

THE CRISIS OF HUNGER: THE TWO GREAT SINS OF ISRAEL: THAT OF GRUMBLING AND DISOBEDIENCE (UNBELIEF) EXODUS 16:01–15

Introduction

One of the most basic needs of man is the need for food. Without food, a person starves to death. Consequently, when a person's food supply is threatened...

- he complains — grumbles and murmurs against the weather, some crop disease or God
- he blames the circumstances, the government, the economy, the grocery store, the farmer, his employer — just whoever or whatever is causing the shortage of food

A person's trust in God and others is soon lost when his food supply is threatened. Trust in God far too often crumbles when hunger or any other serious trial confronts a person. This was the very situation facing the Israelites...

- that of hunger
- that of complaining, grumbling and murmuring
- that of failing to trust God to meet their need

But these things should never be. We should never complain nor fail to trust God, not because of hunger nor because of any other serious circumstance that might confront us. God loves and cares for us. And God has promised to take care of our needs in every circumstance, even in life-threatening circumstances. God's promise is clear:

Mat 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

This is the great lesson of this passage: *The Third Crisis of Israel in the Wilderness — Hunger: The Two Great Sins of Israel, that of Grumbling and Disobedience (Unbelief)*

- I. The crisis of hunger: the first great sin committed again, that of complaining and grumbling (unbelief) (vv. 1-3).
- II. The promise of God: to meet the needs of His grumbling people (vv. 4-15).
- III. The test of the people: They failed the test — they disobeyed God (vv. 16-30)

I. *Exodus 16:01–03 The Crisis of Hunger*

There was the crisis of hunger, and the first great sin of Israel was committed again, that of complaining and grumbling.

1. The people left Elim and marched to the desert of Sin (see *Desert of Sin*, Exo. 16:1).
Note that God's people marched to the desert of Sin exactly one month after leaving
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Egypt. How quickly God's people forget the deliverance, care, goodness and blessings of God! Just one month earlier, God had miraculously delivered His people out of Egyptian slavery. Yet, here they were committing a terrible sin. Note what the sin was.

2. The people complained — grumbled and murmured — against God's servants Moses and Aaron. Why? Because they were hungry: they had used up all their food supply. Before they left Egypt, they had apparently been instructed to take along one month's supply of food, and now they had no food left. A crisis existed and the situation looked hopeless. Where in the desert could two to three million people possibly find enough food to keep them alive? Such an enormous food source just did not exist, not out in the wilderness of the desert. The people knew this, and they obviously began to talk about the problem among themselves. The talk soon became a complaint, and the people began to grumble and murmur against their leaders, Moses and Aaron.

This God's people should not have done. Instead of grumbling and complaining, God's people should have gone to their leaders, presented the problem, and suggested that they all — both leaders and people — seek God together. The people should have trusted God, trusted His goodness and power to deliver them. But this they did not do. They showed unbelief in God...

- distrusted His concern and care
- distrusted His goodness
- distrusted His power
- distrusted His provision

And note the terrible depth of their distrust and unbelief, the scorching heat of their sinful grumbling: they would rather have died in Egypt in one of God's plagues than to die of starvation out in the desert. At least in Egypt they had meat and bread. The Hebrew has the idea of *pots of meat* — all they could eat.

What audacity! What an affront against God! What rashness, arrogance, gall, rudeness and defiance. What a terrible thing to say in the face of God! And after He had done so much for them.

=> Remember God's wonderful deliverance from Egyptian slavery.

=> Remember God's astounding power demonstrated at the Red Sea.

=> Remember God's glorious provision of water to take care of their thirst

All this had all taken place within the last thirty days. Time and again over a period of thirty days, God had gloriously delivered and provided for His dear people. But murmurers have short memories. And here they were wallowing around in the pit of sinful grumbling, showing that their hearts were full of...

- selfishness
- unbelief
- distrust
- carnal, fleshly thoughts

Thought 1. Our memories of the “good old days,” of the past, are often magnified and exaggerated. This was certainly true of the Israelites, and it is true of us. In looking back to their days in Egypt, the Israelites could not have had enough to eat.

Meat and plenty of food are never a part of the everyday diet of slaves nor of the poor of any society. The Israelites had short memories and warped perspectives. They had forgotten their days of affliction as slaves to the world of Egypt.

This shows the great crisis the Israelites were facing. They were facing starvation. A spirit of hopelessness gripped them. They knew there was no place out in the desert where enough food could be found to feed them, not two to three million people. Nevertheless, when a crisis arises for the believer — the genuine believer — he is to call upon God, not grumble and complain. In facing problems, we are to trust God — believe that God cares, that He loves us, that He will help us through the problem — no matter how severe the problem may be.

***Psa 28:7** The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

***Psa 31:19** How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

***Psa 34:22** The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.*

***Psa 37:3** Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

***Psa 37:5** Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:*

***Psa 40: 17** Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

***Isa 26:3** You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

***Isa 26:4** Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.*

***Isa 41:10** So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

***Heb 13:5-6** Keep your lives [behaviour, conduct] free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

Thought 2. J. Vernon McGee has an excellent application of this point.

The children of Israel...despised God’s heavenly food and complained about eating it. They grew tired of eating manna. They longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. They wanted to go back to that from which they had been delivered.

That is the story, I am afraid, of some people who have been converted, and have been delivered out of “Egypt “ [the world, the old life]. Every now and then they take a side trip back to get the leeks, the onions and the garlic. There are Christians today who need to make a complete break with the old life. Friend, you can’t go on living like the world, living on the things of Egypt, and be serviceable to God and have the

peace of God in your heart. There must be a break with Egypt. We must live on the true Manna that comes from heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ. (Vernon McGee. Thru the Bible, Vol. 1, p. 254-255.)

EXODUS 16:01 DESERT OF SIN

This was a place, the actual name of a desert in the days of Moses. The word “sin” must not be confused with the theological word *sin*. The “Desert of Sin” was probably taken from the word *Sinai* or the bush *Seneh*. The desert was probably named the “Desert of Sin” because of its terrain, most likely referring to a rocky area with thorn-bushes scattered across the landscape. The desert was most likely located in the south-western Sinai, close to the area of modern *Debbet er-Ramleh*. □

II. *Exodus 16:04–15 God’s Promise to His People*

There was God’s promise to meet the needs of His grumbling people.

1. God promised to provide *bread from heaven* for His people (v. 4). The only conceivable way two to three million people could be fed out in the wilderness of a desert — fed for over forty years — would be by a miracle from God. This was exactly what God was promising: to feed His people Himself, to feed them in such a way that His existence, love and care could never be questioned nor doubted. (See *Bread from Heaven*, Exo. 16:31.)
2. God would, however, test the faith of His people (v. 4). God was going to test their faith in two ways:
 - ⇒ By charging His people to gather bread every day for that particular day. They were to gather *only one day’s supply*, no more and no less. By laying down this restriction, God tested their trust in Him. They had to trust God *day by day* for food.
 - ⇒ By commanding that they gather twice as much food on the sixth day (v. 5). This commandment would test the obedience of the people. Would they gather twice as much as commanded and rest on the seventh day, or would they go out and work to gather their food on the seventh day? Just what the people did will be seen later (Exo. 16:16-30).
3. God would prove Himself (vv. 6-7). God’s servants went before God’s people and declared His wonderful promise:
 - ⇒ In the evening, the LORD would use His provision to prove that it was He who saved them and brought them out of the land of Egyptian slavery (v. 6).
 - ⇒ In the morning, the LORD would use His provision to prove His glory (v. 7).
 - ⇒ Why was the LORD going to do this? Because the Lord was going to prove Himself — THAT HE WAS TRULY the LORD — because the people had grumbled and complained against Him (v. 7).

4. Now note: God gave a warning. Grumbling is not against God's servants but against God Himself (v. 8). This is true in two ways.
 - a. God, not His servant, is the person who leads His people. God, not the servants of God, had delivered the Israelites from their enslavement in Egypt (the world) and led them to begin their march to the promised land. God in His sovereign leadership had led the Israelites to be where they were, not Moses and Aaron. Therefore, their complaint, although spoken against Moses and Aaron, was really directed against God and His leadership.
 - b. Complaining and grumbling show distrust in God, that a person does not believe God cares and will work things out for good. Therefore, when we complain and grumble, we are saying to God that we do not trust Him, do not trust that He loves us and will deliver us. Our complaining and grumbling is not against God's servant, not really. It is against God.

***Psa 95:8-11** "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested me; they tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared an oath in my anger, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

***Prov 19:3** A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.*

***Prov 28:14** Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.*

***Prov 29:1** A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy.*

***Rom 14:4** Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

***1 Cor 10:12-14** And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

***Phil 2:12-14** Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing.*

***Heb 3:8-13** Do not harden your hearts, as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, and forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared an oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.' See to it, brothers, that none of you has*

a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Heb 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

5. God laid down the prerequisite for receiving the bread of God: the people had to come, to draw near God (vv. 9-10). When believers sin against God by complaining and grumbling, they must come before the Lord and draw near to Him. The idea is that of confession and repentance: the people were to draw near God, come before Him and confess and repent of their complaining and grumbling.

Note that the people obeyed: they looked to the cloud which symbolized God's very presence (v. 10). What they witnessed was a phenomenal sight: the glory of the Lord shone in the cloud (v. 10. See *Glory of God*, Exo. 16:10.)

Thought 1. How often God would grant a clear, intense sense of His glory and presence — if we would only draw near Him. If we would only spend long sessions of meditation and prayer in His presence. How much power would be present in our lives and ministries if we often got alone with God for long periods of time.

Heb 10:22 *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

6. God re-stressed the facts (vv. 11-12). Note that He restated the facts to Moses: He had heard the people's grumbling and He would meet their needs. But He was doing it for a very specific purpose: that they might learn the truth, learn more and more that He is the Lord their God. God wanted the truth driven more and more into their hearts and lives, that He and He alone is the only living and true God. He and He alone was to be their God, the Lord of their lives.
7. God fulfilled His promise (vv. 13-15).
 - a. God gave the meat He had promised. The quail came and covered the camp that very evening (v. 13). Imagine enough quail to feed two to three million people every day of the week for forty years. Moreover, imagine the quail always landing right where the Israelites were camped. The provision of the quail was beyond all question a spectacular miracle of God.
 - b. God gave the bread He had promised — the manna from heaven (vv. 13-15).
=> The next morning after the dew had melted, the ground was covered with thin flakes that looked like frost (v. 14).

=> The Israelites had never seen the thin flakes before. Thus they called it manna, which means “What is it?” (v. 15). Moses informed the people that it was the bread from heaven that had been promised by God. (See *Bread from Heaven*, Exo. 16:31.)

Thought 1. Man is hungry, hungry for all kinds of things. But lying at the very base of his hunger is the craving for...

- purpose and fulfilment
- acceptance and recognition
- love and friendship
- joy and pleasure

The world offers food to satisfy and fulfil man’s hunger. And when a man looks at the world, he sees an appealing offer to feed him, to feed him with...

- drugs
- stimulation
- popularity
- alcohol
- excitement
- riches
- sex (illicit sex)
- position
- property
- pleasure
- honour
- power
- fame
- control
- success
- beauty

But tragically, these things never satisfy; they never fill the deepest recesses of man’s heart. The world leaves man empty, leaves him with a sense of empty gratification and pleasure and with unfilled achievement and success.

There is only one way man’s hunger can be satisfied: he must eat, partake of the bread from heaven: the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the hunger of man’s heart. Only Jesus Christ can give life to man. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life. He is the bread given by God to satisfy the hunger of man’s soul.

John 6:32-33 *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it was my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, “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.”*

John 6:58 *“This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

Isa 55:2 *“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ■*

EXODUS 16:10 GLORY OF GOD; SHEKINAH GLORY

*While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud. **Exodus 16:10***

The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. This was the Shekinah Glory, the cloud that symbolized God's presence. It was the very cloud that had guided Israel out of Egypt and that was to rest upon the tabernacle (Exo. 40:34-38). The Shekinah Glory was also to rest above the mercy seat in the most holy place of the tabernacle. Scripture describes the glory of the Lord as follows:

1. The glory of the LORD is like a consuming fire.

***Exo. 24:17** To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.*

2. The glory of the LORD is like a pillar of fire that radiates light.

***Exo. 13:21-22** By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of a cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.*

3. The glory of the LORD is like a fiery furnace.

***Heb. 12:18, 29** "You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm...For our "God is a consuming fire."*

4. The glory of the LORD is like a light that radiates splendour, a light that is so full of splendour that Peter called it "the excellent glory."

***2 Pet. 1:17** He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with whom I am well pleased."*

5. The glory of the LORD is a light so glorious and brilliant that there is no need for a sun.

***Rev 21:11, 23** It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.*

6. The glory of the LORD is a light so brilliant that no man can approach it.

***1 Tim 6:16** Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen. □*

EXODUS 16: 31
JESUS CHRIST, THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN
MANNA, THE BREAD OF GOD

*The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. **Exodus 16:31***

God promised to feed the Israelites with bread from heaven. The Israelites called this bread manna. Manna looked like resin or a coriander seed. The coriander seed is a small white grain that is used for seasoning. Manna tasted like honey wafers (Exo. 16:31) or like wafers made with olive oil (Num. 11:8). The manna could be ground with a hand-mill or crushed in some form of mortar and cooked or baked in pots (Num. 8:7-8). Note three significant pictures — three important lessons — that can be drawn from the manna.

1. The manna was the bread given by God to save Israel from physical death (starvation). Jesus Christ is the Bread of God given to save man from spiritual death. This means the manna was a type of the Bread of Heaven, a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Note what Jesus Christ claimed for Himself:
 - a. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the true bread from heaven.
***John 6:32** Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it was my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.”*
 - b. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the bread of God who came down from heaven.
***John 6:33** “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*
 - c. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the bread of life.
***John 6:35** Then Jesus declared, “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.”*
***John 6:48** “I am the bread of life.”*
 - d. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the living bread which came down from heaven.
***John 6:51, 58** “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world....This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”*
 - e. Jesus Christ claimed that whoever ate, that is, partook, of Him as the bread of life would live forever.
***John 6:58** “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

- f. Jesus Christ claimed that whoever came to Him would never hunger nor ever thirst.

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "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."*

2. The manna was sent by God, but the people had to gather it. Jesus Christ was sent by God, but we have to receive Him.

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

3. The manna was the daily bread for the redeemed, the bread upon which they were to feast. And note, they had to arise early to gather the manna or else the sun melted the manna. The picture is clear: believers must arise early every day to gather the manna of God, the Bread from heaven. We must arise early to receive our spiritual nourishment through prayer and the study of God's Holy Word. And we must remember: when the sun rises, the manna melts. The activities of the day begin to press in upon us when the sun rises. The point: we must arise early to feed upon the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must seek Him in prayer and in the study of His Word, seek Him early every day.

We must arise early every day and gather the manna of God, the Bread from heaven. To stay physically healthy, we have to eat every day. The same is true spiritually. To stay spiritually healthy, we must seek the spiritual nourishment to strengthen and carry us through the day. That is, we must arise early enough every day to spend time with the Lord Jesus Christ...

- in worship and devotions
- in feasting and partaking of Him
- in nourishing ourselves spiritually, nourishing ourselves enough to last us all day

Once the sun rises, the manna is melted. The activities of the world begin when the sun rises; the hope of having time to gather the manna of spiritual nourishment is slim. The suggestion of God's Word is strong: we should arise early — before the activities of the day crowd in upon us — to gather the manna of spiritual nourishment.

=> Jacob arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

Gen 28:18 *Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.*

=> Samuel's parents arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

1 Sam 1:19 Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah.

=> Hezekiah arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

2 Chr 29:20 Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials together and went up to the temple of the Lord.

=> Job arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

Job 1:5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each one of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

=> David arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

Psa 57:8 Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.

=> The Psalmist arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

Psa 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.

=> Jesus Christ arose early in the morning to worship and pray.

Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

=> Scripture had predicted that Jesus Christ would be awakened morning by morning to listen to God His Father.

Isa 50:4 The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

Deu 4:29 But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all our heart and with all our soul.

Deu 17:19 It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.

Psa 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psa. 63:6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.

Psa 104:34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.

Psa. 119:47 For I delight in your command because I love them.

Psa. 119:48 *I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.*

Psa. 119:72 *The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.*

Psa 143:5 *I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.*

Isa 55:6 *Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*

Jer 15:16 *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Acts 20:32 *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

Rom 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. □*