

Week #:	41	Text:	Exodus 16:1-36	Title:	Into the Desert: Water, Manna, & Quail
Songs:					
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Into the Desert: Water, Manna, & Quail

Exodus 15 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

²² Moshe [Moses] led Isra'el onward from the Sea of Suf. They went out into the Shur Desert; but after traveling three days in the desert, they had found no water. ²³ They arrived at Marah but couldn't drink the water there, because it was bitter. This is why they called it Marah [bitterness]. ²⁴ The people grumbled against Moshe [Moses] and asked, "What are we to drink?" ²⁵ Moshe [Moses] cried to Adonai; and Adonai showed him a certain piece of wood, which, when he threw it into the water, made the water taste good. There Adonai made laws and rules of life for them, and there he tested them. ²⁶ He said, "If you will listen intently to the voice of Adonai your God, do what he considers right, pay attention to his mitzvot and observe his laws, I will not afflict you with any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians; because I am Adonai your healer."

²⁷ They came to Eilim [Elim], where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and camped there by the water.

Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites have finished singing, and now it is time to journey on. Moses leads the Israelites into the desert and they go for three days without finding water. Imagine travelling on foot in the desert and going for three days without water. This was a life-threatening situation. Finally they came to some water and their hopes skyrocketed - only to be dashed by the bitterness of the water. It was undrinkable. The Israelites named the place "Marah", which means "bitterness." Imagine literally dying of thirst, finding water, and discovering that it was salt water.

When the Israelites came to this bitter water they did what you and I would do: they grumbled against their leader Moses. Moses in turn cried out to Yahweh. Yahweh showed Moses a piece of wood which Moses promptly threw into the water. Immediately the water was made sweet and the Israelites were able to drink it. Moses then led them to a place called Elim which had twelve springs and seventy palm trees.

This story is about the journey from Marah to Elim, from bitter water to twelve springs and seventy palm trees. The journey takes place externally and internally. The external journey is the obvious one. Moses and company find themselves in a very bitter situation. They have been three days in the desert without coming upon a source of water. The water they have come to is undrinkable. Death is threatening. Moses cried out to Yahweh and Yahweh made the bitter water sweet. Refreshing themselves, they are revived and journey on to Elim.

It is another revelation of the power and trustworthiness of Yahweh. The message for us is clear: Whatever the bitter obstacles that we encounter in life's journey we can count on God to transform them, to use and redeem them for good, as God leads us to Elim. When we cry our Marahs out to God, God is able to "sweeten" them, that is, to make them drinkable, to turn them into a resource for the next leg of the journey. God is big enough to deal with, redeem, and even transform whatever external problems we might face.

The internal journey is less obvious, but it is the one on which the text focuses. Our English translations obscure this focus because of the difficulty in translating the verb for Yahweh "showing" or "directing" Moses to a tree/piece of wood. The verb used actually means to instruct or teach. Yahweh instructed/taught Moses a tree. That does not make much sense, but it is important to note because this verb is the root verb of the word "Torah". Torah means instruction, and it specifically refers to the instruction/law that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai for how the Israelites were to live in covenant with this God who brought them up out of Egypt. We might say that Yahweh "torah-ed" Moses a tree.

When Moses cast this torah tree into the bitter water, the water became sweet. Torah is not for water, however, but for people. The bitter waters of Marah revealed the bitterness that lodged in the hearts of the Israelites. Notice that they grumbled against Moses while Moses cried out to Yahweh. The external obstacle revealed the internal realities of their hearts. Moses trusted Yahweh and cried the problem out to Yahweh. The Israelites, on the other hand, betray a lack of trust as they grumble amongst themselves against Moses. What becomes evident in the face of Marah is that the Israelites needed deliverance from more than just Pharaoh. They need deliverance from their grumbling, mumbling, bitter selves. And Yahweh is set to bring about that deliverance. Yahweh torahs Moses a tree of transformation.

Right then and there, after Moses/Yahweh sweetened the water with the tree, Yahweh "made a decree and a law for them, and there He tested them. He said, 'If you listen carefully to the voice of Yahweh your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am Yahweh your Healer.'" This text makes it plain that the emphasis is on the transformation of the Israelites rather than the water of Marah. In a word, Israel is to be "Yahweh-centered" in all their living. Remember, down in Egypt life had been Pharaoh centered.

So Yahweh "tested" the Israelites there at Marah. This testing was for the purpose of training them, to reveal their hearts in order that their hearts might be changed where needed. The test revealed that Moses was Yahweh-centered and that Israel was not. The test was a training exercise for Israel, designed to bend their bitter, grumbling hearts toward Yahweh.

How did the bitter water become sweet? The tree. How does one become Yahweh-centered? The answer is Torah, God's instruction. It's kind of a circle. By listening to Yahweh one becomes Yahweh-centered which in turn enables one to be a better listener which in turn increases one's Yahweh-centeredness.

How did the bitter water become sweet? Yahweh, the giver of the tree. How does one become Yahweh-centered? The answer is Yahweh, the giver of Torah. "I am Yahweh, the One who heals you." Yahweh is the One who heals the heart, who is able to transform the bitter waters of the heart to waters of renewal. Again, notice that this internal transformation is the main point of the text, for Yahweh does not say "I am Yahweh, the One who heals the water" but "I am Yahweh, the One who heals you."

Yahweh transforms the heart by means of Torah, Yahweh's instruction/word for sweet living.

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus is our Torah, our transforming Word from Yahweh on and for life. As we receive and follow Jesus, as we become Jesus-centered, we discover a healing transformation being worked within our hearts. It is the

internal journey from the bitter waters of Marah to the twelve springs of Elim, from barren desert to seventy palm trees.

May the tests of life bend us towards Jesus, that we might open ourselves to Jesus at ever new depths, heeding His word and experiencing His healing. By the grace of God in Christ, may we make the journey and know His healing, that we might live the Jesus life. If life is bitter, stir in some Torah.

Exodus 16 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

They traveled on from Eilim [Elim], and the whole community of the people of Isra'el arrived at the Seen Desert, between Eilim [Elim] and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after leaving the land of Egypt.² There in the desert the whole community of the people of Isra'el grumbled against Moshe [Moses] and Aharon.³ The people of Isra'el said to them, "We wish Adonai had used his own hand to kill us off in Egypt! There we used to sit around the pots with the meat boiling, and we had as much food as we wanted. But you have taken us out into this desert to let this whole assembly starve to death!"

⁴ Adonai said to Moshe [Moses], "Here, I will cause bread to rain down from heaven for you. The people are to go out and gather a day's ration every day. By this I will test whether they will observe my Torah or not.⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they have brought in, it will turn out to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."⁶ Moshe [Moses] and Aharon said to all the people of Isra'el, "This evening, you will realize that it has been Adonai who brought you out of Egypt;⁷ and in the morning, you will see Adonai's glory. For he has listened to your grumblings against Adonai — what are we that you should grumble against us?"⁸ Moshe [Moses] added, "What I have said will happen when Adonai gives you meat to eat this evening and your fill of bread tomorrow morning. Adonai has listened to your complaints and grumblings against him — what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against Adonai."

⁹ Moshe [Moses] said to Aharon, "Say to the whole community of Isra'el, 'Come close, into the presence of Adonai, for he has heard your grumblings.'"¹⁰ As Aharon spoke to the whole community of the people of Isra'el, they looked toward the desert; and there before them the glory of Adonai appeared in the cloud;¹¹ and Adonai said to Moshe [Moses],¹² "I have heard the grumblings of the people of Isra'el. Say to them: 'At dusk you will be eating meat, and in the morning you will have your fill of bread. Then you will realize that I am Adonai your God.'"

¹³ That evening, quails came up and covered the camp; while in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp.¹⁴ When the dew had evaporated, there on the surface of the desert was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.¹⁵ When the people of Isra'el saw it, they asked each other, "Man hu? [What is it?]" because they didn't know what it was. Moshe [Moses] answered them, "It is the bread which Adonai has given you to eat."¹⁶ Here is what Adonai has ordered: each man is to gather according to his appetite — each is to take an 'omer [two quarts] per person for everyone in his tent."¹⁷ The people of Isra'el did this. Some gathered more, some less;¹⁸ but when they put it in an 'omer-measure, whoever had gathered much had no excess; and whoever had gathered little had no shortage; nevertheless each person had gathered according to his appetite.

¹⁹ Moshe [Moses] told them, "No one is to leave any of it till morning."²⁰ But they didn't pay attention to Moshe [Moses], and some kept the leftovers until morning. It bred worms and rotted,

which made Moshe [Moses] angry at them. ²¹ So they gathered it morning after morning, each person according to his appetite; but as the sun grew hot, it melted.

²² On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two ‘omers per person; and all the community leaders came and reported to Moshe [Moses]. ²³ He told them, “This is what Adonai has said: ‘Tomorrow is a holy Shabbat for Adonai. Bake what you want to bake; boil what you want to boil; and whatever is left over, set aside and keep for the morning.’”

We always think of manna as being bread – little wafers, or crackers – but it is clear here that it is gathered like wheat or barley or other grains would be gathered, and it can either be ground into a powder to make things (pita, challah, etc), or it can be boiled (such as we would do today with quinoa or barley for a soup).

²⁴ They set it aside till morning, as Moshe [Moses] had ordered; and it didn’t rot or have worms.

²⁵ Moshe [Moses] said, “Today, eat that; because today is a Shabbat for Adonai — today you won’t find it in the field. ²⁶ Gather it six days, but the seventh day is the Shabbat — on that day there won’t be any.” ²⁷ However, on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather and found none.

²⁸ Adonai said to Moshe [Moses], “How long will you refuse to observe my mitzvot and teachings?

²⁹ Look, Adonai has given you the Shabbat. This is why he is providing bread for two days on the sixth day. Each of you, stay where you are; no one is to leave his place on the seventh day.” ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹ The people called the food man [manna]. It was like coriander seed, white; and it tasted like honey cakes. ³² Moshe [Moses] said, “Here is what Adonai has ordered: ‘Let two quarts of man [manna] be kept through all your generations, so that they will be able to see the bread which I fed you in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.’” ³³ Moshe [Moses] said to Aharon, “Take a jar, put in it two quarts of man [manna], and set it aside before Adonai to be kept through all your generations.”

³⁴ Just as Adonai ordered Moshe [Moses], Aharon set it aside before the testimony to be kept. ³⁵ The people of Isra’el ate man [manna] for forty years, until they came to an inhabited land. They ate man [manna] until they arrived at the borders of the land of Kena’an [Canaan]. ³⁶ (An ‘omer is one-tenth of an eifah [which is a bushel dry-measure].)

God has just delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and miraculously led them through the Red Sea. Now the Israelites start an ongoing cycle of complaining. In 15:22-27 they complain about the lack of water, and here they complain about the lack of food.

It’s easy for us to look back and have judgments over their attitudes, but we do the same thing, just in a different manner.

- 1) What is the strangest thing you have ever eaten?
- 2) What food would you eat every day?
- 3) Why do you think the people, having so recently seen God’s awesome power, could complain so soon? (They were spoiled, they had short memories, it was typical of human nature, other)
- 4) If you were Moses, how would you have responded to the people’s complaints? (Quit your whining!, Shape up or ship out!, Lord, why me?)
- 5) Read the verse to know again. Is it easy to forget the things the Lord provides every day?

In verses 1-3, we discover that the Israelites have been in the wilderness for over a month, and they are grumbling about their situation. They complain to Aaron and Moses that they were better off in Egypt than they are now. At least in Egypt, they were eating. This was the first time the Israelites made the *'if only we had died in Egypt'* argument, but it would not be the last. (see: Numbers 11:4, 11:18; 14:2; 20:3; Joshua 7:7)

God decides to test the faith of the Israelites by offering them a very unconventional food source, "bread from heaven."

The test is simple. The people of Israel are to gather food provided by God each morning, but only enough for that day. On Friday, the sixth day, they are to gather enough food for two days, so they could abide by the Sabbath Day rules God had established in Genesis 2:1-3 when He made the seventh day for rest.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, along with everything in them. ² On the seventh day God was finished with his work which he had made, so he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. ³ God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created, so that it itself could produce.

God was teaching them a concept: that He was their ultimate provider, the One who from heaven gave them not necessarily what they expected, but what they really needed. Thus His satisfying them with the bread of heaven becomes a theme of Scripture that not only refers to the manna described in this account (Psalms 105:40; Nehemiah 9:15), but to the ultimate provision of eternal sustenance, Christ himself.

After Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 people, they wanted Him to always provide bread. He tried to get their attention off of the physical bread and onto the true Bread of Life – Himself. In John 6:25-71 we read what Jesus said of Himself being the Bread of Life:

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" ²⁶ Yeshua [Jesus] answered, "Yes, indeed! I tell you, you're not looking for me because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the bread and had all you wanted! ²⁷ Don't work for the food which passes away but for the food that stays on into eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For this is the one on whom God the Father has put his seal."

²⁸ So they said to him, "What should we do in order to perform the works of God?" ²⁹ Yeshua [Jesus] answered, "Here's what the work of God is: to trust in the one he sent!"

³⁰ They said to him, "Nu, what miracle will you do for us, so that we may see it and trust you? What work can you perform?" ³¹ Our fathers ate man [manna] in the desert — as it says in the Tanakh [Old Testament], 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' ³² Yeshua [Jesus] said to them, "Yes, indeed! I tell you it wasn't Moshe [Moses] who gave you the bread from heaven. But my Father is giving you the genuine bread from heaven; ³³ for God's bread is the one who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread from now on." ³⁵ Yeshua [Jesus] answered, "I am the bread which is life! Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever trusts in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ I told you that you have seen but still don't trust. ³⁷ Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will certainly not turn away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven

to do not my own will but the will of the One who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of the One who sent me: that I should not lose any of all those he has given me but should raise them up on the Last Day. ⁴⁰ Yes, this is the will of my Father: that all who see the Son and trust in him should have eternal life, and that I should raise them up on the Last Day.”

⁴¹ At this the Judeans began grumbling about him because he said, “I am the bread which has come down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Isn’t this Yeshua [Jesus] Ben-Yosef [son of Joseph]? We know his father and mother! How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” ⁴³ Yeshua [Jesus] answered them, “Stop grumbling to each other! ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father — the One who sent me — draws him. And I will raise him up on the Last Day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘They will all be taught by Adonai.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God — he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Yes, indeed! I tell you, whoever trusts has eternal life: ⁴⁸ I am the bread which is life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the man in the desert; they died. ⁵⁰ But the bread that comes down from heaven is such that a person may eat it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that has come down from heaven; if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. Furthermore, the bread that I will give is my own flesh; and I will give it for the life of the world.”

⁵² At this, the Judeans disputed with one another, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³ Then Yeshua [Jesus] said to them, “Yes, indeed! I tell you that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life — that is, I will raise him up on the Last Day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I live in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live through the Father, so also whoever eats me will live through me. ⁵⁸ So this is the bread that has come down from heaven — it is not like the bread the fathers ate; they’re dead, but whoever eats this bread will live forever!” ⁵⁹ He said these things as he was teaching in a synagogue in K’far-Nachum [Capernaum].

⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his talmidim [disciples] said, “This is a hard word — who can bear to listen to it?” ⁶¹ But Yeshua [Jesus], aware that his talmidim [disciples] were grumbling about this, said to them, “This is a trap for you? ⁶² Suppose you were to see the Son of Man going back up to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is no help. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life, ⁶⁴ yet some among you do not trust.” (For Yeshua [Jesus] knew from the outset which ones would not trust him, also which one would betray him.) ⁶⁵ “This,” he said, “is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has made it possible for him.”

⁶⁶ From this time on, many of his talmidim [disciples] turned back and no longer traveled around with him. ⁶⁷ So Yeshua [Jesus] said to the Twelve, “Don’t you want to leave too?” ⁶⁸ Shim’on Kefa [Simon Peter] answered him, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the word of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have trusted, and we know that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰ Yeshua [Jesus] answered them, “Didn’t I choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is an adversary.” ⁷¹ (He was speaking of Y’hudah [Judas] Ben-Shim’on [son of Simon], from K’riot [Iscariot]; for this man — one of the Twelve! — was soon to betray him.)

***Vs 30: Nu is defined as a Yiddish expression of agreement, or is used to ask a simple question instead of using words such as "well" or "so." An example of nu used as an interjection is when you say "Nu?" to ask why something that you have just been told is important.*

In Exodus 16:6-11, Moses and Aaron remind the people that it is actually God they are grumbling against, not Moses and Aaron. But, they assure the people that God has heard their complaints and is going to provide meat in the evening and bread in the morning. Once they gather around the pillar of cloud, which is God's presence among them, God reiterates what Moses and Aaron told them.

Q: What is the purpose of God miraculously providing this food?

A: "Then you will know that I am the Lord your God."

God was testing his people throughout the exodus events: leading them in odd directions without fully explaining why (14:1-4), surprising them with potentially destructive enemy attacks even after they had left Egypt (14:10; 17:8), requiring them to walk into and through deep water (14:15), and taking them to locations that lacked the necessities of life (as in 15:23 and 16:2).

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.

The meat appears that very evening in the form of quail, and in the morning a bread-like substance appears which the Israelites have never seen before. They actually name the substance "What is it?" This translates into English as *manna*. Once the manna appeared, the Israelites gathered it as instructed, only gathering one *omer* per person. An omer is equal to about 2 quarts.

Moses gave an additional command, however. Nobody was to save the manna overnight. It must be eaten the same day it was collected.

Q: Why would God command this?

A: To force the Israelites to rely on him *daily* for their food. Some Israelites, thinking they could hoard the manna, saved it overnight, but the next morning it was "full of maggots and began to smell."

Recall that on the 6th day, each person was to gather 2 omers, or twice as much as the other days. Why is this? God explains in verse 23. "Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning." Every seventh day was to be a day of rest, so God did not want the people of Israel gathering food and cooking it on the day of rest, the Sabbath.

The daily giving of the manna was so important to God and the Israelites that God commanded them to set aside a single omer of manna and keep it as a reminder of God's daily provision of food for the 40 years they spent in the wilderness. It wasn't until they entered the Promised Land that the manna ceased to appear each morning.

OMER:

In traditional Jewish standards of measurement, the *omer* was:

- Equivalent to the capacity of 43.2 eggs
- Also known as one-tenth of an *ephah* (three *seahs*).
- In dry weight, the *omer* weighed between 1.560 kg. to 1.770 kg., or approx. 3½ - 4 lb.
- This is the amount to be separated out of a loaf of dough to be given to the priest in the dough offering.

To put this into perspective, using something we know in our culture today:

- 1 cup of wheat berries produces approximately 1¾ cups flour.
- One pound of wheat berries equals approximately 4½ cups flour.

The word *omer* is sometimes translated as *sheaf* — specifically, an amount of grain large enough to require bundling.

In Exodus 16:16 God instructed the Israelites to collect an *omer* for each person in their tent, implying that each person could eat an *omer* of manna a day.

In the Torah, the main significance of the *omer* is the traditional offering of an *omer* of barley on second day of Passover during the feast of unleavened bread as well as the tradition of the Counting of the Omer - the 49 days between this sacrifice and the two loaves of wheat offered on the holiday of Shavuot.



Coriander Seeds

Q: "Why did the Israelites need manna if they had flocks/herds of animals that they could eat?"

A: In Exodus 9:1–7, the Bible tells us that the children of Israel had cattle or livestock while living as slaves in Egypt. And in Exodus 12:30–31, Pharaoh tells Moses to get out of Egypt after the final plague had been placed on Egypt and all their firstborn sons had died. Pharaoh even went so far as to tell the Israelites to take all that they had, including their flocks and their herds, possibly getting every trace of them out of Egypt. Yet as they wander in the wilderness, they complain and moan about not having enough to eat, and God deals with them with tremendous grace by providing manna (Exodus 16:1–5). Why, though, did they describe themselves as “starving” when they had flocks and herds of animals?

The fact is that the Bible doesn’t explain why they did not—or could not—eat the animals from their flocks. For the sake of the argument we will ponder some possible answers even though Scripture is silent on the issue.

- First, it’s possible that Israel had too much of the Egyptian ways in them, having been in captivity there for over 400 years. Egypt had a system in effect wherein they worshipped many animals, cattle among them. Soon after the exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel even worshipped a golden calf, fashioned by Aaron in the absence of Moses (Exodus 32:1–4). It’s possible they were so steeped in Egyptian ways that they couldn’t bring themselves to eat animals they worshipped.

- Second, did they see their livestock as their source of income? They were shepherds, and they came from shepherds. No one would want to eat his source of income. Perhaps they were preserving their flocks and herds for when they came into the Promised Land and would once again be shepherds and herdsmen. If they ate up the source of all their income, they would be paupers and beggars in their new country. A third possibility is that they were just whining because they were tired of eating the same old thing all the time. Perhaps they just wanted some variety in their diet.
- I think it is more likely this third reason: Numbers 11:4 says that they were greedy.

⁴ Now the mixed multitude who were among them [c]yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?” ⁵ We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

The Hebrew phrase translated as “greedy desires” can also mean “craving lust.” The JPS Torah Commentary translates the phrase as “gluttonous craving.” In Numbers 11:31 the place where this event occurred is called Kibroth-hattaavah. The literal Hebrew means “Graves of Craving.” They were greedy. It is highly likely that they ate more food – bread and meat – than could be produced by their herds and flocks while in Egypt their taskmasters would have had sufficient to meet any shortages. Therefore, it appears in this scripture to indicate that the Israelites needed quail and manna because they were consuming their food supplies faster than they should have due to greed.

Whatever the reason, the point is that it wasn't meat that the Israelites lacked; it was faith. They wanted to go back to Egypt where they were “fed” (Numbers 11:4–6). Even though they had been slaves in Egypt, they wanted to go back so they would not have to worry about where their next meal came from. Another point is that they should have made the trip in 10 days (and they probably had that much food) but it took 40 years because of their rebellion and disobedience (Numbers 14:26–35). Nothing would please or satisfy the grumbling Israelites, not meat for a whole month, not all the flocks and herds or all the fish in the sea.

Although God is silent as to why this happened, the lesson we learn from it is that God is faithful and supplies our needs, whatever they are, and it is not always what we want or think that we need. But He knows our greatest needs, and He knows what will sustain us and keep us safe. A case in point is the fact that the clothes and shoes of the Israelites did not wear out in the 40 years of desert wandering because God saw to it (Deuteronomy 8:4; Nehemiah 9:21). The manna stayed fresh so long as the people gathered it up according to His instructions, and water came out of a rock for them (Numbers 20:11). In the same way, God has promised to supply all our needs through His riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). We are not to worry about food because God knows what we need before we ask. Rather, we are to seek God and His kingdom, putting Him first and trusting in His faithfulness to provide what we need (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:22–31).