

## MEAT, MANNA, SABBATH EXODUS 16:8-36

The Lord responded to the grumbling of the Israelites and His response would be to provide them meat in the evening and bread in the morning. This was going to be an ample provision of food that would be sufficient to completely satisfy their hunger.

Exodus 16:8 <sup>8</sup>Moses said, "*This will happen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumbings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumbings are not against us but against the LORD."

He was still trying to show them who He was and trying to get them to unreservedly follow Him. He wanted them to realize and depend on the fact He would provide for their needs to the point they needed nothing. All He required of them was to trust Him and to obediently follow Him.

Moses reiterated the fact that the rebellious nature of the Israelites was manifested against God. Moses and Aaron didn't lead them to that place; Yahweh led them there.

Moses then spoke through his brother to the people thereby fulfilling the role God originally commissioned Aaron to do when Moses received his call to service. Aaron was Moses' spokesman.

Exodus 4:15–16 <sup>15</sup>"You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. <sup>16</sup>"Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him.

Exodus 16:9–10   <sup>9</sup>Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.’” <sup>10</sup>It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

God continued to reveal Himself to the Israelites and test them in order to determine whether or not they were really going to trust Him and to bring them to that place of trust in the face of the signs, miracles, and wonders He was performing right in front of them. He was unifying them into a nation who worshiped one God only, the true God of the universe. We know now that didn't work out so well, but that was God's plan for Israel and it didn't have to turn out that way; they could have, as a nation, wholeheartedly trusted Him, but they never did. They will one day, but that day is not yet here. One commentator put it this way: “All of these challenges were part of a plan to develop a people's willingness to trust him. Explaining everything in advance would have run counter to that plan. It was necessary for Israel to learn faith while confused, while afraid, while desperate—not just in theory but under pressure of actual conditions where survival was uncertain and faith was tested to the limit.”<sup>1</sup>

Doesn't it seem likely that, instead of grumbling against Yahweh and against His prophets, that faithful trust expressed through prayer would have gotten them the same results? After all they had seen and would continue to see, they just didn't understand what a special relationship God was establishing with

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 374-375.

them even though God was trying to get them to understand the nature of that relationship. Eventually, they would understand it to a point, but they never really got it, and they won't get it until they are passed under the rod of judgment during the time of Jacob's distress. Again, I don't want to be too hard on them; this is very early in their history as a nation and they didn't know much yet. Later, they would be without excuse.

Even though they had the pillar of cloud and light in their presence at all times, Yahweh revealed Himself even more gloriously at that moment in what must have been an awesome display of His magnificent being who was with them, guiding them, and providing for them. The people were to come out of their tents and behold the glory of the Lord; it was a visible manifestation beyond what was visible in the cloud. No one really knows why He revealed Himself in that way at that time, but it was probably designed to get their attention and show them who was guiding them and providing for them in such an incredible manner. Many theologians believe the glory of Yahweh was made manifest to them in the provision of the food, and while that's true to an extent, the text says they saw His glory immediately appear in the cloud. He wasn't just glorified by providing food, His glory was visible at that moment in the cloud.

Next, the Lord gave Moses insight into what was about to happen.

Exodus 16:11–12 <sup>11</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>12</sup>"I have heard the grumbings of the sons 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.'"

In the evening, the Israelites were going to have meat to eat and in the morning, they would have the bread from heaven God was going to miraculously provide. The meat was going to be provided in form of quail.

Exodus 16:13 <sup>13</sup>So it came about at evening that the quails [שָׁלִי] came up and covered [כָּסָה] the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

Quail, שָׁלִי, is the small kind of bird, a quail species, that lives in that area. It is not a special kind of bird or a bird that didn't exist apart from the miraculous provision of God; it was a quail. The miracle involved the provision of the quail and not the fact of the quail itself. God caused them to come up in that place at that time in huge numbers sufficient to feed the Israelites. Covered, כָּסָה, means to cover, to clothe, to conceal. In other words, there was so many quail the ground was not visible beneath the bodies of the quail lying on the ground. The provision of the quail to this magnitude must have been a one-time event.

The mention of dew in this verse sets up the morning provision of bread.

Exodus 16:14–15 <sup>14</sup>When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>When the sons of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, “What is it?” [מִן הָרֶגֶט] For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread [לֶ] which the LORD has given you to eat.

When the dew evaporated in the morning sun, left behind was this fine, flake-like stuff lying around on the ground. It was something they had never seen before and they didn't know what it was. Moses had never seen it before either, so the Lord must have told him what this bread would look like when He provided it so the prophet could educate the people about what it was and how they

were to gather it. To this point, these flakes were still being referred to as “bread,” לֶחֶם, which means a loaf of bread or any consumable grain product which is distinguishable from meat. That definition fits the context here very well; this bread was distinguished from the meat of the quail. The meat was consumed in the evening and the bread was gathered in the morning for consumption during that day. Moses made sure to remind them that the Lord gave them this bread to eat. This was a miraculously prepared food, perfect in every way, entirely adequate for sustenance, which was never seen before the Exodus and has not been seen since the Exodus.

One element of these verses most people don't think about is the dew. Dew doesn't often form in desert climates where the humidity levels can be so far down into the single digits they almost reach zero. For dew to appear daily in this area is a miracle in and of itself making this another indication of the supernatural nature of God's work by providing them bread from heaven.

The question, “What is it?”, מִן הַיָּדֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם, is the origin of the name “manna.”

The command was given to gather the bread from heaven in the amount of an omer apiece.

Exodus 16:16 <sup>16</sup>“This is what the LORD has commanded, ‘Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer [עֹמֶר] apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.’”

An omer, עֹמֶר, in this context, refers to a dry measure of one tenth of an ephah which is equal to about two quarts of the bread from heaven. They were

to gather it according to the number of people in their family unit. The Lord insured that everyone gathered just the right amount for their family.

Exodus 16:17–18 <sup>17</sup>The sons of Israel did so, and some gathered much and some little. <sup>18</sup>When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat.

No matter how much each family gathered, they ended up with exactly the amount they needed per person. Everyone ended up with what was a sufficient amount of food for the people in their tent. Apparently, the provision of an omer per person should have been sufficient to adequately feed each person each day. Adults probably ate a little more and children and the elderly a little less, but the average per family was probably an omer per person, at least that's the allowance allotted to them by Yahweh.

Exodus 16:19–20 <sup>19</sup>Moses said to them, "Let no man leave any of it until morning." <sup>20</sup>But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms [תולעים] and became foul [באש]; and Moses was angry [קצף] with them.

Many people assume the manna spoiled because people gathered too much, but the text doesn't say that. It says that those who gathered much ended up with correct amount apiece just as those who gathered little ended up with the correct amount apiece. What it does say, is those who tried to eat a little less of their daily allotment and hoard the remainder until the next day, even though the amount gathered was an amount they should have eaten on that day, saw what they hoarded become spoiled.

The Lord must have wanted them to know just how displeased He was with those who failed to trust Him to provide their food on a daily basis because keeping any of this bread overnight resulted in an infestation of worms in the bread and it would become horribly repugnant. Worms, תולעים, actually refers to maggots meaning the larva stage of insects such as flies. To the average human being, this presents a very disgusting picture of this spoiled food. Foul, ריח, means to stink, to smell, and to be odious; it is a bad odor to the extent the object becomes loathsome and difficult to be around. This wasn't simply a bad smell; it was an odor that you couldn't stand to smell and you had to get away from it. One would assume that in the confined space of a tent, this odor would make life very unpleasant until the spoiled food was removed. These things do not ordinarily happen just overnight; they take a little bit of time. Therefore, we may safely conclude this was a supernatural act of God to make a point. They were to rely on Him daily for the provision of this food in the appropriate amount.

Does this mean that any bread left over whether it was cooked leftovers or raw, uncooked bread would spoil? The text doesn't say. My assumption has always been that raw, uncooked bread would spoil the next day, but keeping leftovers would serve the same disobedient purpose, that is, exhibiting a lack of faith that Yahweh would provide a sufficient supply of food each day; therefore, my thinking has changed to include both. Raw, uncooked bread from heaven would spoil and cooked leftovers would also spoil because both exhibited a lack of faith and disobedience to the command of God for handling it.

Of course, some of them did not obey the instructions provided by keeping some for the next day and Moses was angry with them. Our English word “angry” may not adequately convey the depth of anger being expressed here. The Hebrew word, **קָצַף**, means to be angry, to have wrath, or to be furious. This is a state of anger that arises from the fact people fail to properly perform their duties. It refers to being in a state of strong displeasure with a focus that an action of anger follows. The text doesn't indicate that Moses actually followed up his anger with action of some sort, but he may have. At the very least, we can probably assume he gave them a tongue lashing for their failure to follow directions. We don't know. Certainly, this incident contributed to his mounting and continuing frustration with the disobedience and doubt the Israelites continually exhibited that would eventually culminate in Moses losing his patience with them to the extent he disobeyed the Lord and was prohibited from entering the Promised Land.

Exodus 16:21 <sup>21</sup>They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt [**מָלָה**].

With the exception of the Sabbath, this bread from heaven was to be gathered every morning for use that day except on the day before the Sabbath, the sixth day of the week, when two days' supply of bread was gathered because they were not to gather it on the Sabbath day itself. They had to do it early in the morning in the cool of the desert air because once the sun warmed up, the bread would melt into the ground and the opportunity to gather it that



day was past. If they didn't get right to work gathering it early in the morning, they missed out that day. Melt, מָלַךְ, refers to a solid becoming a liquid.

The purpose for this was to drive the point home that the Israelites needed to depend on God every day for their daily bread. If that sounds familiar, it is. The Lord related this Exodus example to the Kingdom prayer He modeled for the Jewish people in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:11      <sup>11</sup>'Give us this day our daily bread.

Next, Moses gave them a more detailed explanation concerning the Sabbath and the gathering of the bread from heaven in preparation for that day.

Exodus 16:22–26    <sup>22</sup>Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, <sup>23</sup>then he said to them, “This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance [שַׁבְּתוֹן], a holy [קֹדֶשׁ] sabbath [שַׁבָּת] to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” <sup>24</sup>So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. <sup>25</sup>Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath [שַׁבָּת] to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup>“Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *the* sabbath [שַׁבָּת], there will be none.”

The people went out on the sixth day and gathered twice their daily allotment, two omers per person, just as Moses told them to do in Exodus 16:5. At that earlier time, Moses gave them the command but he didn't give them the reason for it which he proceeded to do for the elders. They reported this to him probably because they wanted him to know the people were being obedient to his command on this first sixth day since they were told to gather the bread

from heaven. They possibly wanted to mollify him a bit since they had just experienced his anger over the people's disobedience concerning the hoarding issue.

Some theologians think the elders were worried Moses would be angry because the people were gathering twice the daily allotment, but that doesn't seem to be correct. The people knew they were commanded to gather double on the sixth day; therefore, it is inconceivable the elders wouldn't know that. Besides, the families of the elders had to gather the bread from heaven on that day as well. It is very doubtful they were ignorant of the command to gather double on the sixth day.

The English word "sabbath" is used four times in this verse, but there are two words used in Hebrew. The first one, [שְׁבֻתוֹן], means a sabbath observance for a day of rest. It is mostly used in the Bible to refer to the seventh day the Israelites were commanded to observe and to other dedicated holy days such as the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16:31), the sabbatical year (Lv. 25:4), the Feast of Trumpets (Lv. 23:24, and the first and eighth days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lv. 23:39). It is a period of time for resting as a consecrated observance of rest. The next three uses of the word translate the Hebrew word שָׁבַת which is the word with which we are most familiar. The root of the word means to cease or to desist. The meaning here in Exodus is simply referring to a day of rest that occurred on the seventh day of the week. These two words seem to overlap somewhat, but the Hebrew word שְׁבֻתוֹן refers to the celebration or observance of the sab-

bath day while שַׁבָּת refers to the actual day itself and the rest that occurs on that day. Fruchtenbaum noted this is the first mention of the sabbath observance in the Bible which is why the full name is used, שַׁבְּתוֹן שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ, that is, “a sabbatical celebration, a holy sabbath.”<sup>2</sup>

Eventually, God linked the sabbath required under the Mosaic Covenant with the Exodus, but that was still in the future.

Deuteronomy 5:15<sup>15</sup>“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

Many people erroneously connect the sabbath with a day of corporate worship. For example, the *Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* calls it “a day of rest and worship.” This isn’t a problem in all the lexicons, but a number of them make this mistake. Bible dictionaries also have this problem. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* also says the sabbath is “a time for of rest and worship.” The priests would have sabbath day worship duties, but the people didn’t. The people were required to attend three feasts per year, but they were not required to attend any corporate worship service on the weekly sabbath. Attending synagogue on the sabbath is a rabbinic tradition imposed on Judaism during and after the Babylonian captivity because the Temple was no longer in existence. The synagogue became the focal point for Jewish religious life and remains so today. Even though the original intent of the sabbath was rest and not

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1993), 594.

worship, the focus has tended to become one of worship, at least among the religious Jews. The sabbath was strictly meant to be a day of rest and that's what it was in Exodus. They were to keep it as a holy day separate from the other days of the week that was dedicated to God and they expressed this by resting rather than by working on that day.

The cooking and storing two day's supply of food may be interpreted two ways just as the hoarding issue could be interpreted two ways. Were they to cook all of it and eat only half of it one day and half the next, or were they to cook half of it one day and half of it the next? Commentaries come down on both sides of the issue, but it seems the end result is the same. Whether they cooked it and kept leftovers or cooked only half of it one day and half the next, it didn't spoil overnight as it would have the other days of the week. If they tried to keep some of that food another day until the first day of the week, it would have spoiled as well. This highlights and confirms the supernatural activity involved in keeping or spoiling the bread from heaven.

Whatever this bread from heaven was, it could be baked or it could be boiled. I'm sure they could figure out various ways to cook with it in terms of adding seasoning, mixing it with other ingredients they could find in the area, and so forth. On the other hand, perhaps the bread from heaven is all they had. That seems unlikely, however, because they did have livestock some of which could be butchered for food and certainly they had milk for making yogurt and cheese. They could find things to eat in the area as they moved about, and

they would encounter some communities and caravans throughout their travels from whom they could purchase various kinds of food and spices. The Bible confirms this in a number of places. We know they came out of Egypt with livestock, even a very large number of livestock (Ex. 12:38, 17:3), that they continued to possess in Sinai (Ex. 34:3) and on into the area east of the Jordan River (Num. 20:19, 32:1). They purchased food and water from the people of Edom (Dt. 2:6-7). They were able to bake unleavened bread (Lv. 8:2) which means they had access to grain and the baking of leavened bread was therefore also possible (possibly referenced in Lv. 8:26). They had grain for offerings (Lv. 9:4); if they had grain for offerings, they had grain for food. These facts should not be construed to mean the Israelites would have survived without this provision of food from God; they would not. That was the point; they needed God to provide for them and He was going to do just that. Anything they obtained in addition to the manna was a bonus.

On the sabbath day itself, the seventh day, they would not find any bread from heaven in the fields around their encampment. This was emphasizing the fact that day was a day of rest from their labors. God graciously gave them the food they needed for the seventh day on the day before, the sixth day, so they could rest.

Some of the Israelites just had to disobey God and go out on the seventh day to try and find some more bread from heaven.

Exodus 16:27 <sup>27</sup>It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

This is the epitome of stubbornness and self-reliance. God was trying to teach them they had to rely on Him, but some of them insisted on doing things their own way. They had been told to gather twice as much on the sixth day and presumably, all of them did that. They had been told that would leave them enough for the seventh day. They had been told that if they went out on the seventh day, they would find nothing. But they did it anyway. Even after everything God had done for them on their behalf by means of signs, wonders, and miracles, some of them still would not trust Him.

This disobedience earned the Lord's rebuke.

Exodus 16:28–30 <sup>28</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? <sup>29</sup>“See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” <sup>30</sup>So the people rested on the seventh day.

Through Moses, the Lord rebuked the people and repeated His instructions for the seventh day. He wanted them to understand He had given them this day in order for them to have a day of rest. He wanted them to trust Him and to obey Him. The question, How long? wasn't designed to elicit an answer. It was a rhetorical question that was a rebuke, a challenge, and an expectation. The evidence that He wanted them to rest was the fact He gave them bread enough for two days on the sixth day; they didn't need to go out on the seventh day. That some of them did was a direct affront to the grace and the authority of the

God who created them to be a people and a nation and who brought them out Egypt. In terms of the tests the Lord has been giving the Israelites, they haven't been doing very well to this point in the Exodus. These tests weren't difficult; all they had to do was obey and God would graciously lead them and provide for them. After the Lord rebuked them through Moses, they must have finally realized they needed to trust God and rest on the seventh day.

The text reveals they began to call it manna and provides us with a partial description of it.

Exodus 16:31      <sup>31</sup>The house of Israel named it manna [מָן], and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey.

Manna, מָן, apparently comes from the question, What is it [מָן הוּא]? asked in Exodus 16:15. It is described as looking like coriander seed and white in color, but the fact is, no one knows exactly what it looked like or what it was. Notice that it is not coriander seed but it is like coriander seed. We also need to keep in mind that the coriander seed mentioned in the Bible may not be the coriander seed we use today. I mention that because the coriander seeds we know today are not fine and flake like. You can find numerous pictures on the internet of what people think it looked like, but the manna wasn't a natural substance; it was a supernatural substance unknown to mankind before and since. Only God and the Israelites know what it looked like. Anything available to us today is just a guess.

What do we know about manna? We know it fell with the dew (Num. 11:9) and when the dew evaporated it was left on the ground (Ex. 16:14). It was left in the form of a fine flake like substance as fine as frost (Ex. 16:14). It was white in color and resembled a coriander seed (Ex. 16:31) and it also looked like bdellium (Num. 11:7). Bdellium, *בְּדֵלְיָה*, was an aromatic, transparent, yellowish resin from a tree of the southern Arabian Peninsula that may have looked like gold pearls when hardened. If the manna not harvested before the sun got hot, it melted (Ex. 16:21). We know that it had to be gathered daily with a double portion gathered on the sixth day (Ex. 16:4-5, 21, 29). The manna would spoil if kept overnight (Ex. 16:20) except on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:23-24) when it would still be good for that day. When it spoiled, it was fouled with maggots and produced a very obnoxious smell (Ex. 16:20). It could be baked or boiled (Ex. 16:23) and ground between millstones or in a mortar (Num. 11:8). It tasted like wafers with honey (Ex. 16:31) or cakes baked with oil (Num. 11:8). Finally, we know when the Israelites entered Canaan and ate of the produce of the land, the provision of manna stopped (Ex. 16:35; Josh. 5:12).

Ultimately, the bread from heaven carried with it a powerful spiritual lesson which was revealed in the Old Testament and applied by the Lord in the New Testament.

Deuteronomy 8:3 <sup>34</sup>“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”



Matthew 4:4           <sup>4</sup>But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Yahweh was trying to teach the Israelites that the Word of God was of paramount importance, more important even than food. The Word of God has eternal, spiritual significance; food, necessary for temporal life but perishable just as that temporal life is perishable, provides a temporal meal which is finite and has no spiritual significance. The Lord also used the metaphor of bread to refer to Himself, the Bread of Life.

John 6:31–35, 48-51           <sup>31</sup>"Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'"<sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven."<sup>33</sup>"For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."<sup>34</sup>Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. ...<sup>48</sup>"I am the bread of life."<sup>49</sup>"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died."<sup>50</sup>"This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."<sup>51</sup>"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

The Jews thought Moses gave them the manna to eat and the Lord was correcting their thinking. The New Testament background for this pericope was the feeding of the five thousand and they thought Moses' miraculous sign was far more significant than feeding a few thousand people one time as Jesus had just done. After all, Moses fed the nation for forty years, but Jesus just provided one meal for five thousand people. That wasn't the point. Just as Moses was authenticated by the sign, Jesus was also authenticated by the sign. Of course,

Moses didn't provide the Manna, Yahweh provided it and Yahweh has sent the true Bread to them at that point in history. Jesus was true Bread from heaven which is far more important than the provision of perishable temporal food however useful it is at the time; He provides imperishable spiritual food that has eternal ramifications. Life is in Him, the Bread of Life, and those who partake of the bread He provides will never be hungry. The key to this is belief and that was true in Moses' day and it was true at the Lord's First Coming. Dr. Davis put this very well: "Just as manna was a refreshment and a great blessing to the hungry bodies of the ancient Israelites, so the Lord Jesus, the Bread of Life, fulfills all the hungers, desires, and aspirations of the starving soul in this age."<sup>3</sup>

Of course, as noted all along in the Exodus story, skeptics have a number of explanations for the manna that denies any possibility of its supernatural provision.

One theory is the manna was a lichen, *Lecanora esculenta*, that "grows on rocks and produces pea-sized globules which are light enough to be blown about by the wind. They are well known for their sweetness and are often collected by the natives of central Asia."<sup>4</sup>

The most popular rationalistic theory seems to be that the manna was the sap from a tamarisk tree that grows in the Wadis of the central Sinai mountains. During June "a granular type of sweet substance up to the size of a pea ap-

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<sup>3</sup> John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1986), 193.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

pears on the tender twigs of these bushes for a period from three to six weeks. ... [I]nsects produce this honeydew excretion on the tamarisk twigs. These drops are small, sticky, light colored and very sweet.”<sup>5</sup>

The problem with this theory is that it conflicts with the biblical text. This tree had to exist along the entire path of the Exodus and not just in some Sinai wadis, it had to produce this substance every day for forty years, and it had to be in quantities sufficient to feed two million people or more every day. The text also revealed the manna melted every morning. The naturalists explain this away by claiming it didn't really melt, it was eaten by ants. The claim is the ants didn't become active until about 8:30 AM after it warmed up, but once it did, they quickly ate the tamarisk sap. He also claims *נִמְצָא* means vanish implying the manna disappeared but didn't melt which leaves open the possibility the ants ate it, however, the word does not mean that. It means to melt; to go from a solid state to a liquid state. Further, the claim is the Israelites only thought it melted, but it really didn't. This rationalistic scientist also claims the only way the manna could survive for hundreds of years in a jar before the Lord was because of its high sugar content which caused it to get hard and dry but not moldy and rotten.<sup>6</sup> None of this agrees with the biblical text. I would submit the manna put into the jar by Aaron remained exactly as it was the day Aaron put it in that jar and it lasted for centuries. If we could find that jar of manna today, it would still look,

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<sup>5</sup> Davis, 191-192.

<sup>6</sup> Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 288-292.

feel, and taste exactly as it did 3,500 years ago. If the God of creation can cause manna to spoil on one night and preserve it on another, He can keep it from spoiling forever if He wants to do so. Everything about this manna was the product of the supernatural activity of the Creator God of the universe. He who created it can certainly preserve it.

The Lord had Moses tell Aaron to place to take an omer of manna and put it in a jar to be placed before the Lord as a memorial. Succeeding generations of Israelites needed to be reminded of God's faithfulness on their behalf. Whether Aaron did that at the time or later after the ark was constructed is not known but we know it was ultimately placed in the Ark of the Covenant.

Exodus 16:32–34 <sup>32</sup>Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded, 'Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' " <sup>33</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations." <sup>34</sup>As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept.

This is interesting because they didn't have the "Testimony" yet. The text reads the Testimony, הַ עֵדוּת, specifically referring to the tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments. It means "the Testimony, i.e., a written copy on stone of the precepts and stipulations of the covenant given to Moses, functioning as a witness between the parties."<sup>7</sup> The word, עֵדוּת, carries the common meaning of statute, stipulation, regulation, i.e., a principle or contingent-particular point of law, having authority to give consequences for not keeping, with a possible focus that these com-

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<sup>7</sup> James Swanson, s.v. "עֵדוּת," *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

mands serve as a warning, urging, or witness to the covenant agreement. The Testimony in Exodus 16:34 is specifically referring to the stone tablets. The Ark of the Covenant itself was called the ark of the testimony at times but that seems to be because of its relationship to the tablets of stone that were placed inside it.

The book of Hebrews indicates this jar of manna was placed in the Ark of the Covenant at some point.

Hebrews 9:4<sup>4</sup>having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant;

The Old Testament mentioned placing the Testimony, the tablets, into the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25:21 and Deuteronomy 10:2, 5, but no mention was made of the jar of manna.

In the last two verses of this chapter, Moses revealed the timeline for the provision of the manna.

Exodus 16:35–36 <sup>35</sup>The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. <sup>36</sup>(Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.)

This may have been added as a later postscript because at the time Moses wrote the books, they were still in the wilderness outside Canaan eating the manna. It is also thought that the mention of an omer was for the benefit of later readers who called it a homer the change taking place even during Moses' lifetime because he used the word "homer" in Leviticus 27:16 and Numbers 11:32. In fact, "omer" is used only in this chapter of the Bible.