

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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The Waters of Marah

(Exodus 15:22-27)

“And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah” (Exodus 15:23).

The nation of Israel had just been through the most amazing experience of their lifetimes. They had witnessed the awesome power of their God, a God with whom they had been acquainted only through the divine promises given to their forefathers. Their emotions were at a peak of exuberance and joy. Reading the song that Moses and the children of Israel sang (verses 1-21), one cannot help but feel their happiness.

But they were inexperienced as a free nation and their God knew they needed much training. Despite the deep impressions their recent deliverance from Pharaoh must have made, it became immediately obvious that there was still much more they needed to learn.

There were several routes from Egypt to Canaan and the Lord chose for His people the most circuitous of the options. He had in view from the first, their need of training. Their long bondage had made them servile and weak, lacking self-reliance in the new way and fearful that their leader, in whom they trusted remarkably, might yet prove incompetent for their deliverance. What a resemblance to all this we find in spiritual Israelites! When first leaving the world and its rudiments, although trusting in Christ, our fully accepted leader, how apt we are to feel fearful of our ability, even under his guidance, to gain the promised glorious deliverance from sin and its slavery!

In Exodus 15:22 we read: “And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.”

There is no doubt that the Lord realized that there was no water to be found during the first three days of this journey. After all, was not the Lord leading the people by means of a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire in the night? What might have been the Lord's purpose in allowing three days' journey without a new source of water being found? Undoubtedly he was waiting for them

to appreciate their need. They were certainly cognizant of their decreasing supply of water.

Verse 23: “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto Jehovah; And Jehovah showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them; and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah that healeth thee.”

On arriving at Marah, Israel was presented with waters unfit for use. In fact the very name Marah means “bitter.”¹ The anticipation of their need coupled with their great disappointment with the bitter water was enough reason for them to voice their dissatisfaction with the situation. “What are we to drink?” they murmured. Their cry to Moses was in unbelief, distrust, and reproach. But the cry of Moses to God was in faith. He responded, showing Moses a tree to throw into the bitter waters. According to providence this tree acted as medicine, sweetening the waters, making them palatable for consumption. This lesson was valuable, leading those who learned to trust God more fully and realize His continued care for them.

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There are valuable lessons here for us also. Paul spoke about many of Israel's experiences in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. He pointed out that the experiences of the typical nation were examples for the benefit of spiritual Israelites, the church. In 1 Corinthians 10:11,12 he wrote: "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."^{2,3}

Whoever has read the story of Israel and failed to discern that the failings of Israel are a picture of the failings of many in the church, has failed to get the gist of the lesson that the Lord would teach. The Israelite experiences were foreshadowings to warn us of similar temptations.

Moses, mediator of the Law covenant, was a beautiful type of The Christ, head and body, which would mediate the new covenant during the Millennium. The bitter water of Marah was an apt type of the law covenant. Why so?

Water is a vital component to human existence. Our bodies are, in fact, over 75% water. As necessary as water is to our physical lives, so also is truth to our spiritual lives. Thus, water is frequently used in scripture as a figure or symbol of truth, of divine messages, of the divine promises of everlasting life. The Law covenant held forth to the Israelites just such a promise. It invited the nation to drink of it with the hope of being refreshed and helped to obtain life. This promise is found in Leviticus 18:4,5: "Mine ordinances shall ye do, and my statutes shall ye keep, to walk therein: I am Jehovah your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah."

But while the Law in itself was good (Romans 3:1,2), it required something from them they were unable to give, namely perfect obedience. So while the Law made promises to life, it was actually "found to be unto death" (Romans 7:10). It was as poisoned waters to them, just as the waters of Marah were unusable, giving no refreshment.

THE TREE

In the type God shows Moses a certain tree and told him to throw that tree into the "bitter waters" and the waters were promptly sweetened.

The fulfillment of this in the antitype is in the death of our Lord. The tree that Moses threw in the water reminds us of another tree, or more accurately, a cross made from a tree — the Cross of Christ. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"

So the curse or poison of the old covenant was removed by our Lord's sacrifice. The poison is the sinful inheritance of mankind which, under the new law covenant with its better mediator, the Christ, will completely heal. The Christ will make good on all the gracious promises of God to those who will walk in the ways of the Lord.



Bitter waters of Law are sweetened with the wood of the Cross.

ANOTHER APPLICATION

There are other valuable lessons that we can draw from the same picture. We might say that it would not be unreasonable to consider that there is a further application of this at the present time.

During the dark ages, the waters of life, as given to us by the Lord and his apostles, became very much polluted and, as a consequence, undesirable to many. The erroneous doctrines of the dark ages made the precious waters of God's Word brackish and impure, sometimes even nauseating and, as a whole, unwholesome. But the Lord in his providence showed us more clearly, in the shining of these last days, the great doctrine of the ransom, the magnificent reason for the cutting off of our Lord Jesus in death. Here was the great manifestation of divine love and mercy. And since we have realized and come in contact with this truth, we see how it has purified and cleaned up the message of the dark ages. We can once again partake of the words with refreshment and joy.

We may not know if this was intended by the Lord to be a correspondence, but we can at least draw some lessons from it, the lessons being true whether the matter was intended to be supplied or not.

ELIM

As the Lord brings upon us trying experiences to prove and develop us, he also brings us to wonderfully refreshing experiences, to oases of rest. This was true also of natural Israel. After their first test of faith at Marah they are brought to Elim. Verse 27: "And they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters."

The name "Elim," perhaps means "strong trees."⁴ This meaning, if we are accurate, certainly suggests a comfortable, shady, and restful condition. And indeed it was. Though its exact location is not certain, its traditional location is identified with the modern Wadi Gharandel.⁵ It fits the biblical description in having 12 springs and 70 palm trees, along with much vegetation and plentiful water.⁶

Upon reading this account we are immediately impressed with the numbers 12 and 70, which are by no means unfamiliar to the Bible student. The 12 springs remind us of the 12 apostles, who are God's special gift for blessing to the church and from whom have come the refreshments of the waters of life. We remember also that these twelve, according to the Lord's promise, are to be prominent also in the kingdom, in the work of blessing Israel and all the nations.

The seventy palm trees remind us of the seventy whom our Lord commissioned subsequently to the 12 apostles and whose ministries typified the public services of this Gospel Age down to its Harvest or close (Luke 10:1,17). The 70 were directed to go into every city whither our Lord would ultimately go, and were instructed "you should not have gone over the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come." By extension, this signifies that our mission is to all nations, people, kindreds, and tongues, where ever we may find a hearing ear, with the assurance that we shall not have more then accomplished the work of declaring the good tidings to every nation until the full manifestation of the returned Lord in the power and great glory of his Kingdom.

So the experience of Israel at Marah was followed by a joyful one when their journey brought them to Elim, to its many water-springs and its palm groves, where they rested. Similarly, the spiritual Israelite is not long out of Egypt before he is permitted to have trying experiences; and in seeking refreshment he perhaps finds bitter disappointments corresponding to the waters of Marah. The first impulse of the beginner in the way might be in the nature of a murmuring which, whether intended or not, is a reflection upon the wisdom and guidance of our Leader.

The lesson is to be learned in perfect trust, to look to the Lord to turn our bitter disappointments and experiences sweet if we but trust him. Then to us also comes a season of rest and refreshment, and healing condition. The Lord does not permit us to have bitterness and trials continually, lest we should become thoroughly discouraged. He leads us sometimes by still waters, restoring our soul, refreshing and resting us in his grace. These experiences, rightly received, produce in us thankfulness and appreciation. And, importantly, they will tend to make us stronger for the further journey and lessons in the wilderness school of the present life.

By reading these literal experiences of natural Israel and what their reactions were to the Lord's loving care, we are so much aided to understand our own weaknesses. This is a truly marvelous way in which our wise and loving father teaches us.

— Br. David Stein

(1) In the book of Ruth, Naomi, having had such bitter experiences, tells those in Bethlehem to no longer call her Naomi, but call her Mara for her bitter experiences (Ruth 1:20,21).

(2) Paul made no mistake in writing "upon whom the ends of the ages are come." The plural use of "ages" lets us know there is special application to consecrated followers of Jesus at the beginning and end of the Gospel age. There is, consequently, special emphasis and warning on this subject to our time.

(3) The Berean Bible has "fulfillment of the ages" and the NIV has "culmination of the ages." Thus suggests another perspective. Perhaps Paul's point was that the Christian Age was a culmination of the preparation of past ages, from which Paul was drawing lessons for spiritual Israel.

(4) Smith's Bible Dictionary, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/smiths-bible-dictionary/elim.html>

(5) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elim_\(Bible\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elim_(Bible))

(6) One reference source, no longer remembered, put the water discharge at 1,260 gallons per minute.

Cleansing the Water

What made the water at Marah bitter? A huge underground water supply is underneath the Sinai desert, which drains near the eastern and western coasts. This water is rich in sulfates, which are bitter, and when ingested is a strong cathartic. (Glauber's salt, sodium sulfate, is given medicinally as a cathartic, but it is too bitter for some people.) Not only is it bitter, but is also dehydrating — life-threatening in desert summer heat.

Breccia is calcified wood, in which the wood fibers have been replaced by calcium (similar to petrified wood, in which the wood fibers have been replaced by silica). Calcium sulfate is nearly insoluble (solubility only about 0.3% by weight). If breccia is the "tree" Jehovah showed Moses, then powdering it and adding it to the bitter water, then calcium sulfate (gypsum, or plaster of Paris, building materials) will precipitate and leave the water suitable for drinking. And this technique could be used not only at Marah, but throughout the journey down the west coast of the Sinai peninsula and then up the east coast.

— Br. Jim Parkinson



At Elim there were 12 wells and 70 palms.

Manna and Quail (Exodus 16)

“And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host” (Exodus 16:13).

Israel had just spent several weeks at the beautiful wilderness oasis of Elim. They continued their journey to the Promised Land on the 15th day of the second month.

Verse 1: “And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.”

Of the Wilderness of Sin, we read that it “Lies further south on the route followed by the Hebrews from Egypt to Mount Sinai. ... Some have suggested it is Debbet er-Ramleh, a sandy tract of desert in the interior of the Sinai Peninsula at the foot of Jebel et-Tih, in the southwest of Sinai. Others believe it refers to the desert plain el-Merkha on the west coast of Sinai half-way between the head of the Red Sea and the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Suggestions are guesses and the exact location is unknown.”¹

“Wilderness of Sin, a tract or plain lying along the eastern shore of the Red Sea [Gulf of Aqaba]. It is thought to be the present plain of El-Kaa, which commences at the mouth of Wady Taiyibeh, and extends along the whole southwestern side of the peninsula. ... It is connected also with the Plain el-Markhah on the coast.”²

Israel was not in that wilderness very long before they began to murmur again. **Verses 2 and 3:** “The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and ... Aaron in the wilderness: [saying] Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, 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.”

Our Father in His high wisdom often allows His people to go without for a time in order to appreciate their need, whatever it may be. In this appreciation of the need, He prepares His people for His bountiful provision. They can then receive it as an expression of God’s love and care and truly appreciate God’s great generosity and concern.

In the Wilderness of Sin God again allowed the Israelites to appreciate their need of food, as He had done in the Wilderness of Shur respecting water. Many had not learned at Marah the lesson of complete confidence and complete dependence upon the Lord. This lesson of trust needed to be more deeply impressed upon the Israelites.

Their murmuring provides us with insight into the psychology of fallen human nature. In their cry against Moses they said, “would to God we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full.” They had



Grumbling in the wilderness

forgotten all about the bitter bondage of Egypt, the making of bricks without straw, the cruel taskmasters, and how they had cried to God for deliverance. They remembered only some of the pleasant things. We are certainly not to believe that under those dire circumstances they had any superabundance of food. The discontented mind becomes blind to the leading of God’s providences. It leaves Him out of its calculations and forgets the exceeding great and precious promises set before His people.

The Israelites had special promises due to the faithfulness of father Abraham. But we today have promises of infinitely greater value than those given to the typical nation. In our imperfection, we also might remember the pleasures and gratifications of the sinful condition, and forget its burdens, heartbreaks, and disappointments! Let us never set our minds on the things given up.

Having the same shortcomings that Israel had can help us exercise some sympathy toward them. Conditions in the wilderness were bleak; they were strangers in that land, and despite the past actions of God on their behalf, they were still uncertain and fearful. Their upbringing in servitude yet exercised an influence on them, causing them to be weak-willed and unsure. We know the Lord realized this and doubtless this is the reason He tempered His discipline with mercy and patience. This was especially so since their murmurings, though wrong, arose out of their need of necessities. At any rate, they were still enrolled in the school of Jehovah and the required courses had to be passed in order to obtain the promises.

MANNA

The lesson of faith needed to be especially impressed. God did this by foretelling the coming of a special provision. He first communicated His plans to Moses. **Verses 4 and 5** read: “Then said Jehovah unto Moses, 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. And ... on the sixth day ... they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”

After the Lord explained what He was going to do, Moses and Aaron told the people. **Verse 6:** “Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that Jehovah hath brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Jehovah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? ... Jehovah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that Jehovah heareth your murmurings ... against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah.”

Moses made the situation very plain to the Israelites. Their murmuring against Moses and Aaron was actually against Jehovah. The Israelites at the Exodus no doubt viewed Moses as merely God’s representative and believed that Jehovah was leading them. But they were now murmuring already a second time, showing that they had lost their initial faith and trust, and displayed a fear that Moses was leading them of his own responsibility.

Moses said sternly, “Ye shall know that Jehovah has brought you out of the land of Egypt.” He showed his own humility, saying “What are we?” He meekly ignored his own relationship to the work and loyally pointed them to Jehovah as the one who had led them thus far, and was thoroughly competent to supply all their needs and perform all of His good promises. Despite the wilderness’s ominous and threatening appearance, Israel would not be permitted to forget this. Their murmurings against Moses and Aaron were murmurings against Jehovah Himself.

Since it was necessary for them to learn that Jehovah was both able and willing to care for their needs, Israel was informed ahead of time that they would have flesh to eat and also bread. Jehovah could have simply fed them before their food supply was low; but if He had, His provision would probably have been considered merely part of His responsible duty. On the other hand, as they began to understand their needs in the wilderness, they were better prepared to appreciate the bounty and also to realize its miraculous source.

Having been assured that God heard their murmurings against Him, they were invited to come near before Jehovah, to impress on them even more deeply the les-

son of trust. **Verse 9:** “Moses said unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah; for he hath heard your murmurings. ... As Aaron spake unto the whole congregation ... they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud. And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: 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 Jehovah your God.”

Perhaps the assembly of Israel before God was here in its representatives, that is, the chief men and elders of each of the tribes. They were invited to see a manifestation of the brightness of Jehovah’s glory. This evidence of Jehovah’s presence further assured them of His leadership and that all provisions for the necessities were from Him even though they were announced through His servants. How patient was Jehovah in dealing with His people, full of compassion and of tender mercy. The people should have cried to Jehovah, “Give us this day our daily bread,” but should not have murmured and stipulated that they wanted something as good as the fleshpots of Egypt.

QUAIL

After all the instruction, the afternoon came and along with it, flesh. **Verse 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.”

The miracle of the quails was not a regular occurrence. Apparently it occurred only twice, once here in the wilderness of Sin, and again in the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 11:31-34). Evidently their coming was similar in both cases. A strong wind from the sea brought the quail in immense numbers. Wearing with the journey, they were unable from sea level to fly up high, and thus came within reach of the Israelites, many of the quail falling from sheer exhaustion. The fact that Jehovah used natural means to accomplish this feeding does not diminish its status as a miracle. It showed that God is abundantly able to control natural forces to fulfill His promises at His due time.

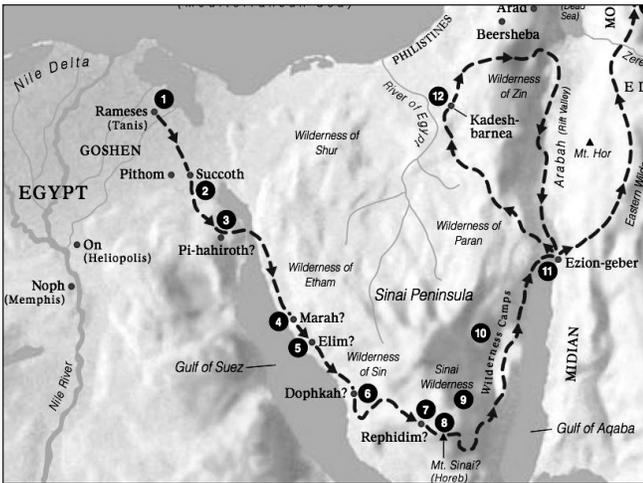
We have thus far considered the natural or typical details of the account. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “These things occurred to them typically [as types, interlinear *tupois*] and were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come” (Wilson (Diaglott)).

A PICTURE OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

The nation of Israel in its journey to the promised land typically represents spiritual Israelites in their journey to the heavenly kingdom. The experiences of the nation thus depicted experiences that spiritual Israelites might expect in their journey. As the natural Israelite left Egypt and went into the wilderness, there to have his needs sustained by God, so spiritual Israelites have left the



Possible appearance of manna



The Israelite sojourn, per the traditional location of Mount Sinai. (But some locate Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia, and Professor Anati of Italy makes a compelling case for a northern Sinai location.)

world for their journey to receive the heavenly promises of the Gospel Age.

During their journey they are to walk by faith, trusting in our Father for all necessities both temporal and spiritual (Matthew 6:32). The spiritual Israelite is also to guard against murmuring, which indicates dissatisfaction with God's provisions. We have evidence in these types that a considerable number of spiritual Israelites would be murmurers, unhappy with God's graces. We should be especially cognizant of ourselves in order to avoid so dangerous a condition. This is in fact one of the major reasons God provides these scriptural lessons for us, pictures in which we are included. What a marvelous way to teach, truly a tribute to God's great wisdom!

Our Father's supply of our earthly needs is perhaps represented by providing the quails. He overrules natural affairs to provide us things needful, sometimes more and sometimes less abundantly. As the Israelites doubtless ate of the quails not only at the time of their gathering, but preserved some of them for future use, so we in respect to earthly things are to use them wisely. Though they come to us in the ordinary course of life, they are, nevertheless, God's provision, to be used with frugality and judgment, to His praise. If the supply is abundant, we are to be thankful. If it is deficient, we are to trust. We are to learn the lesson of trust, in that after having done what we are able to do to provide for our necessities, we can safely leave all else to Him with whom we have to do, our Father in heaven.

WHAT IS IT?

The Lord promised not only flesh that evening, but also manna the next morning. Starting with the latter part of **verse 13** we read: "In the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is

it? For they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat. This is the thing which Jehovah hath commanded, Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less. And when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating."

The Israelites, foretold that they would have bread in the morning, were probably quick to arise and go out to see what would happen. Moses, we can be sure, was among the earliest to awake. At first they saw only the normal morning dew, but as that evaporated, lo and behold, a small white thing remained. It covered the face of the wilderness, all around the camp! The Israelites expected bread, but here are the small white things they have never seen before. According to the King James Version, they said "it is manna." This is not, however, a very good translation. A more accurate rendering would be, "What is it?" They had no idea what it was and were asking the question. (See, among others, Rotherham's translation, Moffatt's translation and Bible in Basic English.)

RESPONSIBLE ACTIVITY FOR ALL

Moses answered the query of the people, saying "this is the bread which the Jehovah hath given you to eat."

Of course it was not bread in the initial estimation of the people, but neither had God specified how He would provide it. In fact, He had in mind from the outset to provide bread only in an ingredient form. As is often the case, Jehovah, due to His fabulous foreknowledge, accomplishes several benefits with a single act or plan. It is true here also. He foreknew that without some useful daily employment, Israel could not be happy. They would have become bored, feeling no satisfaction or accomplishment. So he provided the manna in this form. He gave them a daily routine which added continuity and ritual to their lives. The family heads rising early each morning, perhaps with some of the children, gathered their daily needs. Then the wives, with perhaps the daughters, prepared it for the meals. Each could have a share in caring for these needs.

In the preparation there was room for initiative. The manna could be ground in mills and baked as bread, stewed with spices, or cooked in some other way limited only by imagination (Numbers 11:8). Jehovah cared not only for their physical needs, but their mental disposition also.

The manna was gathered in the wilderness and then brought back to the camp and meted out. Verse 18 seems to indicate that when one who gathered for his family brought back his supply and measured it according to the omer³ measure, he had precisely what the family required, no more, no less, about an omer per person.

The Apostle Paul picks up on this statistic and observes the same overruling providence respecting the needs of the church. “But by equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality: as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack” (2 Corinthians 8:14,15).

Just as the Heavenly Father cared for the material needs of ancient Israel, so does He provide for the spiritual needs of the church. This type further assures us that we will always have what we need in the way of spiritual food.

Evidently Jehovah made this manna tasty and palatable, For **verse 31** says: “The house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.” Once again we see profound love prompting blessings in this marvelous way. It is all the more reason for us to continually thank our God for his generosity.

Since even the gathering of the manna was under divine guidance with each family meeting its exact requirements, it was appropriate that Moses should say in **verse 19**: “Let no man leave of it till the morning.”

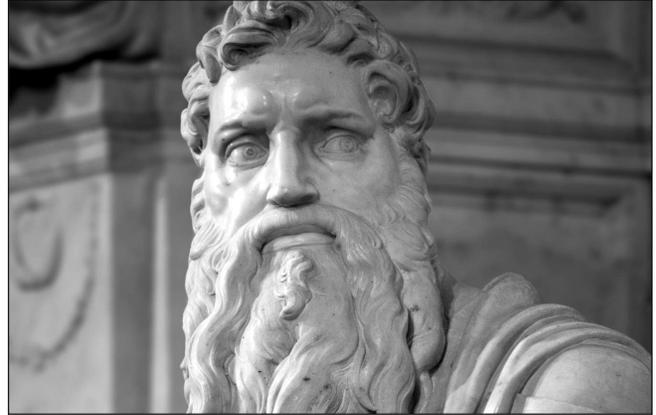
Jehovah had been generous and merciful in providing this food. It would have been an evidence of thankfulness and propriety to waste none. However, some did not view it this way. We are informed in **verse 20**: “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Moses was wrath with them.”

Someone has said “experience is the best teacher.” This is generally true; however, with experience as one’s teacher, it is inevitable that we will learn many things that we probably do not wish to be taught. This was true with the Israelites. They were stiff-necked, stubborn, and untrusting. They could have saved themselves a lot of trouble and a big mess if they had listened to Moses. But instead of trusting God’s words by faith, they learned to trust Him by experience. They learned not to leave any manna over till the next day by a most unpleasant experience. This bad experience should have taught them much about the truthfulness of God’s words.

The provisions from Jehovah had guidelines, and when used within these regulations all went well. The ungathered manna was also taken care of. **Verse 21**: “They gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.”

SPECIAL CARE FOR THE SABBATH

This daily routine did have a very important weekly change. In **verse 22** we read: “It came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.”



Moses led the Israelites to the goodness of God.

Imagine their bewilderment when the gatherers came home and measured what they had collected and found fully twice as much as one day’s supply. Now they came back with a two day supply! God had told Moses about this arrangement, but up to now Moses had not explained it to Israel. **Verse 23**: “This is that which Jehovah hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Jehovah: 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. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto Jehovah: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.”

These verses contain the first occurrence of the word “Sabbath” in scripture. Although the seventh day of creation was cited as God’s rest day, and there are other indications that weeks of seven days were in use prior to this, until this time there was no law given to rest from normal activities. It is noteworthy that the Sabbath rest requirement was initiated several weeks prior to its inclusion in the law covenant as the fourth commandment.

Of immediate practical importance to the nation, this Sabbath observance afforded them at least one day per week for beneficial meditation and reflection on their God, Jehovah. Properly used, it should have cultivated in their hearts and minds a deepening relationship with Him and an ever-increasing appreciation of Him (Deuteronomy 6:5). The time would give them an opportunity to study the Law, which would be given to them soon. This study would, in turn, help them to better grasp Jehovah’s mind, His will, what would please Him, and what would not. It would draw families together and create in the whole nation a tie which in future years could be used by Jehovah in carrying out His great Divine Plan of the Ages. Though the Israelites could not then appreciate its full significance, the Sabbath would yield many blessings if obeyed.

It was a merciful thing for Jehovah to institute this Sabbath observance before putting the Law covenant into

effect. Remember that the penalty for breaking a Sabbath, according to the Law, was “death.” This allowed some time to adjust to this new institution without worry about incurring the penalty. They would have time to discipline themselves and create new habits, thus avoiding the death penalty by accidentally sinning because of its newness.

But a stubborn disposition reared its ugly head. On this very first Sabbath, a number of Israelites disobeyed. We read from **verse 27**: “It came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that Jehovah 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. So the people rested on the seventh day.”

LESSONS FOR US

As we have already observed, all these things have special meaning to the consecrated Christian. Let us see what further lessons we may draw from these experiences.

Since the provision of the quails represents God’s supplying of our earthly needs, we might expect that the manna would represent our spiritual needs. This is indeed so. We, as spiritual Israelites, have a daily need of grace which is found in Christ. When Jesus declared himself to be “bread from heaven,” it was a “hard saying” to many of his listeners (John 6:31-35). But to us it is packed with meaning. Because the plan of God centered in Jesus and his sacrifice for mankind, Jesus can be considered as truth personified (Colossians 2:3). Thus it is necessary that we eat of him, not in a fleshly way, but as consuming the blessings God provided in His Son. These are both life-giving and life-sustaining blessings. This spiritual ingestion must also include Jesus’ loving spirit or disposition. As we put on Christ, we put on his character and the character of the Father. If we wish to grow spiritually, we must eat spiritually. As the ancient Israelites had one source for their bread, we have one source also, our Lord Jesus.

As the Israelites were to gather their manna daily, not left over till the next day, so with our supply of grace. Our literal food, as it is digested, becomes part of us and provides strength and energy for our daily activities. We have a similar pattern for our spiritual eating. As we gather “manna” each day, it should motivate spiritual activity. This includes dispensing or sharing it with others. Indeed, if we were to accumulate much of God’s grace and not use it for the benefit of others, it would be just like the natural Israelites keeping his manna till the next day.

So then, in our journey to heavenly Canaan, should we find ourselves with and in God’s tender mercies, let us use these precious gifts to assist and strengthen others in their journey by dispensing divine grace to them. Let us use all the “manna” we are given each day.

THE HIDDEN MANNA

There is one more future promise connected with this matter. Revelation 2:17 reads: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.”

The “hidden manna” was that which was put into the golden pot, then placed inside the Ark of the covenant. Exodus 16:32-34: “Let an omerful 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. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omerful of manna therein, and lay it up before Jehovah, to be kept throughout your generations. As Jehovah commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.”

This “hidden manna,” kept as a remembrance, has a splendid significance. Hebrews 9:4 says it was kept in a golden pot. Gold symbolizes the divine nature. The literal “hidden manna” did not decay in its golden container. Thus the golden pot of incorruptible manna teaches that the Church of the Firstborn, the overcomers of Revelation 2:17, would get the great prize of the divine nature — immortality, incorruptibility. This “little flock” shall enjoy the grace of God in the fullest possible way, being recipients of inherent life (John 5:26), or in the words of the Lord Jesus, “eating of the hidden manna.”

In conclusion, we read **verse 35**: “As Jehovah commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And the children of Israel did eat the manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the manna, until they came unto ... the land of Canaan.”

Thus it is for the journey of spiritual Israel. We must feed on the grace of God in giving us our Lord Jesus Christ. This must be done daily so that we may have strength sufficient for each day’s journey, each step closer to heavenly Canaan.

— Br. David Stein

(1) Encyclopedia of the Bible, www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Wilderness-Sin

(2) Unger’s Bible Dictionary, page 1029, paragraph 3

(3) An Omer was about 2 quarts in volume, though some sources put it a bit higher.

Financial Report

5,376.22	Balance January 1, 2018
1,885.74	Donations
-2,728.12	Expenses
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4,533.84	Balance January 1, 2019
623	Mail subscribers, Email subscribers 356