

DHW
BIBLE STUDY CLASS

LESSON 14

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

The long journey to the Promised Land had just begun. In a great and mighty way, the LORD had liberated the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Under the oppression of slavery they looked up and cried to the LORD. God heard their cries and delivered them.

They had just crossed the Red Sea in a most marvellous and stupendous way which the LORD wrought before their very eyes. They hurried across the sea on dry ground of the sea-bed, pursued by Pharaoh and his six hundred elite charioteers. But Pharaoh and his charioteers were not able to catch up with them or harm them. All the children of Israel were saved to the very last man. When the last person stepped

on the shore on the other side to safety, the waters returned and drowned the enemies. They were triumphant and jubilant. But that was just the beginning.

The journey ahead was not easy. There were many trials, troubles and tribulations which they had to go through. The LORD put them through these hurdles and hindrances in order to strengthen and build their character, and also to teach them many precious lessons that they might trust Him. Our study and meditation of the account of these experiences of the children of Israel will certainly benefit us in our spiritual growth and walk with God. It will increase our knowledge of God and His will. It will teach us how we ought to depend and trust God daily in our journey of life until we reach Beulah Land (Heaven). It will be exciting and profoundly instructive.

The following is a reasonably good outline of the chapter:

- 1) The children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron (16:1-9);

- 2) The Lord was faithful and true to His promise to the children of Israel (16:10-15);
- 3) The Lord imposed certain conditions on the collection of the manna for their daily consumption (16:16-21);
- 4) The Lord instructed the children of Israel how they should collect the manna for the Sabbath (16:22-30);
- 5) The Lord required them to keep a portion of the *manna* before Him for future generations (16:31-36).

STUDY THE WORD

Complaining Against Moses & Aaron

After resting the children of Israel broke camp at Elim where there were twelve wells of water, and seventy palm trees. Moses took them south along the western side of the Sinai Peninsula into the wilderness of Sin, which was between Elim and Mount Sinai. It was on the 15th day of the 2nd month after departing from Egypt. Forty five days had passed since they left Egypt. The scorching heat and biting

cold at night had taken their toll on them. Not long later they began to murmur. They had so quickly forgotten what God had done at Marah by turning the bitter water sweet to drink (15:25). They also had forgotten the good things they enjoyed and rested at Elim, which was surrounded by wells of water and many palm trees. God had told them that if they obeyed Him, He would bless them. They had also forgotten the words and promises of God through Moses.

Soon all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron. They complained to their leaders that they were hungry and there were no meat and bread to eat. They blamed Moses and Aaron charging them for leading them into the wilderness to die of hunger. They would rather enjoy the food in Egypt and be slaves for the rest of their life and die. They would rather forfeit their new-found freedom. They were not prepared to go through the troubles in the wilderness even though God had promised them that He would be with them (15:26).

They lusted after bread and meat like they had in Egypt. The divine record states that the LORD

heard them. Moses did not have to turn to the LORD. The LORD took the initiative and spoke straightaway to Moses. God told Moses that He would provide them with *bread from heaven* (16:4). They would have to collect it daily. God did not give them a week's supply or even two days' supply of bread. It must be collected on a daily basis. The reason for this restriction was *to prove them whether they will walk in my law, or no* (16:4).

The lesson is simple yet serious and essential. God placed a premium on trusting and obeying Him. There was no other way. For them to be blessed their faith in God must never waiver. They must completely trust God and do what God wanted them to do. It was a simple yet important commandment. Moses heard from the LORD. He told the children of Israel the words of the LORD. Moses was quick to point out to them that their murmuring was not against him and Aaron for they were insignificant, but their murmuring was against the LORD. God would also give them meat from quails in the evening and bread from heaven in the morning.

The lesson of this daily collection of the bread is that each person collected what he could consume for that day. The next day they would do the same. The test is that the children of Israel needed to daily depend on the LORD. It was also a test of their continual faith and trust in God. What happened was that some obeyed but some did not. Those who were disobedient collected more than their share so as to reserve it for the next day. But the extra manna turned bad and infested with worms (16:20)! Some people just did not learn to submit to God. How characteristic of many of us even today having no trust and faith in God. What about the Sabbath day? Did they go out and collect the manna?

The Lord Is Faithful and True to His Promises

The LORD continued speaking to Moses. The LORD affirmed to Moses that He had heard the murmurings of the children of Israel (16:12). As He had promised, the children of Israel would have meat in the evening and bread in the morning so that they *shall know that I am the LORD your God* (16:12b). Consequently, the

quails which covered the whole camp came in the evening, and in the morning there was dew lying on the camp. But when the dew had gone *there lay a small round thing, as small as a hoar frost on the ground* (16:14). When the people saw it they called it *manna* (meaning, “What is it?). They did not know what it was. Moses then explained that *manna* was the bread which the LORD had given them to eat. That means that the LORD was faithful to His words and promises. A lesson to be learned is that God does not lie and will keep His promises according to His Word.

Conditions for Collecting *Manna*

The LORD laid strict conditions for the collection of *Manna*. Accordingly when the morning dew had gone, the children of Israel collected the *manna* on the ground. Some, who collected much using an *omer* (a tenth of an ephah, about 2 litres, 16:36) as a measuring device had nothing left over and interestingly those who collected less *had no lack*. The important thing was that each person should gather according to his need. Moses reminded them that none of the

manna should be left overnight (16:19). But there were some who did not heed Moses’ reminder. And when all had collected their need, the remainder just melted when the hot sun shone on it. But there were those who gathered twice as much that was two *omers* for themselves individually. Of course, they did not finish consuming it, and some of it was left over till the next morning. The leftover bred worms. Moses was very angry with them for their disobedience. They acted as if they knew better. They thought that they would not lose out if the *manna* did not appear the following day. They did not trust Moses and the LORD.

The Collection of *Manna* for the Sabbath

The Sabbath is a holy rest unto the LORD. It is a day which the LORD commanded the children of Israel to set apart that is to sanctify or keep the day special from the rest of the days of the week. It was a day to be devoted to worship the LORD. So, on the sixth day they were allowed to collect two portions of *manna* – one for the day and the other for the next day, the Sabbath day. On the Sabbath day they did not need to go out to collect the

manna because there would be no *manna*. And the extra portion of the *manna* which had to be kept overnight for the Sabbath would not turn bad. Moses encouraged them to eat the *manna* collected the day before for it would still be good on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath was unto the LORD.

In spite of the LORD'S clear instruction, some went out on the Sabbath day to collect the manna but they found none (16:27). The LORD asked, *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?* (16:28). Their actions grieved the heart of God. Unbelief is the cause of disobedience. We learn that this is the reason why we disobey God because we are unbelieving. Doubts about God and His Word and promises hinder our trust and obedience to Him.

Sabbath was a rest day that God had given to His people to rest and keep it holy unto Him. Today, the Sabbath rest is the Lord's Day (first day of the week, i.e. Sunday). Similarly as the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, we are to keep it by congregating together to worship God. It is kept holy unto the LORD by the reading

of His Word; the preaching, teaching and hearing of His Word; the singing of hymns of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving; and the giving of our substance as the LORD blesses.¹ Therefore, it is as good as disobeying God if a Christian does not attend church worship services on Sunday. The only exception is when one is involved in works of mercy and necessity.²

The Lord Requires Them to Remember His Goodness

The manna was *like coriander seed, white in colour, and the taste of it was like wafer made with honey* (16:31).³ The LORD commanded Moses to fill an omer of the *manna* in order to keep it for posterity that they might see the bread which the LORD fed the children of Israel in the wilderness, when He brought them out of Egypt (16:32). The

¹ Deuteronomy 16:10 *And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:*

² Matthew 12:1-13 expounds the principles of keeping the sabbath holy unto the LORD.

³ A plant having narrowly lobed leaves, small white, pink, or lilac flowers borne in flat-topped clusters, and globular aromatic fruits; the dried ripe fruit of the plant is used as a spice in sausages and other meat products (Times-Chambers Dictionary, s.v. "coriander")

omer of manna was to be kept in the Ark of Covenant, which is called here as *the Testimony* (16:34). The LORD wanted the children of Israel to know how the LORD had fed them in their journeys in the wilderness. The divine commentary on this memorial is given by Moses later in Deuteronomy: “*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live* (8:3).

PRACTICAL VALUE

One glaring truth revealed in this chapter is that men easily forget the good things they have enjoyed and received from others but when bad things happen they are quick to criticize and condemn. This is illustrated by the children of Israel as they started off their journey in the wilderness. In slightly more than a month, they had forgotten how the LORD delivered them in mighty and miraculous ways from their bondage in Egypt. They also

forgot how the LORD had protected and preserved them while the Egyptians suffered. Now here at the first instance of a lack of food, they charged Moses and Aaron with false intentions to destroy them in the wilderness. But as Moses and Aaron acted on behalf of the LORD, their accusations against Moses and Aaron were in fact directed against the LORD. We learn that the LORD was merciful and patient with them and provided for them a special *manna* from heaven and also quails for meat. It is therefore quite appropriate that the LORD commanded Moses to keep an omer of *manna* in the Ark of Covenant so that the children of Israel might *see* that the LORD had fed and sustained them throughout their journeys in the wilderness. God delights in His children to remember His goodness and greatness because we have the propensity to forget, especially the good things we are given to enjoy. We need to be grateful to others who have helped us.

Although we need physical food to sustain our body and more importantly, we need spiritual food, which is the Word of God, the *manna* from heaven for our spiritual

growth. Many of us are still spiritual babes because we have not been feeding our spirit and soul just as regularly as we feed our bodies! Because of our spiritual immaturity we are unable to discern the will of God. We do not love Him as we ought to. We are easily lured by false ideas about God and His will.

The lessons in these passages are precious. Our faith in the LORD and His Word must never be compromised. There must not be a trace of doubt. An unbelieving heart breeds discontent and disobedience. Disobedience robs us of the blessings of God. Daily dependence upon God is imperative. How often we trust in ourselves and not in God. On the other hand, the LORD our God is ever faithful and trustworthy as seen in the chapter.

Keeping the Sabbath, which is the Lord's Day for us today, pleases the LORD. If we love Him, we will keep apart that day exclusively unto the LORD. We will not allow anyone or anything to hinder or draw us away from congregating with other Christians to worship the LORD. As we are prone to forgetfulness, we must remind

ourselves how good and merciful is the LORD our God. AMEN