Exodus Chapter Sixteen

Exodus 16:1-9: The Israelites Grumble About Food

Exodus 16:1 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we 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 will 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 or not they will walk in My instruction. 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 sons of Israel, “At evening you will know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, for He hears your grumblings against the Lord; and what are we, that you grumble against us?” 8 Moses said, “This will happen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the Lord hears your grumblings against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the Lord.” 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumblings.’ ” (NASB95)

In this passage, we have the Israelites grumbling against Moses and Aaron with regards to food whereas in chapter 15, they grumbled against them with regards to water, which the Lord provided for them as we noted. The grumbling of the Israelites is the result of unbelief. Their unbelief is the direct result of not bringing to remembrance all that the Lord had done for them in delivering them from the bondage of Egypt through the ten plagues and destroying an elite Egyptian military force at the Red Sea and then in providing water for them at Marah. If they would have remembered what the Lord had done for them in the very recent past, they would not have thought of complaining. This lack of faith resulted not only in their grumbling and complaining but also resulted in a failure to be aware the Lord was in fact present among them. In fact, the pillar of fire at night and the pillar of cloud during the day was a visible presence of the Lord. Thus, their complaining is without justification and is inexcusable.
Maybe they were thinking that we grumbled last time when we were without water and got water. Now maybe this time they thought that by complaining about a lack of food, they would get food. Sort of the squeaky wheel gets the oil.

“The wilderness of Sin” was located in the southwestern part of the Sinai peninsula.

The Hollman Illustrated Bible Dictionary has the following note on this place “Barren region somewhere west of the Sinai plateau on the Sinai Peninsula. The Hebrew people stopped here on their journey from Egypt to the promised land (Exod. 16:1). It was here that God first provided manna and quail for them to eat. The place sometimes has been confused with the Wilderness of Zin, which is located on the northwestern side of Sinai.”

J.M. Houston writes “A wilderness through which the Israelites passed between Elim and Mt Sinai (Ex. 16:1; 17:1; Nu. 33:11–12). It is usually identified with Debbet er-Ramleh, a sandy tract below Jebel et-Tih in the SW of the Sinai

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peninsula; but another suggested location is on the coastal plain of el-Markhah. As its position depends on the fixing of Mt *SINAI, which is uncertain, it is impossible to determine the exact site.”

Easton’s Bible Dictionary writes that the wilderness of Sin “was probably the narrow plain of el-Markha, which stretches along the eastern shore of the Red Sea for several miles toward the promontory of Ras Mohammed, the southern extremity of the Sinitic Peninsula. While the Israelites rested here for some days they began to murmur on account of the want of nourishment, as they had by this time consumed all the corn they had brought with them out of Egypt. God heard their murmurings, and gave them “manna” and then quails in abundance.”

Exodus 16:1 tells the reader that exactly one month had passed since the Israelites left Egypt since we have seen that the Israelites left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month of the year and this verse records that they arrived in the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month.

Exodus 16:2-3 shows that the entire congregation of Israel was involved in this complaining to Moses and Aaron about a lack of food.

The NET Bible has an excellent comment, they write “That the complaint leading up to the manna is unjustified can be seen from the record itself. They left Egypt with flocks and herds and very much cattle, and about 45 days later they are complaining that they are without food. Moses reminded them later that they lacked nothing (Deut 3:7; for the whole sermon on this passage, see 8:1–20). Moreover, the complaint is absurd because the food of work gangs was far more meager than they recall. The complaint was really against Moses. They crave the eating of meat and of bread and so God will meet that need; he will send bread from heaven and quail as well.”

This is the first of many times in which the Israelites will use the Egypt argument “if only we had died in Egypt.” (See Numbers 11:4, 18; 14:2; cf. 20:3; Joshua 7:7)

Notice that they complain that they wished that the Lord would have killed them, implying that they were better off being killed by the one of the plagues the Lord struck Egypt with. By complaining that the Lord was not taking care of them, they were attacking His character and integrity. They were also grossly exaggerating. He had taken care of them every step of the way if they would have taken a moment to stop concentrating on their adversity and instead recall and concentrate upon the fact that the Lord had just delivered them a month ago with a mighty hand from Egypt. Their faith was being tested and they were failing miserably.

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In Exodus 16:4-5, we have the Lord providing the Israelites with manna from heaven, which would not only provide food for them in the short term but also it would provide for their long-term need for food. The Lord is teaching them that He provides them with what they need and not what they lust for. He is satisfying their need with manna. In John 6:31-58, the Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as the bread from heaven meaning that He is the ultimate provision for man. He is eternal sustenance who is superior to the manna He provided the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin.

The Lord would provide a test for the Israelites to accompany this gift of manna. This food would fall down only at dawn when the dew was forming and would disappear as soon as the sun was up. It was to be gathered in moderation so as to satisfy one’s daily need. It was not to be stored in jars for future use since it would become foul and wormy. They could bake or boil it immediately after they had gathered enough to satisfy their appetites. Every morning they would have to gather it anew. This means that the collection of yesterday’s manna would do them no good. In the same way, the Christians intake of the Word of God yesterday will not satisfy their spiritual need for today. Just as the Israelites had to gather and eat the manna provided for each day to satisfy their hunger so the Christian is to eat the Word of God in order to satisfy their spiritual hunger and need.

Stuart has an excellent comment, he writes “This great gift also involved a test. The NIV translation of the end of v. 4 obscures the point of God’s statement. It should be translated ‘so that I can test them to see whether or not they will walk by my law.’ In other words, the people’s willingness to obey the manna-gathering law (tôrāh) would show God whether or not they would be inclined to keep his covenant law (tôrāh) as revealed at Mount Sinai. It was not just a test to see if they could follow instructions but a test to see if their hearts were inclined to be his covenant people. The test itself required faith for an agricultural people. Farmers know that if one harvests only enough food in a day to meet the needs of that day, eventually one has no food because no crops or animals produce food every day. Now they were being asked to restrain their natural tendency to gather as much as was available to gather in anticipation of the time when no gathering would be possible. God was teaching them to trust him every day afresh, and they were challenged to think about his provision in a way that had never before been part of their planning pattern.”

In Exodus 16:5, notice that on the sixth day of the week, the Israelites were instructed to gather twice as much manna as they would gather daily. The seventh day was of course the Sabbath. Therefore, God was testing their faith again since every Sabbath they would have to trust that when they woke up, there would be

enough manna left to eat and that it would not spoil overnight as it would on the other days of the week. He was teaching the Israelites to have faith which would result in obedience to His commands and prohibitions.

The NET Bible has the following comment, they write “There is a question here concerning the legislation – the people were not told why to gather twice as much on the sixth day. In other words, this instruction seems to presume that they knew about the Sabbath law. That law will be included in this chapter in a number of ways, suggesting to some scholars that this chapter is out of chronological order, placed here for a purpose. Some argue that the manna episode comes after the revelation at Sinai. But it is not necessary to take such a view. God had established the Sabbath in the creation, and if Moses has been expounding the Genesis traditions in his teachings then they would have known about that.”

In Exodus 16:6-7, Moses and Aaron tell the Israelites that in the morning they would see the glory of the Lord in that He would provide them this manna from heaven. In other words, the glory of the Lord would be the miraculous provision of manna.

In Exodus 16:7-8, they instruct the Israelites that they were merely servants of the Lord and that their complaining was in fact directed against the Lord whom they represented before them.

In Exodus 16:9, Moses employs Aaron to communicate to the Israelites. Moses tells them through Aaron that they were to “come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumblings.” This does not refer to the Lord’s ability to perceive what the Israelites were thinking and saying since He is omniscient and knew from eternity past before He created anything what they would think and say. Rather, it denotes that the Lord was poised to act on their behalf in providing them manna from heaven for their provision of food and as we will see quail as well.

Exodus 16:10-15a: The Lord Provides Manna

Exodus 16:10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. 11 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12 “I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’ ” 13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like

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thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons 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 which the Lord has given you to eat.”” (NASB95)

Verse 10 tells the reader that the Lord manifested Himself in the presence of the Israelites with a pillar of cloud. The glory of the Lord is manifestation of the presence of God or one or more of His attributes or His person. This is another theophany meaning a visible and auditory manifestation of God.

Verse 12 amazingly records the Lord not rebuking the Israelites for their complaining but rather He assures them of His concern for them and that He will provide for them. He is of course treating them as He always did according to His grace policy meaning that they deserved a stern rebuke and even death because God’s holiness, however, He treated better than they deserved which is an expression of His love and compassion.

The NET has the following comment “One of the major interpretive difficulties is the comparison between Exod 16 and Num 11. In Numbers we find that the giving of the manna was about 24 months after the Exod 16 time (assuming there was a distinct time for this chapter), that it was after the erection of the tabernacle, that Taberah (the Burning) preceded it (not in Exod 16), that the people were tired of the manna (not that there was no bread to eat) and so God would send the quail, and that there was a severe tragedy over it. In Exod 16 both the manna and the quail are given on the same day, with no mention of quail on the following days. Contemporary scholarship generally assigns the accounts to two different sources because complete reconciliation seems impossible. Even if we argue that Exodus has a thematic arrangement and ‘telescopes’ some things to make a point, there will still be difficulties in harmonization. Two considerations must be kept in mind: 1) First, they could be separate events entirely. If this is true, then they should be treated separately as valid accounts of things that appeared or occurred during the period of the wanderings. Similar things need not be the same thing. 2) Secondly, strict chronological order is not always maintained in the Bible narratives, especially if it is a didactic section. Perhaps Exod 16 describes the initiation of the giving of manna as God’s provision of bread, and therefore placed in the prologue of the covenant, and Num 11 is an account of a mood which developed over a period of time in response to the manna. Num 11 would then be looking back from a different perspective.”

Exodus 16:13 says that the Lord provided quail and in verse 14, He provided manna. The Lord provided the quail for only one evening whereas the manna would be provided for them for forty years. After the Israelites had eaten the quail

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and had gone to sleep, the nightly desert dew condensed on the ground and remained until the next morning. Numbers 11:9 teaches that the manna came down not only in the morning but during the night. Therefore, the manna did not follow the dew but rather it was visible when the dew had lifted in the morning.

Verse 14 describes the manna as a thin, crisp substance which was thin like frost on the ground. Verse 15 reveals that when the Israelites saw the manna, they had no idea what it was and Moses had to tell them that it was the Lord’s provision for their hunger.

Stuart writes “Once the dew evaporated, the Israelites saw something they hadn’t seen before and weren’t expecting to find. The description can be best translated as follows: ‘There on the surface of the wilderness was a thin, crisp substance, thin like frost on the ground.’ In other words, it may not have appeared in ‘flake’ form at all but perhaps in sheets. It may have been ‘flaky’ in the way a pie crust is called ‘flaky’ but not necessarily occurring in the form of separate, individual flakes. In old Hebrew/Canaanite at least one biform of the word for interrogative ‘what’ was màn rather than the later and more common màh, so the Israelites’ question ‘what is it?’ (màn hù’) became eventually abbreviated into ‘what?’ (màn), and the name stuck. The usual ‘natural’ explanation for manna is that it was the exudant of various kinds of plant lice that feed on the sap of the tamarisk trees that are abundant in the Sinai wilderness. This explanation assumes that the Israelites remembered the little bits of sweet-tasting lice exudant found near tamarisk trees and as centuries went by built the memory through folklore into a whole food supply narrative. The text says nothing of the sort but describes a massive, collectable, permanent daily food source for thousands of people.”

Exodus 16:15b-18: Israel Gather the Manna

Exodus 16:15 When the sons 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 which the Lord has given you to eat. 16 “This is what the Lord has commanded, ‘Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.’ ” 17 The sons of Israel did so, and some gathered much and some little. 18 When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat. (NASB95)

The term “manna” is from the Israelites’ question “what is it?” which is translating the Hebrew expression màn hû(’) (מָנָֽו הַעֲדָֽל). The Israelites were not to be

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gluttonous with regards to the manna since there was a prescribed amount each family could collect of it. They could only gather an omer apiece according to the number of persons in each family. The “omer” was equal to about two quarts, which would be just enough food for a person per day.

Verses 17 and 18 say that the Israelites carefully obeyed the command about not gathering too much manna but just enough so that they did not break any of the Lord’s commandments.

**Exodus 16:19-20: Some in Israel Disobey Stipulation Connected With the Manna**

**Exodus 16:19** Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it until morning.” 20 But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. (NASB95)

These verses record that some of the Israelites did not conscientiously obey the Lord’s commandment with regards to the manna and tried keeping some of the uneaten manna until the next day. They discovered that the food was inedible.

The Lord deliberately prohibited the Israelites from keeping some of the uneaten manna overnight in order to teach them to trust in His daily provision. Moses’ anger with them is a legitimate anger towards them and is righteous indignation and not sin because He is concerned about obedience to God who is holy and is God’s representative. He wants to please the Lord and some of the Israelites could care less otherwise they would have obeyed carefully the Lord’s instructions concerning the manna.

**Exodus 16:21-26: Israel Gathers the Manna and the Sabbath**

**Exodus 16:21** They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt. 22 Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 then he said to them, “This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm 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, the sabbath, there will be none.” (NASB95)

Verse 21 tells us that there was a fresh provision of manna every morning for the Israelites. They would have to gather it every morning. The heat of the sun
would melt the manna away. Interestingly, if you were lazy, you didn’t eat since you had to get up early each morning before the sun got hot and collect your daily provision of food. Also, those who were greedy and selfish were not allowed to collect more than the prescribed amount. Verse 22 echoes verse 5.

As we noted in verse 5, the Israelites could only collect the manna for six days but they were not to do so on the seventh day. In verse 23, we see Moses explaining to them the purpose of not collecting the manna on the seventh day, namely the observance of a sabbath rest.

“Sabbath” is the noun שַׁבָּת (šāḇāṯ), which means “rest period” referring to the seventh day of the week which is called “Saturday.” This is the Bible’s first mention of the Sabbath. Genesis 2:2-3 teaches that God rested or ceased from His creative and restorative activity on the seventh day. The Hebrew words for “seventh” and “rested” are similar. The observance of the Sabbath is found in the Ten Commandments. It was an ordinance given to the nation of Israel and not the church.

Exodus 20:8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.” (NASB95)

Although the church was not given the ordinance to observe the Sabbath, they are commanded to enter into God’s Sabbath rest meaning to rest in the promises of God and one’s union with Christ.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. (NASB95)

In the ancient world, gathering food was the most basic form of work. Thus, the gathering of the manna would be prohibited since it would be work. Thus, we see Moses instructing the Israelites to cook their daily portion of manna but not to concern themselves about keeping the remainder overnight since the Sabbath was not only a day of rest for them from working but a holy Sabbath to the Lord. This means they were to meditate upon the Lord and what He had done for them and what He promised to do for them in the future. This would invoke in them for the present moment and for the future.

Now, Exodus 20:8-11 makes clear that the observance of the Sabbath is connected to the fact that God Himself rested on the seventh day after six days of work (Genesis 2:2-3). The Sabbath is thus an invitation to rejoice in God’s creation and to acknowledge that He is sovereign. Deuteronomy 5:15 gives another reason for observing the Sabbath. This verse connects the Sabbath with Israel’s
deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, every Sabbath the Israelites were to bring into remembrance that the Lord delivered them from Egyptian bondage by means of His omnipotence. Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14-15 and Exodus 23:12 teach that the Sabbath was for the benefit of both man and animal in Israel. Lastly, Exodus 31:13, 17, Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 teach that it was a sign of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. Thus, those in Israel who failed to keep the Sabbath were put to death (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:32-36; Jeremiah 17:19-27). The keeping of the Sabbath would affirm one’s loyalty to the Lord and would guarantee His presence and deliverance.

In Exodus 16:24, the Israelites put aside the manna as Moses commanded them to do and it did not become inedible, which was a miracle. In Exodus 16:25-26, Moses commands the Israelites to gather the manna for six days but on the seventh day not do so for there would be none to collect.

Exodus 16:27-28: Israel’s Disobeys Observance of the Sabbath a Second Time

Exodus 16:27 It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions?” (NASB95)

Some of the Israelites did not obey and went out to gather the manna on the Sabbath in violation of the Lord’s command. This was a lack of faith since if they trusted in the Lord that they would have enough to eat for the Sabbath they would not have gone out to gather some. Their lack of faith led to their disobedience to the Lord’s command.

Verse 28 is a rhetorical question that the Lord does not expect an answer. It is a rebuke which says in a rhetorical manner that the Lord was expecting the Israelites to obey Him and would hold them accountable for disobedience.

Exodus 16:29-30: Israel Learns the Sabbath Lesson

Exodus 16:29 “See, the Lord has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. (NASB95)

Moses responds to those in Israel who disobeyed by emphasizing that the Lord had given them bread for two days on the sixth day, thus there was no need to gather manna on the seventh day. He is in effect saying that I told you that there would be no manna on the sabbath and that the Lord would give you two days provision on the sixth day.
Notice that there is nothing in verses 29 and 30 which indicate that the Israelites were confined to their homes. They were merely prohibited from gathering the manna on the Sabbath. The Lord knew that the Israelites would have to go outside to milk their goats and cows and to feed their animals and to relieve themselves outside the camp.

Exodus 16:31-36: Israel Preserves Manna as a Testimony for Future Generations of God’s Faithfulness

Exodus 16:31 The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey. 32 Then Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded, ‘Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’ ” 33 Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations.” 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 (Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.) (NASB95)

In verse 31, we have a description of the manna. It white in color and was like wafers with honey.

Stuart has an insightful comment, he writes “In ancient times the refining of sugar had not been invented, and the only means of sweetening foods was to add either fruit compounds or honey to them. Honey is far sweeter than dried, crushed, or minced fruit, being approximately half sucrose and half fructose, and its taste in foods was the apex of ancient flavoring. Few Israelites ever had the luxury of making wafers (in effect, thin cookies) instead of bread, and honey was rare enough (since it had to be found in the wild rather than cultivated as today) that describing the manna as ‘like wafers made with honey’ was tantamount to saying that it was ‘the most delicious food imaginable.’ Manna was colored white, the comparison here to coriander seed (which is a pale white in color) intending nothing more than to establish a known color as the comparison point. The taste or texture of coriander seed, in other words, had nothing to do with the manna.”

Verses 32 and 33 say that the Lord commanded Israel to set aside an omerful of manna to memorialize the Lord’s provision for them in the wilderness throughout future generations. It would be placed in the Ark of the Covenant according to verse 34. Hebrews 9:4 teaches that the manna was stored in a golden jar and later

placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which was constructed by Bezalel before the completion of the Tabernacle (Exodus 37:1-3). This would serve as a perpetual reminder to Israel of the Lord’s faithfulness to her.

The Ark of the Covenant was the only piece of furniture within the Holy of Holies. It was called the “Ark of the Covenant” (Hebrew: ‘aron berit, Num. 10:33), or “Ark of the Testimony” (Hebrew: ‘aron ha`edut, Ex. 25:22), from the law that was kept therein.

The Ark was made of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits broad, and one and a half cubits high (external dimensions) and was plated inside and out with pure gold. Running around each side was a gold border extending above the top of the Ark, so as to keep the lid from moving. This lid was called the “mercy seat” (Ex. 25:20, 22, Hebrew: kapporeth, a “covering”), was the same size as the Ark itself, and was made of acacia wood covered with gold. The Ark was transported by means of two gold-covered poles run through two gold rings on each side, from which they were not to be moved (25:15) unless it might be necessary to remove them in order to cover the Ark when the Tabernacle was moved (Num. 4:6).

Upon the lid, or Mercy Seat, or at the ends of the Ark, as in the Temple, were placed the cherubim, probably figures beaten out of gold, as was the lampstand. In shape they were probably human, with the exception of their wings, though some authorities think they were of the same complex form as the cherubim mentioned in Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:5-14). They were no doubt the normal or full height of a man and are always spoken of as maintaining an upright position (2 Chron. 3:13). They stood facing each other, looking down upon the Mercy Seat, with their wings forward in a brooding attitude (Ex. 25:20; cf. Deut. 32:11). The golden censer, with which the high priest once a year entered the Most Holy Place, was doubtless set upon this lid.

Between the cherubim was the Shekinah (Hebrew: shekina, “residence”), the cloud in which Yahweh appeared above the Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:22; cf. Lev. 16:2). It was not the cloud of incense (16:13), but the manifest appearance (pre-incarnate appearance of Christ or theophany of Christ) of the divine glory. The Lord manifested His essential presence in this cloud; therefore, no unclean and sinful man could go before the Mercy Seat. Not even the anointed high priest could go before it of his own pleasure or without the expiatory blood sacrifice or he would be killed by the Lord instantly.

The Ark contained the two tables of stone on which Jehovah wrote the Ten Commandments, or rather those prepared by Moses from the original, broken by him when he heard of Israel’s idolatry (Ex. 31:18-34:29; Deut. 9:10-10:4); and the copy of the law, written by Moses (31:26), presumed by some to be the Pentateuch in full, and thought to be the same as was afterward discovered in the time of
Josiah (2 Kings 22:8). The law must, in the meanwhile, have been removed, together with all the contents, because in the days of Solomon the Ark contained the 2 tablets only (1 Kings 8:9). The Ark also contained a golden jar of miraculously preserved manna (Ex. 16:33-34) and “Aaron’s rod which budded” (Heb. 9:4; cf. Num. 17:10).

The fact that the manna in the jar would be preserved and would not deteriorate would be another miracle. God would cause the manna in the jar to be preserved throughout future generations.

Exodus 16:35 tells the reader that the Lord provided the Israelites with manna for forty years until they entered the land of Canaan which He promised them. They ate the manna until they came to the border of Canaan.

Hannah writes “The manna in the ark was a perpetual reminder of God’s loyalty to His people in supplying their needs. Jesus, referring to the Israelites’ manna (John 6:31, 49, 58), called Himself ‘the true [spiritual] Bread from heaven’ (John 6:32), ‘the Bread of God … from heaven’ (John 6:33), ‘the Bread of life’ (John 6:35, 48), and ‘the Living Bread … from heaven’ (John 6:51). Everyone who believes in Him, He said, would have eternal life (John 6:33, 51, 58).”