

Bible Study # 28 Exodus 16.22–36 03–11–2021

God's intention was that the people would gather a double portion on the sixth day of the week, as the manna was not to be provided on the Sabbath. This they did, and the leaders confirmed this to Moses. He reiterated what God had already said about the seventh day. It was to be 'a Sabbath observance', 'a holy Sabbath to the Lord'.

Instructions were given concerning the necessary preparation of food for the Sabbath. Whatever cooking method was adopted (baking or boiling), after partaking of it for that day, the remaining amount was reserved for the next morning.

Verses 24–26 record the result of Moses' instruction. There was no corruption of the manna, and hence no tainted smell from it (cf. v. 20). He encouraged the people to eat the remaining cooked manna from the previous day, again reminding them that no new manna was to be provided on the seventh day. The seventh day, the Sabbath, was marked as distinctive by the absence of a fresh supply of manna.

The NIV's 'nevertheless', though catching the spirit of the passage, is an unnecessary insertion, 'Nevertheless some of the people went out to gather'. The RSV, NRSV, and ESV all have 'On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather', which is a suitable translation of the Hebrew.

This explicit command was met with disobedience. It was a fruitless search for manna on the seventh day, for none was provided. The Lord's message to the people through Moses was a question to them: 'How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?'

They were reminded that God was a generous giver, having given them the Sabbath, and then given them a double portion of food so that they would have sufficient food for the seventh day. No excursions outside the camp were to be permitted on the Sabbath, and as a consequence the people were able to enjoy its rest.

This verse picks up the name of the food, 'manna', mentioned already in verse 15. Here reference to its color and taste is added. It was 'white like coriander seed' and tasted 'like wafers made with honey'. Further particulars about the manna are given in Numbers 11:6-9.

The Lord gave a particular 'word' concerning preservation of some of the manna. The instruction was that an omer of it was to be kept so that future generations could see the wilderness food that Israel ate after redemption from Egypt. It was the bread that God caused the people to eat, and so there was to be a memorial to that divine provision.

Following the instructions, Moses saw to it that Aaron put the manna 'in front of the testimony'. This must have occurred later, as the building of the Tent of Meeting and the ark had not taken place at this time. The ark is variously designated in the Old Testament ('the ark of the covenant', 'the ark of the Lord', 'the holy ark'), and calling it 'the ark of the testimony' occurs thirteen times.

The word 'testimony' is applied to God's testimonies, the tabernacle, and the ark, while in a few instances it stands alone to designate the ark (here in 16:34 and in 27:21; 30:36; Lev. 16:13). The final two verses, which may also have been added later than the main narrative here, note that the food of heaven was provided for a period of forty years, and that the size of an omer was one tenth of an ephah.

Our study will continue with Exodus 17.1–16.