

## The Food Here is Terrible: Manna & Quail

**Opener:** Ever get what you needed but not what you wanted? What was it?

**Scripture:** The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, after they had come out of Egypt. <sup>2</sup>In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

<sup>4</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. <sup>5</sup>On the 6th day they are to prepare twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

<sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, <sup>7</sup>and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” <sup>8</sup>Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.”

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the people, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’” <sup>10</sup>While Aaron was speaking to them, they looked to the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. <sup>11</sup>The Lord said to Moses, <sup>12</sup>“I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

<sup>13</sup>That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.” . . . <sup>35</sup>The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan. Exodus 16:1-15, 35 (condensed)

### Discussion Questions

1. The Israelites were no more than three days into their journey through the wilderness before problems arose—there was nothing to drink and nothing to eat. God’s deliverance was a distant memory and they were mired in self-pity. Have you ever been in a situation in which you knew you should be thankful but you were anything but? How did you work through it? Exodus 16:1-3
2. How do self-pity and grumbling (complaining in a bad-tempered way) affect our relationships, including our relationship with God? How can we express our needs or dissatisfaction without grumbling or complaining? Exodus 16:2-12
3. God heard the people’s grumbling and provided sufficiently and abundantly, but they probably got tired of manna and quail after the first decade or so. Knowing that God hears us and understands our needs, what should we expect from His provision? Exodus 16:35
4. God provided enough food for each day, but He didn’t allow them to gather a surplus. Why do you think that was? What is it about daily provision that protects us against trusting in our own resources? Ex. 16:4-5
5. In our culture where “sufficient” is far less popular than “extravagant,” how can we apply this story about manna and quail to our own lives? How can we develop contentment with and gratitude for God’s provisions even when they’re not as extravagant as we’d like?
6. The Israelites likely expected deliverance to take them on an easier path than the Desert of Sin. We don’t know God’s plan for our lives in advance, so how can we prepare for a path we can’t see?

**Wrap Up:** We’re not all that different from the Israelites. How many times has God asked us to step out in faith so we can receive his blessings and we’ve refused? Maybe that’s because we’re afraid that God’s promises won’t turn out the way we want them to and afraid of the long, hard road we’ll have to walk to get to the future God has for us. We’d rather just go our own way where we can at least see and anticipate our next step. The Israelites fell into this trap. We don’t have to.