

Exodus 16:1-26 | They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³ and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” ⁸ And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord.”

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’ ” ¹⁰ And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ And the Lord said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’ ”

¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’ ” ¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.” ²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

²² On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³ he said to them, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’ ” ²⁴ So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. ²⁵ Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

Exodus 16 | Bread from Heaven

Celebrating a culture and celebrating a cultures food are the same thing. When you walk through EPCOT and go to the Disney Italy, or the Disney France, or Disney Mexico, you must eat the food! Food is at the center of being a people, and you can’t have a celebration without food. Thanksgiving = turkey, Birthday = cake, movie night = pizza. It’s all in the food because it shows your whole world. It gathers you at a certain time. It distributes labor. It tells you what season it is, and what flavors the land produces. So when God provides food for his people he understands he is not merely satisfying a hunger but forming a culture.

This is a great week for a food story because it is the week of our nation's food story. We remember the pilgrims in 1620, who lost half of their 102 family members that first winter. Who God provided for through that incredible character of Christian history, Squanto. Who like St. Patrick was captured into slavery, became a Christian, returned to the place of his capture and helps the people who captured him. Only the gospel could create such a story. It is a good story of the Lord's provision we should remember it and give thanks for the Lord's continued provision in our own lives.

When God's people are seeking a new homeland and are living unsettled in the wilderness, God forms their culture around food. But as I've explained food is not just satisfying hunger, food organizes time and seasons, food organizes labor and patterns of work and rest, and it brings us together around our highest goods. You are what you eat.

1. Grumbling

Exodus 16:3 | and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

One again the whole congregation of Israel grumbles against Moses and Aaron, no longer for lack of water but for lack of food. What is their culture when left to themselves, outside of the Lord? It is a culture of grumbling against God. They see their lack of food and immediately turn on Moses and Aaron. They look back on their time in slavery and consider, at least there was food! They have a dead culture of grumbling resentment. When they assemble themselves it is for this end, grumbling against God. It is an anti-feast. When we assess our lack while neglecting the presence of God we become hopeless grumblers. This would be a terrible section of EPCOT, let alone dinner table.

2. Bread from Heaven

Exodus 16:12 | "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

The Lord hears the grumbling of his people and just as with their grumbling in the wilderness of Shur for their lack of water, he responds with gracious provision. Why is the Lord so graciously providing for them? Because he has mercy upon whom he has mercy. Consider their assessment. We are in the wilderness, we've eaten all that we've brought with us and there is no food for us. Where has Moses led us, only to die in the wilderness. **But they forgot about bread raining out of the sky.** They assessed their story apart from the mercy of God, therefore they assessed wrong. They thought like most of us that the earth is what gives our food. So they looked to the earth and it had given way. God was teaching them to look to the heavens, their true source of food.

Do you see what he is doing? This heavenly provision is forming his people into the highest possible culture, remember food and culture are the same. Remember the Egyptians were farmers and they looked down the Hebrews because the Hebrews were herders. Herders wander around, can't establish a home, have to follow the rains. Farmers are established in a place, they can build empires, especially with the Nile. Their land informs their food which informs their culture. So here's one for you, are you a herder or a farmer? We're the type of people who's food rains down from heaven every day. This is the center of their food culture, God is our provider.

3. Forming a People

Exodus 16:15 | When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

That evening God sent quail so they would have meat to eat. And in the morning dew covered the ground and hid the thin flaky layer of manna from heaven. Manna means, what is it? Some names stick. Food is culture remember so in his giving of food, he also orients their work, their time, their sense of proportion, and their rest.

Work:

Exodus 16:16 | This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.' "

The manna does not fall straight into their mouths, Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs style. They must gather it up. It apparently may be boiled, baked, or eaten as is like a cracker. Flaky with a honey flavor. Not bad. This means that every morning in order to eat they must get out and start gathering. As he gives them food he gives them daily labor of gathering and preparation.

Proportion:

They receive from the Lord as much as anyone could eat. He shows us the structure of their society is to be built around the household. There is not to be a slave class of gatherers and a leisure class of eaters. Each household is responsible for its own gathering. And they are to gather according to the number in each household.

Exodus 16:8 | But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

They are to learn that God's provision is more than sufficient to their need. They don't need to hoard, they must simply receive.

Time:

Exodus 16:19-20 | And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.”²⁰ But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

They are to respect the provision of the day. Their must have been enough manna for them to keep on gathering, perhaps enough to last them weeks. But God places a tight expiration date on the manna. They are to act as though God will continue providing day after day. Each day will be enough for the day. This is true of your work. All that God requires of you for the day is enough. Don’t take more work or food or rest than God has given you in the day. If you do you’ll stink. It shows lack of trust in God.

Sabbath:

Exodus 16:25-26 | Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.”²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.”

The Lord likewise establishes by the Manna a weekly sabbath. It is a feast day of resting. They are to gather twice the Manna on Friday and it will not go bad on Saturday so that they don’t require any labor on Saturday. But that is a day set aside to the Lord, it is a demonstration of their total dependence upon him and the sufficiency of his provision. We likewise do not work on the Lord’s day but instead worship the Lord for this same reason. We understand that all of our provision, of life and work come from him. Food forms their culture, just like it forms all cultures. The church is likewise a culture formed around food, bread from heaven to be precise.

John 6:48-51 | I am the bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

We are the culture who gathers around food on our sabbath day. It is bread from heaven which has been provided for us by the father. This is the body and blood of Christ. Who gives to us eternal life when we look to him. We are not a hunting culture, or a herding culture, or a farming culture, we are the culture which receives life directly from heaven. We understand Christ has provided for all of our hunger and thirst. He is like bread. You know how you need to eat bread to live. Well imagine the maximal bread. The type of bread that you eat and you’re never hungry again and you’re raised up to eternal life.

What type of culture does this form? The culture of the kingdom of God. We live by every word that comes from the father. Feast on the true bread of Christ. Made alive by the Holy Spirit. That’s quite a food culture. I bet that would be a pretty busy section of EPCOT.

