

EXODUS

Lesson 14 - Chapter 16

Last week we just started in our study of Exodus 16; this week we're going to continue that study and talk about the provision of Manna to sustain Israel. But unlike the Sunday School version there is much more to this episode than meets the eye. So, let's begin by reading this rather long chapter in it's entirety.

READ EXODUS CHAPTER 16 all

Three million Israelites are hungry. They've been gone from Egypt for nearing 2 months, and their food supply is running out. They come to Moses and want to know why he would bring them out into the desert wilderness just to die from starvation. Moses takes this complaint to Yehoveh and the Lord responds. God tells the Hebrews that He is going to feed them by raining bread down from Heaven. Now, the Hebrew word for bread is "**lechem**". But, **lechem** also is a general word meaning food. Just like the old fashioned term "breaking bread together" literally meant taking a loaf of bread and breaking, or cutting, it and sharing it, it most often simply meant to eat a meal together. Bread, here, just means food in general and not literal bread.

But, then God starts to set up and teach an important principle to the Israelites, by means of His commands concerning the bread, the food, He would provide them: they were to gather all the Manna they needed to satisfy their appetites, but only enough for one day at a time. And, each day they were to do this EXCEPT on the 6th day, they were to gather a double-portion.....that is a two-day supply.

Now, here the story about the "bread from Heaven" detours a bit, and then picks up in a few verses. So, rather than skip around, we'll just follow the flow of the Bible.

Something rather interesting is said in verse 6: upon the Moses and Aaron repeating the Lord's commands concerning the gathering of Manna, they say that, ".....this is so you shall know it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt....." Actually, what it says is, "....so you shall know it was Yehoveh who brought you out of Egypt...." As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, more than 9 out of 10 times in the Torah that you see the words Adonai, or Lord, or God, in fact the original Hebrew is Y-H-V-H; that is, the Lord's FORMAL and PERSONAL name is used.

But, the issue I'd like to point out is not about His name; it's that obviously the Israelites had real doubts as to who it was that was responsible for their leaving Egypt. We've already seen a couple of incidents where difficulties arise and immediately the Hebrews blame Moses. In

other words, this people who (like all other people of their era) were superstitious and believed in magic and sorcery, weren't really convinced that it was this god Yehoveh who had orchestrated the plagues back in Egypt, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and so on. Even with the cloud that led them by day and the fire that emitted from that cloud at night, the people doubted. Moses was the visible human presence, and so Moses caught all the grief. Therefore, as it says so clearly in this verse, part of the lesson from the Manna was to teach Israel that it was Yehoveh, and not Moses, who rescued Israel from Egypt. This is a lesson that Israel will not fully grasp for decades.

The instruction Moses and Aaron received from God about the food God would supply, they now pass on to the people of Israel. And, in verse 7, Moses and Aaron reminds the people that while they may think their griping and murmuring and complaining is directed at their human leaders, in fact it is Yehoveh who they are expressing displeasure with.....and Yehoveh hears them.

Moses goes on to tell Israel that God knows their needs and will of course supply it. He tells them that at sunset (the beginning of the new day) God will give them meat to eat, and then in the morning (still the same day) bread (food) to satisfy their hunger.

In verses 9,10 Moses then instructs Aaron to call for the entire community of Israel to come-near to the presence of God. They obeyed, and as they looked out into the desert wilderness that lay ahead of them, there they saw the Glory of God in the cloud. This phrase, the Glory of God, is the English translation of the Hebrew words **kevod Yehoveh**. Is this **kevod Yehoveh** some new divine experience for Israel.....to look upon the cloud and see the Glory of Yehoveh? Of course not. It was that same cloud, that presence of God, that had been leading them, that had protected them from Pharaoh's army, and had been fully available for their vision, every day, all day, since leaving Egypt.

So, why did Moses have to tell these people to stop, look up, and come-near to God's presence? Because, while God's presence is available to us, we must choose to "come-near" to Him. What is it that we hear preacher after preacher admonish us to do? Keep our eyes upon Jesus, who is OUR present day Glory of God. Israel had either taken their eyes off of the cloud of God's Glory or not fully recognized that the cloud WAS the presence of God; and so they became disheartened and disoriented. Same exact thing happens to us. We get so used to the idea of Yeshua within us, guiding us, such that He becomes like an old piece of furniture, or just another feature of the landscape..... and so He goes unnoticed in our lives. God's presence had never left Israel; the people just quit looking upon it.

It was sunset, verse 13 says, when a vast horde of quail suddenly fluttered down upon the startled camp of Israel. Reminding us a little of Egypt, when God used natural elements of His creation in extraordinary ways to smite Pharaoh and his people, Yehoveh uses the quail in a supernatural way to bless HIS people. Quail migrating across the Sinai and Arabian Peninsulas at that time of year is normal. That they would swoop down for a rest, en masse, having grown exhausted from their long flight, was a not uncommon occurrence. That they would do so at God's command, in such vast quantity, at the exact spot needed, was the supernatural aspect of this miracle.

One can only imagine the Hebrews' wonder and awe: what a day they had just experienced! Called by Moses to come-near to the kevod Yehoveh, they had once again experienced God's awesome presence in their lives and become comforted. Yet, before dark, God also brought them meat from the skies, and they went to bed with their bellies full. Then, as they arose in the morning, from a restful sleep that comes only by being fully satisfied, the rising sun revealed an even greater miracle.

For there upon the desert sands was something that looked like delicate frost; it was everywhere. Verse 13 says the Hebrews looked upon it and asked one another "what is it?" In Hebrew, "what is it" is Man hu.....from which we have derived the word Manna. Moses tells them, it is the bread (lechem), meaning food, from Heaven that God had promised to send them, to sustain them.

It also explains that the coming of the Manna each day was associated with dew. Taken together with a description in Numbers 11:9 that says: "when the dew fell on the camp at night, the Manna would fall UPON IT..." we get a more complete picture. There would be a fall of dew, then the Manna would flutter down upon it, and then another layer of dew would fall over the Manna. Apparently this keeps the Manna clean and fresh.

Now, Moses issues an interesting instruction concerning the Manna: each man is gather as much as he thinks is needed to fully satisfy himself. Yet, at the same time, they were told to gather an "omer" which is about ½ gallon, for each person. Let me make a quick note for you who have heard the term "omer" used in different way as associated with the Biblical Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. An omer is more correctly associated with being a sheaf. So in the ritual of bringing in the first omer, it simply means bringing in the first sheaf of grain stalks from the harvest. Only here in Exodus is the omer some kind of measure of volume. Perhaps it is equal to the amount of grain that is contained within a typical sheaf of grain stalks.

And, when the Hebrews went out and gathered the Man hu a very strange thing happened: whether they gathered MORE than an omer, or LESS than an omer in their baskets, when they put it into an omer-sized jar, everyone had exactly the same amount!! The meaning of this has been the source of many interesting commentaries. But, at the bottom of it is what the Israelites would have learned from this mystery: there was no need to horde, or to rush out to be first to gather, nor to worry if there would be enough provision available from God for each of them. That in God's economy, His bounty is endless, and equality is not about giving everyone exactly the same, it is about giving to each person fully what they need.

Verse 19 brings with it another reminder from Egypt: Passover to be specific. The Hebrews are to gather each day ONLY enough Man hu to eat that day, and they are to dispose of the remainder, leaving nothing left by daybreak. Do you remember that same instruction for the Passover Ram? That they were to eat their fill, but dispose of the remainder before morning.

But, many of the Israelites ignored that part of the teaching and to their disgust found the leftover Manna rotted and otherwise inedible. It's funny, isn't it? We tend to look at God's instructions and commands and follow the parts of them that make sense to us, and kind of blow-off the parts that don't. Not that I'm suggesting a mechanical legalism by any means

being a better avenue to follow; but here we see God's position on obedience, and how blessing can be ruined by man's rebellion; or worse, by our personal determination of WHICH of God's commands and ordinances are important and which aren't.

In verse 22, they were instructed that on the 6th day they were to gather double the normal amount of Manna, and in verse 23 the reason for this is given: the 7th day is a Sabbath of Holiness to Yehoveh, and therefore NONE is to be gathered on the Sabbath. They were given permission to prepare the Man hu how ever they wished.....baked, boiled, whatever....but it had to be done before the end of the 6th day. And, BTW, God was not going to rain down any Manna on the 7th day.

We have here the first re-establishment of Sabbath for the Hebrew people. In other words, while, indeed, Sabbath keeping would be part of the formal law given by Yehoveh to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the Sabbath had already been established.....first at Creation, and here in regards to the gathering of Manna.

Now, after the experience of gathering extra Manna, not using it up, and finding it full of worms and maggots the next morning, one can only wonder what was going through the people's minds upon THIS instruction. But, most did as they were told, and as they entered the Sabbath, sure enough whatever they had prepared the previous night was still fresh and edible.

And, yet, after all that had happened, some people STILL got up on Sabbath morning, took their baskets, and went out expecting to gather Manna, as normal. Naturally there was none to find. This behavior really infuriated Moses, so he said fine: you're all under house arrest on Sabbath. Stay where you are, do not go out from your tent on the Sabbath. STAY HOME!!

We could probably spend an entire session doing nothing but discussing all the pertinent meanings and commands God has ordained concerning the Sabbath; of setting our labors aside and not gathering our sustenance on the Sabbath, even of Moses ordering the Israelites to stay home. And, if we were to study the way Shabbat is observed by traditional Jews, we would find every effort to maintain the intent of God's command concerning the Sabbath. But, we're not going to stop here and do that. A little later in Exodus, or perhaps Leviticus, we'll get into the Sabbath in depth. I tell you from the heart, I'm unsure of just what to present to you about the Sabbath, because it is complex, it is full of reverence to our Holy God that has been almost completely obscured by an anti-Jewish, tradition based church. Let me just say something briefly about it, for now, to give you food for thought; because while the Sabbath is important to God, it is also a thorny issue for Christians.

Whether you believe that some or none or all of the 613 laws of the Mosaic covenant pertain to Christians, the fact is that keeping the Sabbath holy is one of the 10 Commandments that forms the pillar of the Church. I don't think anyone here would disagree with that point.

Yet, I also don't think we take the matter of the Sabbath seriously enough. Nowhere in the Bible has God rescinded the command of the Sabbath. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that for our modern generation, or since Christ, is it OK to work 7 days a week and to ignore the

Sabbath. Many church leaders have taken Paul's meaning in Col. 2 to mean that the institution of the Sabbath can be made into anything man wants...which, by the way, makes no sense whatsoever to understand it in that way (this is what happens when Bible passages are taken out of context in order to try to validate a predetermined agenda or doctrine). Remember this: in the Sermon on the Mount, another pillar of the Church, Jesus says in Matt.5:17 that in NO WAY has He come to abolish the Torah....or as many Bibles say it, the Law and the Prophets. Further, that not the slightest detail, not a jot or a title, shall pass from the Torah until all heaven and earth pass away; the Sabbath is a rather significant element of the Torah, wouldn't you say?

And, also remember, that it is simply documented and historical fact that the early Church continued to follow the Biblical rule of the Sabbath (as Saturday) right on up until Emperor Constantine ordered the Sabbath abolished, and replaced it by something called "The Lord's Day", which was to become the new day in which the gentile Church came together to worship. This new day of worship, the Lord's Day, was designated to be the 1st day of the week, Sunday, which was already the traditional day of national worship for the primary pagan religion of the Roman Empire.....the Mishrain Sun Worshipers.....which is why Sun-day is called Sunday in the first place. This day was chosen as a political compromise between the Sun Worshipers and the Christians.

Let me quote directly for you a couple of edicts handed down in the early 300's AD when this all happened. And, BTW, the ancient official documents I am quoting from, you can find in the local library or on the Internet. First, the very first "Sunday Law", ordered and enacted by Constantine, during his 2nd meeting with the council of Church Bishops in Nicea, in 321 AD: ***"On the Venerable Day of the Sun (the sacred day of the Sun-god, Sunday) let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost..... given the 7th day of March, 321, Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time."***

What happened in these several councils of Nicea was that the GENTILE Christian Church was established, and the JEWISH Christian Church was abolished. Some 16 years after the first Sunday Law was enacted, the following edict was handed down from another of these Roman Church councils, called the Council of Laodicea:

"Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Sabbato (the Sabbath), but shall work on that day; but the Lord's Day (Sunday) they shall especially honor and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work that day. If however they are found Judaizing they shall be excommunicated".

Understand, that in this context "Judaizing" simply referred to Christians doing anything that Jews traditionally did. So, for example, if Jews honored the Biblical Feasts, Christians should NOT. If Jews baptized by submersion, Christians should NOT. If Jews lit candles and ate Challah bread on the Sabbath, Christians should NOT. And, since Jews honored the Sabbath, then Christians should NOT. The principle that was begun in the 4th century, and now firmly

entrenched in our modern church was this: if the Jews do it, Christians shouldn't. Christians who did anything Jews did in relation to honoring God, were considered to be Judaizing, and this would result in being excommunicated from the Church.

Now, I know this is not an easy subject; but (at the risk of offending you) I must say that the reason it is not easy is because we love our traditions and prefer our doctrines to what the Scriptures tell us. So we run around twisting and allegorizing the Bible in order that we have it mean what men have decided they want it to mean. There are plenty of passages in the Bible that are difficult and their understanding is not straightforward. But, the passages on Sabbath are not like that: they are plain and unequivocal.

Now, let me give you the view of the Catholic Church concerning Sunday, rather than Sabbath worship; and, by the way, Catholics lay claim to Constantine as one of theirs. What I am about to read to you comes from the official publication of the Catholic Press.....the official Catholic newspaper..... and was written a little over 100 years ago:

“Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claim to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles....From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week (Saturday) to the first (Sunday)”.

Do you understand what I just quoted to you? The Catholic Church who CLAIMS the establish of Sunday as the day of communal worship for Christians says outright that NOWHERE in Scripture (OT or New) is there a single passage that would allow the 1st day of the week worship and rest to be substituted for the God-ordained 7th day of the week worship and rest. That statement is factually true in every sense. But, why was that statement made and communicated to the world? Why would the Catholic Church say such a thing, because it sounds as if its condemning itself for Sunday worship by openly admitting the truth that scripturally there is nothing to indicate that any day other than the 7th, Saturday, is Sabbath? You see, this was part of an ongoing argument against Protestants, who, of course, deny the all-important doctrine of the Catholic Church that the Pope has special authority, given to him directly from God, to change or add or subtract from the Scriptures. So, in yet another article continuing the debate, again from the official Catholic Press, we get this:

“Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, has no good reason for its Sunday theory, and ought to logically keep Saturday as the Sabbath”.

In other words, the Catholic Church openly admits that there is NO scriptural authority at all for abolishing or moving the Sabbath to Sunday. However, since in their view the Pope has the authority from God to change anything he believes God has directed him to change, then the act of the Roman Catholics (Constantine and the Roman bishops) abolishing the Sabbath, and instead observing Sunday as a new and different day of meeting called the Lord's Day, is OK. The Catholics view Constantine as a Pope. Conversely, since Protestants broke away from the Catholic Church several centuries ago, and since Protestants deny the authority of the Pope and the Catholic Church as empowered by God to alter scriptural commands, then on what basis can Protestants say that they can change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday? And, the implied answer is: there can be none.

And, in another Catholic Press article:

“ It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe that day observe a commandment of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Does that hit you where it ought to? Do you understand that the Catholic Church completely acknowledges that Sunday observance is NOT a Biblical command; it is a command of the Roman Catholic Church government? Does that bother you just a little bit? Man, I hope so. Believe me, I understand how uncomfortable it is to scrutinize traditions and doctrines that have been mainstays of our church lives. But, discomfort is just not a good enough reason to skirt this issue, or worse, disregard the plain Scriptural truth.

So, let me frame this just a little differently. How about if each Christian denomination simply voted to decide which day should be the Sabbath? How about if Torah Class determined by majority rules that Tuesday, the 3rd day of the week, would become our Sabbath? How comfortable would you be with that? For most, not very comfortable at all, because (hopefully) we'd all ask ourselves, by what Biblical authority can we do such a thing? But if we took Paul to mean what is most often taught that he said about the Sabbath (that is that men can make Sabbath any day they want), then why can't we just move it around and do it whenever we feel like it? As a matter of fact, why not just make the Sabbath a different day each week? Or change it from year to year to be fair and equitable to everybody? Or have 4 Sabbaths running together at the end of the month so we can have more time off? Or, no Sabbaths at all? I see some of you frowning a little; that's the problem with trying to defend the traditional gentile Church's dubious position that we can change the Sabbath and observe it any way we please. If you decide that's really so, that means we can do anything with it that suits us. And, we all inherently know that that cannot be the case....and that, indeed, is NOT what Paul said or meant.

Now, I'm not advocating moving all Church services to Saturday (although I think it would be very healthy for the Church). Every day is a good day to worship God. But.....every day is NOT Shabbat; every day is NOT the 7th ; every day is NOT the day that God ordained in Genesis as the Sabbath, and is reinforced here in Exodus, again at Mt. Sinai, and all throughout the Bible.... including, BTW, the New Testament. Let's all remember that Yeshua Himself, Jesus Christ, observed the 7th day Sabbath. But, as individuals, or as families, we can certainly honor God's Sabbath, the 7th day, AND still participate in the Lord's Day (a non-scriptural, gentile tradition) if we choose to. We can honor the day God ordained as Sabbath, by taking God's intent to rest and be with our families and worship Him on the 7th day, and we can STILL attend Church and/or Sunday School on The Lord's Day if we wish to. So, I'm not here to condemn any denomination or to tell you to abandon going to church on Sunday; but I am saying that Shabbat is an important enough issue that we cannot do whatever we wish just because we always have.

Anyway, in verse 32, God has commanded that a jar of Man hu be set aside as visible proof, for all future generations, of the miracle of God's provision during Israel's time in the wilderness. So where is this jar of Manna, today? Well, when they find the Ark of the Covenant,

they'll find the jar of Manna, because the Ark contains the stone tablets of the 10 Commandments, Aaron's budding staff, AND the jar of Manna. This is the meaning of verse 34 about placing the Manna before the Testimony (another name for the Law or the Torah)..... and you can bet that when they do find it, the Manna will be perfectly preserved.

As we near the end of chapter 16, allow me to point out something of a general nature that students of Torah need to know: Moses did NOT personally write all of the 5 books of Torah, which are often called the Five Books of Moses. When someone asks me, 'who wrote the Torah' I commonly say "Moses", but only as a broad and general response. The Rabbis have always recognized that others recorded parts of the Torah, because parts of it were written in retrospect after Moses was dead and gone. We get an example of this here, because the words of verse 35 say that they ate manna all 40 years in the Wilderness, and until they came to settle in the land of Canaan.

So, for those of you who might say, wait a minute, how can these verses be speaking of stone tablets and an ark that haven't even been created yet, because they still haven't even arrived at Mt. Sinai? Remember, the Torah is NOT in perfect chronological order. Let me put it another way: Moses didn't write a diary. The Torah was not written like a daily journal. Moses didn't write down a few sentences about what happened that day, and then more tomorrow and so on and so forth like a news report, until the Torah was completed. No. Most of the events and instructions we see in the Torah were written by Moses, and others, after the fact.....as history....so that it was coherent and understandable by future generations.

Chapter 16 closes by giving us the interesting piece of information that Israel ate Manna for 40 years. God provided them with that Heavenly food for their entire time in the wilderness but the moment they entered the Promised Land, it quit coming as quickly as it began.

Next week, we'll take up chapter 17.