Isaiah 26:10.

**2.** How Moses made known these intentions to Israel, as God ordered him. Here Aaron was his prophet, as he had been to Pharaoh. Moses directed Aaron what to *speak to the congregation of Israel* (v. 9); and some think that, while Aaron was giving a public summons to the congregation to *come near before the Lord*, Moses retired to pray, and that the appearance of the glory of the Lord (v. 10) was in answer to his prayer. They are called to come near, as <sup><2118></sup>Isaiah 1:18, *Come, and let us reason together*. Note, God condescends to give even murmurers a fair hearing; and shall we then despise the cause of our inferiors when they contend with us? <sup><8913></sup>Job 31:13.

**(1.)** He convinces them of the evil of their murmurings. They thought they reflected only upon Moses and Aaron, but here they are told that God was struck at through their sides. This is much insisted on (v. 7, 8): “*Your murmurings are not against us, then we would have been silent, but against the Lord; it was he that led you into these straits, and not we.*” Note, When we murmur against those who are instruments of any uneasiness to us, whether justly or unjustly, we should do well to consider how much we reflect upon God by it; men are but God's hand. Those that quarrel with the reproofs and convictions of the word, and are angry with their ministers when they are touched in a tender part, know not what they do, for therein they strive with their Maker. Let this for ever stop the mouth of murmuring, that it is daring impiety to murmur at God, because he is God; and gross absurdity to murmur at men, because they are but men.

**(2.)** He assures them of the supply of their wants, that since they had harped upon the flesh-pots so much they should for once have flesh in abundance that evening, and bread the next morning, and so on every day thenceforward, v. 8, 12. Many there are of whom we say that they are better fed than taught; but the Israelites were thus fed, that they might be taught. *He led him about, he instructed him* (<sup><1520></sup>Deuteronomy 32:10); and, as to this instance, see <sup><888></sup>Deuteronomy 8:3, *He fed thee with manna, that thou mightest know that man doth not live by bread only*. And, besides this, here are two things mentioned, which he intended to teach them by sending them manna: —

[1.] *By this you shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt*, v. 6. That they were brought out of Egypt was plain enough; but so strangely sottish and short-sighted were they that they said it was Moses that brought them out, v. 3. Now God sent them manna, to prove that it was no less than infinite power and goodness that brought them out, and this could perfect what was begun. If Moses only had brought them out of Egypt, he could not thus have fed them; they must therefore own that that was the Lord's doing, because this was so, and both were marvellous in their eyes; yet, long afterwards, they needed to be told that *Moses gave them not this bread from heaven*, ~~482~~ John 6:32.

[2.] *By this you shall know that I am the Lord your God*, v. 12. This gave proof of his power as the Lord, and his particular favour to them as their God. When God plagued the Egyptians, it was to make them know that he was the Lord; when he provided for the Israelites, it was to make them know that he was their God.

3. How God himself manifested his glory, to still the murmurings of the people, and to put a reputation upon Moses and Aaron, v. 10. While Aaron was speaking, *the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud*. The cloud itself, one would think, was enough both to strike an awe upon them and to give encouragement to them; yet, in a few days, it had grown so familiar to them that it made no impression upon them, unless it shone with an unusual brightness. Note, What God's ministers say to us is then likely to do us good when the glory of God shines in with it upon our souls.

## ~~483~~ EXODUS 16:13-21

### MANNA RAISED FROM HEAVEN

Now they begin to be provided for by the immediate hand of God.

I. He makes them a feast, at night, of delicate fowl, *feathered fowl* (~~487~~ Psalm 78:27), therefore not *locusts*, as some think; quails, or pheasants, or some wild fowl, came up, and covered the camp, so tame that they might take up as many of them as they pleased. Note, God gives us of the good things of this life, not only for necessity, but for delight, that we may not only serve him, but serve him cheerfully.

**II.** Next morning he rained manna upon them, which was to be continued to them for their daily bread.

**1.** That which was provided for them was manna, which descended from the clouds, so that, in some sense, they might be said to live upon the air. It came down in dew that melted, and yet was itself of such a consistency as to serve for nourishing strengthening food, without any thing else. They called it *manna*, *manhu*, “What is this?” Either, “What a poor thing this is!” despising it: or, “What a strange thing this is!” admiring it: or, “It is a portion, no matter what it is; it is that which our God has allotted us, and we will take it and be thankful,” v. 14, 15. It was pleasant food; the Jews say that it was palatable to all, however varied their tastes. It was wholesome food, light of digestion, and very necessary (Dr. Grew says) to cleanse them from disorders with which he thinks it probable that they were, in the time of their bondage, more or less infected, which disorders a luxurious diet would have made contagious. By this spare and plain diet we are all taught a lesson of temperance, and forbidden to desire dainties and varieties.

**2.** They were to gather it every morning (v. 21), *the portion of a day in his day*, v. 4. Thus they must live upon daily providence, as the fowls of the air, of which it is said, *That which thou givest them they gather* (<sup>LABS</sup>Psalm 104:28); not to-day for to-morrow: *let the morrow take thought for the things of itself*. To this daily raining and gathering of manna our Saviour seems to allude when he teaches us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*. We are hereby taught,

**(1.)** Prudence and diligence in providing food convenient for ourselves and our household. What God graciously gives we must industriously gather; with quietness working, and eating our own bread, not the bread either of idleness or deceit. God's bounty leaves room for man's duty; it did so even when manna was rained: they must not eat till they have gathered.

**(2.)** Contentment and satisfaction with a sufficiency. They must gather, *every man according to his eating*; enough is as good as a feast, and more than enough is as bad as a surfeit. Those that have most have, for themselves, but food, and raiment, and mirth; and those that have least generally have these: so that *he who gathers much has nothing over, and he who gathers little has no lack*. There is not so great a disproportion

between one and another in the comforts and enjoyments of the things of this life as there is in the property and possession of the things themselves.

**(3.)** Dependence upon Providence: *Let no man leave till morning* (v. 19), but let them learn to go to bed and sleep quietly, though they have not a bit of bread in their tent, nor in all their camp, trusting that God, with the following day, will bring them their daily bread.” It was surer and safer in God’s store-house than in their own, and would thence come to them sweeter and fresher. Read with this, ~~1065~~ Matthew 6:25, *Take no thought for your life*, etc. See here the folly of hoarding. The manna that was laid up by some (who thought themselves wiser and better managers than their neighbours, and who would provide in case it should fail next day), putrefied, and bred worms, and became good for nothing. Note, That proves to be most wasted which is covetously and distrustfully spared. Those riches are corrupted, ~~980~~ James 5:2, 3. Let us set ourselves to think,

**[1.]** Of that great power of God which fed Israel in the wilderness, and made miracles their daily bread. What cannot this God do, who prepared a table in the wilderness, and furnished it richly even for those who questioned whether he could or no? ~~1065~~ Psalm 78:19, 20. Never was there such a market of provisions as this, where so many hundred thousand men were daily furnished, without money and without price. Never was there such an open house kept as God kept in the wilderness for forty years together, nor such free and plentiful entertainment given. The feast which Ahasuerus made, to show the *riches of his kingdom*, and the *honour of his majesty*, was nothing to this, ~~1004~~ Esther 1:4. It is said (v. 21), *When the sun waxed hot, it melted*; as if what was left were drawn up by the heat of the sun into the air to be the seed of the next day’s harvest, and so from day to day.

**[2.]** Of that constant providence of God which *gives food to all flesh, for his mercy endures for ever*, ~~1065~~ Psalm 136:25. He is a great house-keeper that provides for all the creatures. The same wisdom, power, and goodness that now brought food daily out of the clouds, are employed in the constant course of nature, bringing food yearly out of the earth, and giving us all things richly to enjoy.

## EXODUS 16:22-31

### MANNA RAISED FROM HEAVEN

We have here,

**1.** A plain intimation of the observing of a *seventh day sabbath*, not only before the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, but before the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, and therefore, *from the beginning*, <sup><WEB></sup>Genesis 2:3. If the sabbath had now been first instituted, how could Moses have understood what God said to him (v. 5), concerning a double portion to be gathered on the sixth day, without making any express mention of the sabbath? And how could the people so readily take the hint (v. 22), even to the surprise of the rulers, before Moses had declared that it was done with a regard to the sabbath, if they had not had some knowledge of the sabbath before? The setting apart of one day in seven for holy work, and, in order to that, for holy rest, was a divine appointment ever since God created man upon the earth, and the most ancient of positive laws. The way of sabbath-sanctification is the good old way.

**2.** The double provision which God made for the Israelites, and which they were to make for themselves, on the sixth day: God gave them *on the sixth day the bread of two days*, v. 29. Appointing them to rest on the seventh day, he took care that they should be no losers by it; and none ever will be losers by serving God. On that day they were to fetch in enough for two days, and to prepare it, v. 23. The law was very strict, that they must bake and seeth, the day before, and not on the sabbath day. This does not now make it unlawful for us to dress meat on the Lord's day, but directs us to contrive our family affairs so that they may hinder us as little as possible in the work of the sabbath. Works of necessity, no doubt, are to be done on that day; but it is desirable to have as little as may be to do of things necessary to the life that now is, that we may apply ourselves the more closely to the one thing needful. That which they kept of for their food on the sabbath day did not putrefy, v. 24. When they kept it in opposition to a command (v. 20) it stank; when they kept it in obedience to a command it was sweet and good; for every thing is sanctified by the *word of God and prayer*.

**3.** The intermission of the manna on the seventh day. God did not send it then, and therefore they must not expect it, nor go out to gather, v. 25, 26.



This showed that it was not produced by natural causes, and that it was designed for a confirmation of the divine authority of the law which was to be given by Moses. Thus God took an effectual course to make them *remember the sabbath day*; they could not forget it, nor the day of preparation for it. Some, it seems, went out on the seventh day, expecting to find manna (v. 27); but they found none, for those that will find must seek in the appointed time: seek the Lord *while he may be found*. God, upon this occasion, said to Moses, *How long refuse you to keep my commandments?* 5:28. Why did he say this to Moses? He was not disobedient. No, but he was the ruler of a disobedient people, and God charges it upon him that he might the more warmly charge it upon them, and might take care that their disobedience should not be through any neglect or default of his. It was for going out to seek for manna on the seventh day that they were thus reprov'd. Note,

- (1.) Disobedience, even in a small matter, is very provoking.
- (2.) God is jealous for the honour of his sabbaths. If walking out on the sabbath to seek for food was thus reprov'd, walking out on that day purely to find our own pleasure cannot be justified.

## ~~1015~~ EXODUS 16:32-36

### A POT OF MANNA PRESERVED

God having provided manna to be his people's food in the wilderness, and to be to them a continual feast, we are here told,

**1.** How the memory of it was preserved. An omer of this manna was laid up in a *golden pot*, as we are told (~~3304~~ Hebrews 9:4), and kept *before the testimony*, or the ark, when it was afterwards made, v. 32-34. The preservation of this manna from waste and corruption was a standing miracle, and therefore the more proper memorial of this miraculous food. "Posterity shall *see the bread*," says God, "*wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness*," see what sort of food it was, and how much each man's daily proportion of it was, that it may appear they were neither kept to hard fare nor to short allowance, and then judge between God and Israel, whether they had any cause given them to murmur and find fault with their provisions, and whether they and their seed after them had not a great deal

of reason gratefully to won God's goodness to them. Note, Eaten bread must not be forgotten. God's miracles and mercies are to be had in everlasting remembrance, for our encouragement to trust in him at all times.

**2.** How the mercy of it was continued as long as they had occasion for it. The manna never ceased till they came to the borders of Canaan, where there was bread enough and to spare, v. 35. See how constant the care of Providence is; seedtime and harvest fail not, while the earth remains. Israel was very provoking in the wilderness, yet the manna never failed them: thus still God causes his rain to fall on the just and unjust. The manna is called *spiritual meat* (~~403~~1 Corinthians 10:3), because it was typical of spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Christ himself is the true manna, the bread of life, of which this was a figure, ~~416~~John 6:49-51. The word of God is the manna by which our souls are nourished, ~~404~~Matthew 4:4. The comforts of the Spirit are hidden manna, ~~417~~Revelation 2:17. These come from heaven, as the manna did, and are the support and comfort of the divine life in the soul, while we are in the wilderness of this world. It is food for *Israelites*, for those only that follow the pillar of cloud and fire. It is to be *gathered*; Christ in the word is to be applied to the soul, and the means of grace are to be used. We must every one of us gather for ourselves, and gather in the morning of our opportunities, which if we let slip, it may be too late to gather. The manna they gathered must not be hoarded up, but eaten; those that have received Christ must by faith live upon him, and not receive his grace in vain. There was manna enough for all, enough for each, and none had too much; so in Christ there is a complete sufficiency, and no superfluity. But those that did eat manna hungered again, died at last, and with many of them God was not well-pleased; whereas those that feed on Christ by faith shall never hunger, and shall die no more, and with them God will be for ever well pleased. The Lord evermore give us this bread!