

# A Test in the Provision

3.21.2021

Message 11

Exodus Series

Exodus 16:1-20, 31-36 (CSB)

## MANNA AND QUAIL PROVIDED

**16** The entire Israelite community departed from Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!"

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will test them to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. <sup>5</sup>On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days."

<sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup>and in the morning you will see the LORD's glory because he has heard your complaints about him. For who are we that you complain about us?" <sup>8</sup>Moses continued, "The LORD will give you meat to eat this evening and all the bread you want in the morning, for he has heard the complaints that you are raising against him. Who are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD."

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your complaints.' " <sup>10</sup>As Aaron was speaking to the entire Israelite community, they turned toward the wilderness, and there in a cloud the LORD's glory appeared.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, <sup>12</sup>"I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them: At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will eat bread until you are full. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God."

<sup>13</sup>So at evening quail came and covered the camp. In the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "What is it?" because they didn't know what it was.

Moses told them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each person needs to eat. You may take two quarts per individual, according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.' "

<sup>17</sup>So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. <sup>18</sup>When they measured it by quarts, the person who gathered a lot had no surplus, and the person who gathered a little had no shortage. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat. <sup>19</sup>Moses said to them, "No one is to let any of it remain until morning." <sup>20</sup>But they didn't listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. Therefore Moses was angry with them.

<sup>21</sup>They gathered it every morning. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat, but when the sun grew hot, it melted. <sup>22</sup>On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, four quarts apiece, and all the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. <sup>23</sup>He told them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you want to bake, and boil what you want to boil, and set aside everything left over to be kept until morning.' "

<sup>24</sup>So they set it aside until morning as Moses commanded, and it didn't stink or have maggots in it. <sup>25</sup>"Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. Today you won't find any in the field. <sup>26</sup>For six days you will gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."

<sup>27</sup>Yet on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they did not find any. <sup>28</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and instructions? <sup>29</sup>Understand that the LORD has given

you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he will give you two days' worth of bread. Each of you stay where you are; no one is to leave his place on the seventh day." <sup>30</sup>So the people rested on the seventh day.

<sup>31</sup>The house of Israel named the substance manna. It resembled coriander seed, was white, and tasted like wafers made with honey. <sup>32</sup>Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Two quarts of it are to be preserved throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' "

<sup>33</sup>Moses told Aaron, "Take a container and put two quarts of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be preserved throughout your generations."

<sup>34</sup>As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron placed it before the testimony to be preserved.

<sup>35</sup>The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to an inhabited land. They ate manna until they reached the border of the land of Canaan.

<sup>36</sup>(They used a measure called an omer, which held two quarts.)

Introduction: Eventually, the days at the Oasis must end.

A. As wonderful as Elim was, with springs and date trees, that was not God's destination for them.

1. If Israel had stopped at Elim, they would have missed:

- a. The water from the rock.
- b. The display of God's glory at Mt. Sinai.
- c. And the experience of God's command and commandments.

**2. As great as it was at Elim, what God had prepared for them was even grander.**

B. We must recognize that God uses discipline and testing to build His people.

1. Just like a good basketball or football coach understands the value of conditioning, practice, and drill, how much more does God know that the building of people takes place in the difficult moments.

2. If God had left them at Elim, Israel would have remained a nation of slaves instead of becoming a nation of priests.

C. There were tests, experiences, and encounters that had to take place outside of the comfort of the Oasis.

1. I confess, My flesh prefers to drink from the waters of Elim.

2. *But I would rather drink from bitter waters and experience the presence of God in that place, than drink from the waters of Elim and never experience Him at all.*

3. Again, Israel experiences God not at the oasis of Elim but in the Wilderness.

1. Israel is now about 45 days into her journey.

A. Exodus 16 says 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Second month.

1. From the day Israel left Egypt on Passover till now is between 30- 45 days.

2. They have already crossed the Red Sea and seen bitter water turned sweet.

3. They have also have thrown about 3 BIG temper tantrums at God.

4. In 45 days, they have already accused God of wanting to kill them by the sword of Pharaoh, thirst, and now hunger.

B. Now, Israel is again in another wilderness place: Wilderness of Sin.

1. The Hebrew word probably means bush.<sup>1</sup>

2. We have to be careful not to correlate this Hebrew word with our word for sin because they are not the same.

3. The word "Sin" is not significant for us in this context.

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<sup>1</sup> Evidently they were nearing the vicinity of Sinai. Sin, as with שִׁיב (Exod 3:2), possibly means "bush." (See commentary to Exod 3:2 and discussion of a three-day journey at 5:2.) Carpenter

C. What is significant is that, again in another wilderness place, God's people refuse to have faith.

1. Israel's immediate response to difficulty is to grumble and complain.
2. They immediately accuse God, and his leaders, of bringing them to the wilderness so they could die of hunger.
3. How could Israel have thought so little of God?
  - a. Has He not already proven Himself to be faithful, powerful, and trustworthy?
  - b. Yet we are exposed to this truth: **Miracles apart from relationship do not lead to faith.**
  - c. Israel has seen the miracles but have failed to connect them to a relationship with God.
  - d. Therefore, they do not act in faith.

D. Hard-Statement: Miracles are not the cure for the United States.

1. Generally speaking, Americans do not have a faith-based relationship with Jesus.
2. We do not have the framework to receive a miracle and to praise God for it.
3. If we were to see God perform a miracle like providing manna to the whole of the United States, that many people would:
  - a. Deny it.
  - b. Explain it away with science.
  - c. Give credit to another being, deity, or entity.
  - d. I can guarantee that if manna fell from heaven that the IRS would find a way to tax it and the EPA would regulate it.
4. We are much more like Israel than we want to admit: We quickly forget what God has done.

5. If God was to do a miracle in your wilderness today, would you still believe Him in the next wilderness situation?

- a. Or would you quickly forget God?
- b. How soon after your miracle would you go back to your old ways, old habits, and old lifestyle?

2. God's response to Israel's need in the Wilderness had several facets:

**A. God's Glory Vs. 7**

1. The Lord Moses declared that "tomorrow you will see God's glory, because He has heard your cry."

- a. This is the first time "the glory of YHWH" is mentioned in the Bible.
- b. Even though God was leading them in Cloud and Fire, God declared He would do something special.

2. In providing for the people's need, God demonstrated His glory.

- a. Who else could cause enough food to drop from the sky every day for 40 years?
- b. Who else could cause enough quail to rain in for everyone to be satisfied?

3. How serious was the offense of Israel's rebellion and complaining?

- a. It was enough to for God to show His glory.
- b. There is coming a day when the sins of the Earth will reach the point that God demonstrates His glory like never before.
- c. A day when the complaints, sins, and rebellion of all the nations will be cancelled in the ultimate "cancel culture" event.

d. When every knee bows and confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

God responded with a demonstration of His Glory.

## **B. God's Provision**

1. FOOD: God's people had to be fed daily. Feeding 3 to 3 1/2 million people and large flocks and herds of animals would require a lot of food. According to the quartermaster general in the army, it is reported that Moses would have to have 1,500 tons of food each day. It would take two freight trains, each a mile long, to feed that many people – every day!

2. COOKING: They would also need firewood to cook the food. This would take 4,000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day.

a. Where do you find wood in the wilderness?

b. This is not MO we are talking about here.

3. God did not plan on feeding His people with manna for 40 years.

a. 38 years of the journey was due to their sin.

b. But God fed them anyway.

c. Most of us would have cut them off so they would have died quicker, but that wasn't what God did.

4. God's provision exceeds our sinfulness.

a. "Just because God is providing for you, it doesn't mean that God approves of what you are doing."

b. God did not approve of Israel's murmuring and complaining.

c. He demonstrates this truth in Numbers 11 when, in 30 plus years, God's people again complain about food.

1. This time they are tired of manna and want some meat.
  2. Again, God sends quail.
  3. But when they began to eat it, the anger of the Lord burned against them, and the quail became a plague and curse to them.
  4. We cannot confuse God's provision with God's approval.
  5. We can equate God's provision with God's faithfulness, grace, and mercy.
- d. My God provides for all of my needs, not because I am worthy, but because I am loved.

### **C. God's Test.**

1. God's provision often comes with a test.
2. The test in this passage is the Sabbath.
  - a. We will talk much more about Sabbath in the coming weeks.
  - b. But notice that for 1 day, Israel was not to work and that included gathering food.
  - c. God promised to provide enough food on the 6<sup>th</sup> day to cover the 7<sup>th</sup>.
3. The Sabbath was instituted long before this time, but wasn't practiced.
  - a. Why? Slaves do not Sabbath.
  - b. I bet many of your calendars will demonstrate that you don't Sabbath either.
  - c. It is easier to tithe than it is to Sabbath.
  - d. Money is easy to give, Time is hard.

4. Israel couldn't grasp that the God who can make it rain food everyday would make it stretch for the 7th.

5. Everyday in the wilderness was a reminder that they needed God.

a. They couldn't make it rain manna and quail.

b. In Chapter 17, they couldn't make Water flow from the Rock.

c. **There is nothing wrong with being in a position of dependence upon God.**

D. **Positions of dependence teach us to pray, not complain.**

1. Israel didn't know how to pray, but only complain.

2. In the Wilderness, God wanted to teach the people to ask God for help instead of demanding it and throwing a fit.

3. Towards the end of the 40-years in the Wilderness, Moses provides a new perspective on this passage.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 (CSB)

**8** "Carefully follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase, and may enter and take possession of the land the LORD swore to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup>Remember that the LORD your God led you on the entire journey these forty years in the wilderness, so that he might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup>*He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your ancestors had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

A. Moses is speaking and writing at the end of his life.

1. He is providing perspective on a 40-year journey (Deut 1).

2. This is a new generation that is preparing to enter into the promised land that their parents did not possess.

3. In this passage, he provides a commentary on what God did back in that Wilderness so many years ago.

B. Moses said that God humbled you by letting you go hungry.

1. God tested them.

2. God disciplined them.

3. Then God provided for them.

4. *A believer will experience all 3 of these things in their life:*

*a. You will be tested (not tempted, there's a difference).*

*b. You will be disciplined because God loves you.*

*c. He will provide.*

C. God does this to teach you what is really important.

1. That which is most important is dependence upon God.

2. We receive what we chase after.

a. If you chase money, you receive mammon.

b. If you chase pleasure, you find pleasure.

c. If you chase miracles, you get miracles.

d. If you chase after God, you receive God and He is infinitely more than all of these things.

e. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...

3. That brings us to a key principle to learn from this passage.

4. This is where many of you will not like what Scripture says.

4. When we live off of miracles, we live on the wrong stuff.

A. Israel needed physical food to live.

1. They definitely needed a miracle.
2. But what they needed more than a miracle was relationship with God.
3. *"It seems to us a difficult thing to supply food for the hundreds of thousands (or the millions) who were in the wilderness. But, difficult as that was, the supply of food was not so difficult as the education."*<sup>2</sup>

**B. The problem with Israel was that they truly believed that God had brought them there to die.**

1. What this test and this encounter demonstrated was that Israel still did not trust God.
2. Not only did they not trust Him, they were rebelling against Him.

The word "grumbling" hardly does the Israelites justice. The Hebrew word was "not designed to express a disgruntled complaint. Quite the contrary, it describe[d] an open rebellion." When the people murmured against Moses, it was mutiny against Almighty God.<sup>3</sup>

C. In other words, the people were saying "Give us food or we won't follow you.

1. Give us what we want and need or we won't serve you.
2. If you don't give us what we want, then we will go serve Pharaoh, because at least we had food there.

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<sup>2</sup> Spurgeon, [The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 94.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [Exodus: Saved for God's Glory](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 424-425.

3. "Our complaints really are never caused by our outward circumstances. Instead they reveal the inward condition of our hearts."<sup>4</sup>

4. As God tested Israel, their hearts were revealed and what was revealed wasn't pretty.

## 5. Jesus dealt with this same attitude in John 6.

A. Jesus has just fed the five-thousand men.

1. With five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus replicates the miracle of bread and quail in the wilderness.

2. (I bet you never put those connections together).

3. We don't catch it, but Jesus' audience sure did.

4. They were Jewish and had read how God fed their ancestors in the Wilderness.

5. Now, they desired the same kind of miracle.

John 6:26-36

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup> Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him." <sup>28</sup> "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked. <sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "This is the work of God—that you believe in the one he has sent." <sup>30</sup> "What sign, then, are you going to do so that we may see and believe you?" they asked. "What are you going to perform? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: **He gave them bread from heaven to eat.**"

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 424.

bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> Then they said, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> “I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.

<sup>36</sup> But as I told you, you’ve seen me, and yet you do not believe.

B. Jesus was excited to give these people what they needed.

1. What they needed was a relationship with God.
2. What they needed was to welcome salvation.
3. What they needed was Jesus, the bread of life and living water.

C. What they wanted was to satisfy their flesh.

1. What they wanted was the security of regular food.
2. They wanted miracles, but following Jesus had to be optional
3. They were Seeking Miracles, Missing Jesus.

**D. The presence of miracles, feeding five-thousand plus people and walking on water was not enough for these people to believe that Jesus was from God.**

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is possible to chase miracles and to miss out on Jesus.
2. The world is seeking miracle stories and supernatural experiences but has no room for Jesus.
3. Sadly, too many in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement are chasing miracles, sensational teachings, and “fresh revelations” while neglecting Jesus.
4. The Apostle Paul wrote about this and said:

2 Timothy 4:3 (CSB)

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound **doctrine**, but according to their own desires, will multiply

teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear.

Closing: *We are being tested.*

A. A primary test for many of us here today has to do with our desire for Jesus.

1. If the world could provide everything you wanted and needed, would you settle for the ways of the world without Jesus?
2. Or is your heart's cry, "give me Jesus".
3. Have you learned that we don't live on the bread of this world but we live by the Word of God!

B. In the song, "Graves into Gardens" we sing:

1. I searched the world, but it couldn't fill me.
2. Are you finding that to be true?
3. The greatest prayer we can pray today might be, "Give me Jesus".
  - a. Before we seek the healing, seek the Healer.
  - b. Before we seek the provision, give us the Provider.
  - c. Before seeking the manna, seek the Bread of Life.
4. Oh that we would crave the real bread from Heaven in this wilderness we call life.

C. If you find yourself today thinking, "I really don't desire Jesus like I should or I used to"...

1. I want us together to pray today.
2. Let that be our prayer, "Jesus increase my desire for you."
3. May I hunger and thirst for the true Bread and the true Water.
4. May you increase my appetite for You.