

Peace be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our last lesson, we saw how **God saved** the people of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and his troops. When the Israelites arrived at the shore of the Red Sea, they had no possible means of escaping from Pharaoh's army. However, we saw how God pushed the waters aside for them so that they could walk through the middle of the sea, on dry ground. But when the troops of Egypt tried to cross, they were drowned. Thus, on that day the Lord God saved Israel from the hand of the people of Egypt. And when they saw the great power of the Lord, they feared Him and sang to Him, *"I will sing to the Lord, because He is my Salvation. The Lord is great!"*

We are presently looking in the book of Exodus, where the Israelites are in the wilderness **between Egypt and Canaan**. Canaan is the country that God had promised to give to their forefather Abraham and his descendants, so that they could own it. Today we are going to see **how God fed the Israelites in the desert**. The Scriptures show us how God Himself "walked" before them, in a great cloud during the day and in a flame of fire during the night. One thing is sure, if God did not guide them and care for them, they would perish in the wilderness.

Let us try to imagine for a moment the circumstances in which the Israelites found themselves. They were a huge crowd—a multitude bigger than the population of a medium-sized city, more than two million people! They were passing through a bone-dry desert—a desert without water or food. Think about it! A great multitude walking through a barren wilderness of sand and thorny trees! How would the tribes of Israel survive? Who could save them from the threat of hunger and thirst? How could that

multitude and their many herds find enough water and food to stay alive in the wilderness? Could they feed themselves? No! Who could feed them then? There is only one answer. **God alone** could feed them and preserve them!

Did the Israelites **trust God**? Or did they worry about what they would eat and what they would drink? Surely the people of Israel should have trusted the Lord God. God had done so many great things for them. He freed them from their bondage of slavery by means of the ten plagues. He delivered their firstborn from death, by means of the blood of the lamb. He opened a dry path through the middle of the sea. And now He was going before them in a cloud to lead them back to the land of Canaan, as He had promised to their forefather, Abraham, so long ago. What do you think? Did the people of Israel have confidence in their God? Did they believe that God could do what He had promised? Let's turn back to the Scriptures now and discover the answer.

We are reading in chapter sixteen, in the book of Exodus, in the Torah of Moses. The Scripture says:

*The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community **grumbled against Moses and Aaron.** ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat round 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.**"*

Well, did the tribes of Israel have confidence in God? No, they did not! They were grumbling against Him and His prophet Moses. Listen to how God answered them.

*The Lord said to Moses, "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." 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.

*That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 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. The people of Israel called the bread **manna**. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.*

That is how God fed the tribes of Israel in the wilderness, until the day they arrived at the land of Canaan. Did you hear where the food came from? It came **from heaven**. It came **from God**. Did the Israelites deserve the food that God sent down for them? No! They didn't deserve anything except God's punishment for all their unbelief and ungratefulness. It was only because of God's mercy that they didn't die of hunger in the desert.

Now let's continue reading to see what happened another time, when **the Israelites ran out of water**. We are reading in chapter seventeen. The Scripture says:

*The whole Israelite community set out...traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was **no water** for the people to drink. So they **quarreled** with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."*

The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Thus, a great flow of water came gushing from the rock, flowing in the desert, and all the people drank, they and their herds.

Let us stop here and think a little about the story we are reading today. After all that God had done for the Israelites, did they have faith in Him? Were their hearts full of praise and thankfulness because of all that He had done for them? No! They did not trust God. Instead they complained and spoke against the God who had already saved them from so many, many dangers.

What did God do? The Lord God, in His patience and His goodness, gave them food and water in the desert. Did the people of Israel deserve God's goodness? No! They only deserved God's judgment. Why did God show them His goodness? Because God is **faithful** and **merciful**. He is God, the Faithful One, the Merciful One. Because of **His mercy** He provided food and water for the Israelites, even though they were ungrateful sinners! If salvation from hunger and thirst depended on the goodness and merit of the people themselves, God surely would have let them die in the desert.

Also, we should realize that God did not protect them simply because of His mercy, but also **to keep His Word**. God is faithful to keep all His promises--and He had made an important promise concerning the nation of Israel. As we have already learned, **God had promised to bless all the nations of the world through the nation of Israel**, because it was to be through them that the prophets, the Holy Scriptures and the Savior of the world would come. Yes, God is faithful and full of mercy! He is the **God of truth** and the **God of love**. Surely the tribes of Israel did not deserve God's love. Yet

even when they disobeyed God and spoke against Him, God proved His faithfulness and His love by giving them food from heaven.

Perhaps someone asks, "Of what value are the stories of the Israelites to us today?"

The Word of God says: *"These things happened to them as examples, or illustrations, and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."* As God delivered the children of Israel from the power of the desert, in a similar way, God wants to deliver every child of Adam from **the power of sin**.

We ask you: What did the Israelites have to do so they would not perish in the desert? They simply had **to gather and eat the food that God sent down from the sky**. From where did their deliverance come? Did it come from their own efforts? No, their deliverance came from God. They had no power to save themselves from hunger and death. They couldn't do anything but **gather and eat the food that God had sent down for them**.

The Holy Scripture shows us that we are all sinners like the people of Israel, we have **no means of saving ourselves**--neither from the power of sin nor from the righteous judgment of God. Perhaps we are not walking through a dry desert as were the Israelites, but the shadow of death still hangs over us as it hung over them. The Word of the Lord is clear: Anyone who refuses to receive this means of salvation that God has provided will die in his sin and fall into eternal fire of hell. These are not pleasant thoughts. Die in sin! Come into judgment! Fall into hell! These are **terrible tragedies!** The **good news**, however, is that no one needs to die in his or her sin. Just as God gave the Israelites food so that they could live and not die of hunger in the wilderness, in a similar way God has given us "Food" so that we can be blessed in this life and forever in the life to come!

What is the "Food" which gives eternal life? Can we buy a food in the market that can give us the power to live forever in God's presence? No, no such food is available in the market! Well then, where and what is this "Food" which gives eternal life?

Friends, you must know that about one thousand five hundred years after the Israelites ate manna, a type of bread, in the wilderness, God sent down **the Redeemer**, the Savior of the world. He is the "Food" which God has provided to save the people of the world from the power of sin, death, judgment and hell. Let us listen and think carefully about what the Redeemer Himself said when He was upon the earth. He said,

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread {Lit. food, sustenance} of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven...He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty!"

Dear friends, this is where we must stop today. In our next program, God willing, we will begin to see how God gave Israel the Ten Commandments....

God bless you as you ponder what the Redeemer declared, saying,

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty!"

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