

MANNA

Adapted from a Jacob's Ladder Religion Lesson

Reading: Exodus 16:9-31

After they had escaped from Egypt, the Children of Israel journeyed through the wilderness. It took about a month from the time the people left Egypt for them to reach Mount Sinai, traveling 150 miles with all their animals and possessions. And on the way they ran out of food!

The Children of Israel were hungry. They quickly forgot about their unhappiness as slaves in Egypt and complained to Moses that they had meat and bread to eat when they were there. The people accused Moses of leading them out into the desert to die of hunger. When the Lord heard these bitter complaints, He told Moses that He would "rain bread from heaven" for them. The people could go out and gather their quota each morning. But with this gift came a test of the people, whether or not they would obey what the Lord said.

Each morning, the people found the ground covered with a white substance, which they called "manna". Moses explained that this was the bread from heaven that the Lord had provided for them! The manna had to be gathered early in the morning, because it melted as the sun grew hot. The Lord also send quails to the people in the evenings. Quails are small birds which are easy to catch. These birds provided good meat for the people in the evening.

Moses instructed all the people that everyone should gather only what they needed for each day. Each person would need one omer per day. An omer is a measure equal to about one quart. The people were told not to keep any of the manna over night. But they did not trust the Lord enough to obey His command. They did not listen to Moses. They kept some of the manna over night. Do you remember what happened to it? It bred worms and stank. What an awful sign to remind the Israelites that they had disobeyed!

There was one exception to this rule. On the sixth day the people were to gather twice the normal amount of manna: two omers for every person. The Lord instructed them to bake it or boil it and there would be enough food for the next day. Do you remember why they were to do this? On the Sabbath the people were not allowed to do any work. It was a holy day of worship and rest to honor the Lord.

The Israelites kept wandering in the desert for forty years. All this time they were kept alive with manna every morning. In order to help remind them of this miracle, the Lord had Moses and Aaron fill a pot with manna. They were to keep it to show how the Lord had fed all the people while they wandered in the wilderness.

Does this story make you think of anything in the Lord's Prayer? The Lord taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Do you think this request is for bread for our bodies or for our spirits? It is for both. Our bodies need food for nourishment and our minds also need nourishment. The Lord gives us strength for each day, both physical and spiritual. We do

not need to be anxious. He is continually with us, guiding us and providing for us, just as He did for the Israelites so many years ago.

We can also gather the spiritual food that the Lord gives each day. If we make the effort, we can learn to trust the Lord and use what He provides in good ways. One thing we can do is read from the Word a little each day. When we have anxious or fearful times, we can remember this story and turn to the Lord to help us.

In this story we have the powerful lesson that the Lord can provide everything we need for our lives. He knows we need food for our souls as well as for our bodies every day. This is why He taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He gave the Children of Israel food for their bodies, and He gives us food for our souls—the spiritual wisdom and strength we need to overcome evil.

The Lord asks us to collect the spiritual food He sends us, just as the Israelites went out each day to collect the manna. Our bread from heaven is the goodness and truth we find in the Word. If we take some of this into our minds each day and pray to the Lord to guide us, we will be sustained all through our journey of life.