

Recap of last week's study:

Moses' Exile and Encounter With God in the Wilderness

Exodus 2:11-25, 3:1-6

- You may not have had a burning bush encounter, but have you ever felt God's presence and speaking to you?
- Remember how we compared Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush and how it compared with Hagar's experience in the wilderness?
- What might these stories reveal about the wilderness as a place where God meets with people, cares for them, and calls them into a new future?

Wilderness Testing to Strengthen Trust

- Exodus 16:1-20

In a barren wilderness where food and water are almost impossible to find, Israel faces the threats of starvation and dehydration.

- God uses these challenges to test them, inviting them to trust him more than ever before.

As they travel from Egypt to Mount Sinai, the Israelites face three major tests arranged in a symmetrical pattern:

A: Lack of water (Ex. 15:22-27)

B: Lack of food (Ex. 16:1-36) ← **Today's Focus**

A: Lack of water (Ex. 17:1-7)

In each episode, Israel grumbles against Moses (Ex. 15:24, 16:2-3, 17:3), doubting God's ability to keep them alive in the wilderness.

- But each time God provides what they need.
- The repetition emphasizes the key idea that God is transforming terrified slaves into free people who trust that everything needed for life comes from him alone.

Exodus 16:1-20NASB

¹ Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. ² But the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The sons of Israel said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread until we were full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this entire assembly with hunger!”

Consider-1

God sets Israel free from slavery in Egypt, but he immediately leads them into a place without food, water, or shelter.

- They're forced to wonder: A rational person would ask what kind of rescue is this?
- Obviously, slavery was awful, but the wilderness feels like a death sentence.
- But God doesn't let them die or abandon them there.
- He's testing Israel, showing them his loyal love and inviting them to see their world differently—to see him as their sole source of life.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, so that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, “At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?”

Consider-2

In the central story, the Israelites complain about having no food, so God sends manna, a mysterious bread from heaven that covers the ground each morning.

- This daily bread nourishes the Israelites for 40 years, until they enter the promised land and start eating from its produce (Josh. 5:12).
- God instructs them to never collect more than what they need for one day, except on the sixth day, when they should gather twice as much so they don't need to work on the seventh day, the Sabbath.

⁸ And 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 grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD.”

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come forward before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.’” ¹⁰ And it came about, as Aaron spoke to the entire congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

¹¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “I have heard the grumblings 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.’”

¹³ So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone gather as much as he will eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.’” ¹⁷ The sons of Israel did so, and some gathered much and some little. ¹⁸ When they measured it by the omer, the one who had gathered much did not have too much, and the one who had gathered little did not have too little; everyone gathered as much as he would eat.

Consider-3

While manna brings life, it also presents a challenging test to see whether the people will listen to God's voice.

- Some ignore God's words by collecting more than needed, but their stockpiles quickly rot into maggot food (Ex. 16:20).
- God is trying to teach the Israelites that good, ongoing life will not come about by thinking and acting on their own.
- He wants them to be free, which involves relying on God's provision and trusting in his faithfulness.

Reflect

When you think about your need for food, would you rather have enough to last for a while or only have enough for one day at a time?

- Our human nature sometimes leads us to look ahead when it comes to our provisions. But are we looking ahead on our own or with God's help?

How might God's instructions for Israel to collect only enough food for one day (except on the sixth day) have informed the Israelites to think and live?

Relevant Scripture to Consider

- Psalm 78:14-32
- Numbers 11

Next week:

Israel's Wilderness Transformation

Deut 8:1-20

How does Israel's wilderness journey reveal that true life is found not in abundance itself, but in trusting the one who provides it?

Source:

[The Wilderness in the Bible | Wilderness Testing to Strengthen Trust](#)