Research: The Manna in the wilderness

Ex. 16:1, 4, 7, 12-15, 21, 35

1And 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.

4¶ Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

“**I will rain bread from heaven for you.**—This first announcement at once suggests that the supply is to be supernatural. “Bread from heaven” was not simply “food out of the air” but a celestial, that is, a Divine supply of their daily needs.

A certain rate every day.—Heb., a day’s meal each day—sufficient, that is, for the wants of himself and family for a day” (Elliott’s Commentary).

“**Bread,**i.e. manna, which shall serve them instead of bread, and was a more delicate and pleasant kind of bread, called therefore the bread of angels, [Psalm 78:24](http://biblehub.com/psalms/78-24.htm).   
  
**Every day,**Heb. the thing, i.e. the provision of a day in his day, i.e. every day, as much as was sufficient for a man’s sustenance that day. That I may prove them; either,   
  
1. Whether by my giving them such miraculous and excellent provision they will be won to love and obey me. Or,   
  
2. Whether by raining it down upon them for several days together they will learn to trust me for the following days, and therefore gather no more than that day required (Matthew Poole Commentary).

7And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

“see the glory. His might and greatness will be declared by His gift of manna” (Cambridge Bible).

**Murmurings** is *teluwnah* in Hebrew which means “obstinacy; a grumbling; complaining.”

12I 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 the Lord your God.

“Ye shall know that I am the Lord your God — This gave proof of his power as the Lord, and his particular favor to them as their God; when God plagued the Egyptians, it was to make them know that he is the Lord; when he provided for the Israelites, it was to make them know that he was their God” (Benson Commentary).

**Morning** in Hebrew is *boqer* which means “the end of night; the coming of daylight; the sunrise; bright joy after night of distress.”

13And 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.

“**At even the quails came up.**—The common quail is very abundant in the East, and regularly migrates from Syria and Arabia in the autumn of the year for the purpose of wintering in Central Africa, whence it returns in immense masses in the spring. Exhausted after a long flight over the Red Sea, the flocks drop to the ground as soon as they reach the coast, and it is then easy either to take the birds with the hand or to kill them with sticks.

**Covered** is *kacah* in Hebrew which means “fill up the hollows; to cover; to spread over; to clothe oneself;

“**The dew lay.** Literally, *there was a lying of dew.*A heavy fall seems to be meant” (Benson Commentary).

**Dew** is *tal* in Hebrew which means “night mist; light rain.”

14And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

“*and in the morning … a small round thing … manna*—There is a gum of the same name distilled in this desert region from the tamarisk, which is much prized by the natives, and preserved carefully by those who gather it. It is collected early in the morning, melts under the heat of the sun, and is congealed by the cold of night. In taste it is as sweet as honey, and has been supposed by distinguished travelers, from its whitish color, time, and place of its appearance, to be the manna on which the Israelites were fed: so that, according to the views of some, it was a production indigenous to the desert; according to others, there was a miracle, which consisted, however, only in the preternatural arrangements regarding its supply” (Jamieson Faucett Brown).

15And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

**Manna** is *man* in Hebrew which means “What is it?; the bread from Heaven that fed the Israelites for 40 years of wilderness wanderings.”

**“for they wist not what it was.** Man signifies what in the Egyptian tongue; and it is not strange that the Israelites use one of their words, being newly come out of their land. Hence this is called manna; but it is of a different nature from the ordinary manna, which now we use only as physic for purging; whereas this manna was food, and nourishing, being prepared by the great God for this use” (Matthew Poole Commentary).

21And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

“*It melted —*As much of it as was left upon the ground, not, it seems, from its own nature, which was so solid that it could endure the fire; but that it might not be corrupted, or trodden under foot, or despised, and that they might be compelled, as it were, to the more entire dependence upon God” (Benson Commentary).

“And they gathered it every morning,.... From the time the morning began, during four hours, or to the fourth hour, as the Targum of Jonathan; that is, till ten o'clock in the morning: this was a very wonderful thing that bread should be provided and rained every morning about the camp of Israel, in such plenty as to be sufficient to feed such a vast body of people; and that for forty years together:

“every man according to his eating; according to the number of persons he had in his family to eat of it, and as much as everyone could eat; there never was any lack or scarcity of it, but every morning there it was for them, and they gathered it, an omer for everyone:” (Gill’s Commentary).

35And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

“This Moses might well write; for though he did not go into Canaan, yet he came to the borders of Canaan. And though he did not see the cessation of the *manna*, yet he sufficiently knew both from the nature of the thing, and by revelation from God, that it would forthwith cease upon their entrance into Canaan” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).

“The Israelites were told to gather the manna each day and to gather enough to meet their needs for the day. We who journey through the desert of human doubts and fears must gather the heavenly supply. A good time to gather it is in the morning while our thought is free and unfettered by concerns of the day. This is a valuable time to study the Lesson-Sermon, gathering into our awakened thought the beauty and peace of Spirit. Now is the time to pray for ourselves, our home, our loved ones, and that world which is to mortal sense bending under a burden of war and suffering. When we start the day with prayer, reaching out to our Father-Mother God in heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for the unlimited good that is bestowed upon the real man, the spiritual idea of divine Mind, we are gathering manna that will feed and sustain us through the day. "The great truth of spiritual being," when understood, destroys the false beliefs of lack, limitation, sin, disease, and death. Man, the image and likeness of God, cannot be sick, cannot lack any good thing. Jesus sometimes arose early, before it was day, and retired to a quiet place to pray. He is the Way-shower, and we desire to follow him, knowing that his way leads to supreme good, true joy, eternal bliss.

In the account of the gathering of the manna we note that the Israelites were to gather only one day's supply. There must be no anxious fear for the morrow, no unnecessary hoarding of supplies, for the promise was that the manna would fall daily. The attitude of thought that has freed itself from doubt and fear of the future is better able to see the good that lies right at hand. There is not the slightest doubt that the loving care which supplied the manna in days long past is still supplying it. Let men do as Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Love is ever present to guide us, bless us, and feed us with the bread of Spirit, and this truth will free us from error of every kind” (Gathering the Manna, Eileen Dunstan, October 24, 1942, CSS).

**Christian Science articles on “Manna”**

“The Hidden Manna,” Della M. Whitney, March 1936, CSJ

“The Manna of Today, Harold Molter, December 26, 1959, CSS  
“Manna,” Albert F. Gilmore, October 15, 1927, CSS