

Nutritional Value of Manna and Quail in Exodus 16:13-18, As an Act of Divine Providence for Human Flourishing in Africa

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Abstract

A close and studious study of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation reveals vividly that God provides for His people and expects that His people wholeheartedly should rely on Him for divine provision. The book of Exodus demonstrates the power of God to meet His people's needs and deliver them in times of need and danger. Exodus 16:13-18, 35 gave a vivid account of God's divine provision when the people of Israel called upon Him. The nutritional value of quail and manna (Ex 16:13-18, 35) was critically studied, with its lessons examined as an act of human flourishing in Africa. This work employs historical-critical exegetical methods. The finding shows that quail is composed of proteins, lipids, vitamins, and minerals and is low in carbohydrates, while manna is the bread which is 100% carbohydrate. The people of Israel fed on these for forty years without developing any known nutritional disease. They, however, operated according to God's command. The researcher argues that if Christians in Africa can call upon God for their daily needs and obey Him, the Lord will surprise them and give them their lives sustenance. Also, God expects Christians to depend on and rely on Him for all they need to live and will certainly not fail them, and this will help by developing their physical strength for the work of Christian missions and evangelism.

1. Introduction

Without adequate nutrition, the human body does not function optimally, and this is very true, considering that severe nutritional inadequacy has been found to lead to diseases and even death. The typical African diet is lacking in many ways, from not containing the proper amount of essential nutrients to being too speedily consumed to being only meagerly satisfying.¹ The ability to wake up, think, communicate, hope, dream, go to school, go to church, do mission/evangelism work, gain knowledge, go to work, earn a living, and do all of the things that one likes to do are dependent upon one factor – health, which is invariably dependent on a good diet – also thought of as nutrition.

The foods people eat, as God makes them, contain nutrients. Nutrients are

substances the body requires to perform its essential functions to flourish. Nutrients must be obtained from the diet since human does not synthesize them. Nutrients produce energy, detect and respond to environmental surroundings, move, excrete waste, respire, grow and reproduce. Six nutrients are required for the body to function and maintain overall health—carbohydrates, Lipids, Protein, Water, Vitamins, and Minerals. The Bible might not speak on these food classes but supports the nutritional value added to the body by these foods. In the scriptural passage under examination, God gave the Israelites manna in their wilderness journeys, which suggestively sustained them in health, nourishment, and vitality. Manna (bread) in Numbers 11:9, Exodus 16:13-18, 30, belongs to the Carbohydrates class by constitution Macronutrients. Macronutrients are foods that are required in large amounts in a diet. Carbohydrates comprise carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. The primary food sources of carbohydrates are grain, milk, fruit, bread, and starchy vegetables. In Exodus 16:15, God sent the Israelites bread from heaven which they called *manna*. It was an exceptional food miraculously sent from God to feed the people after the exodus from Egypt. It was a white substance that resembled frost, took the form of thin flakes, and tasted like honey (Ex 16:14, 31; Nm 11:9).

Exodus 16:35 states, “The Israelites ate manna for forty years until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.” It was a wonderful and excellent experience that God sustained them for forty years with manna and quail. Quail is known to be a source of protein, while manna is majorly carbohydrate; other macronutrients and micronutrients may be lacking. The miracle was that they were sustained with it for forty years! This, however, negates the theory or principle of a balanced diet needed by the body to function effectively and be sustained. That quail and manna could sustain them for forty years without developing significant health challenges must therefore be accompanied by a divine hand of God. This is the central concept of why the researcher embarked on this study.

2. The Nature and Nutritional Value of Manna

In the Hebrew Bible, manna is described twice: once in Exodus 16:1-36 with the entire narrative surrounding it, and once again in Numbers 11:1-9 as a part of a separate narrative. In the Book of Exodus description, manna is like a white coriander seed.² Ancient commentaries have explained this as a comparison to the round shape of the coriander seed. Again, manna is described in Exodus as being “a fine, flake-like thing,” like the frost

on the ground.³ It is described in the Book of Numbers as arriving with the dew during the night.⁴ Exodus adds that *manna* was comparable to hoarfrost in size and had to be collected before the sun's heat melted it. Numbers describes it as having the appearance of bdellium,⁵ adding that the Israelites ground it and pounded it into cakes, which were then baked, resulting in something that tasted like cakes baked with oil.⁶ Exodus states that raw *manna* tasted like wafers made with honey.

Manna, sometimes or archaically spelled *mana*, is an edible substance that, according to the Bible and the Quran, God provided for the Israelites during their travels in the desert. The understanding of the substance called manna has been greeted with severe misunderstandings. According to George Ebers, the name comes from the Egyptian “mennu.” The *manna* is also designated “bread” (Ex 16:4); it is called “the corn of heaven” and “the bread of the mighty” in Ps 78:24-25, and, in a depreciative sense, the “light bread” in Nm 21,⁷ though *manna* is from heaven, according to the Hebrew Bible and Jesus in the New Testament,⁸ the various identifications of *manna* are naturalistic. In the Jewish Mishnah, *manna* is treated as a natural but unique substance, “created during the twilight of the sixth day of Creation,”⁹ and ensured to be clean before it arrives by sweeping the ground by a northern wind and subsequent rain.¹⁰ According to classical rabbinical literature, *manna* was ground in a heavenly mill for the use of the righteous, but some of it was allocated to the wicked and left for them to grind themselves.¹¹ The gathering of the *manna* was connected with several miracles: it was collected before sunrise, and despite its hard substance, it melted in the sun. The quantity collected made exactly one Omer for every person, whether one collected much or little. On Friday morning, the portions were double, for the *manna* could not be found on Sabbath. The *manna* was eaten the day it was gathered; if it were left until the following morning, it corrupted and bred worms, though the *manna* gathered on Friday and kept for the Sabbath remained fresh.

It continued to descend during the forty years the Israelites were in the wilderness, but when they arrived at Gilgal on the 14th of Nisan and began to eat the grain grown there, the manna ceased to fall.¹² To perpetuate the memory of this providence, Aaron was told to put an Omer of manna in a vessel and lay it “before the testimony” (Ex 16:17-35). Numbers 11:5 makes it appear that manna was the only food of the Israelites while they were in the wilderness, although references to provisions of fine flour, oil, and meat are discovered elsewhere. From this, two schools of argument

suggest that the manna constituted their main food supply during the forty years or that it became their whole food after the provisions they took from Egypt were exhausted.¹³

Elsewhere in this paper, it had been mentioned that manna is a bread that is 100% carbohydrate. Bread supplies a significant portion of the nutrients required for growth, health maintenance, and well-being. It is an excellent source of proteins, vitamins, minerals, fibre, and complex carbohydrates. It is also low in fat and cholesterol. Bread is quite bulky, so it takes longer to digest and is, therefore, more satisfying and less fattening than the fats, sugars, and alcohols commonly consumed in excess. Bread is nutritious, including manna, and the differences in nutritional value are insignificant, especially if a balanced diet is taken.¹⁴ To corroborate this with a claim of balance according to God's providence is also the miraculous supply of quails. Maintaining adequate levels of vitamins, minerals, and protein in our diets is essential to remain healthy. The average percentage of our daily nutrient requirements supplied by 100g of any bread shows that bread is an excellent source of many nutrients necessary for a healthy diet. 100g of bread is 2-4 slices, depending on the type and size.¹⁵

Similarly to the protein comprising amino acids, carbohydrates consist of building blocks called 'saccharides or 'sugars.' When large numbers of these saccharides are joined together, they form polysaccharides found in the foods we commonly think of as 'carbohydrates,' e.g., bread, potatoes, and pasta.

Dietary fibre belongs to the carbohydrate group but is not digestible. This fibre is also found in large quantities in bread. Fibre has an essential role in helping you feel full after a meal. Carbohydrates are also crucial as the primary providers of energy in our diet. Every body cell, including the brain, requires a constant supply of glucose as fuel, most of which is provided by the carbohydrates in food and drink.¹⁶

3. Nature and Nutritional Value of Quails

Quail is a small bird. It can reach 4.5 to 7.8 inches in length and 2.4 to 4.9 ounces in weight. They are covered with brown, black, white, grey, and blue feathers; specific coloration and arrangement of feathers create a scale-like pattern on some body parts. Certain species of quails have a plume shaped like a teardrop on top of the head. It bobs when the bird is walking. Quails can fly short distances but spend most of their time on

the ground. Depending on the species, quails can be active during the day (diurnal animals) or night (nocturnal animals).

The quail is an omnivore (eats other animals and plants). Its diet consists mainly of seeds, leaves, wheat, barley, berries, and occasionally grasshoppers and worms. Quails produce high-pitched sounds, cackles, and grunts used for communication. Quails bathe in the dust to eliminate pests from their feathers and to keep their plumage clean. Quails run when they are threatened. Some species can quickly reach the sky, while some are motionless when faced with danger. Certain quails are equipped with heel spurs-bony structures used for protection against predators.¹⁷

Quails are packed with vitamins and minerals. Even with their small sizes, their nutritional value is three or four times greater than chicken. Quails contain 13 percent proteins compared to 11 percent in chicken. In addition, it also contains 140 percent of vitamin B1 compared to 50 percent in chicken. In addition, quails provide five times as much iron and potassium. Unlike the chicken, quail has not been known to cause allergies. They help fight allergy symptoms due to the ovomucoid protein they contain.

Regular consumption of quails can help fight against many diseases. They are a natural combatant against digestive tract disorders such as stomach ulcers. Quails strengthen the immune system, promote memory health, increase brain activity, and stabilize the nervous system. They help with anemia by increasing the hemoglobin level in the body while removing toxins and heavy metals. The Chinese use quail to help treat tuberculosis, asthma, and even diabetes. If you are a kidney, liver, or gallbladder stone sufferer, quail eggs can help prevent and remove these types of stones. The nutritional benefit of quail is unquantifiable.¹⁸

Because protein is what our body needs to build muscles and use as a long-term energy source, carbohydrates, when consumed and not used by the body, end up becoming fat that we carry. Protein found in quail is of superior quality in that a very high nutrient load accompanies it: “Quail contains 140 percent of Vitamin B1 compared to only 50 percent in Chicken”.

Why is Vitamin B1 essential? B1 is also called Thiamine. Deficiency in Thiamine can cause optic neuropathology, Korkoff’s syndrome,

a condition commonly called Beriberi (involving the neurological, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal systems), malaise, weight loss, irritability, and convulsion. Thiamine is essential and can be obtained easily by consuming quail. Quails provide five times as much iron and potassium.

Why are Iron and Potassium (minerals) essential to the human diet? Iron deficiency can result in anemia. Iron is essential in binding to protein and carrying oxygen in the blood. When iron is not absorbed in the gastrointestinal tract of human beings, deficiency/anemia can result.¹⁹ Quail eggs, providing 5 times the iron of a chicken egg, are a far superior source in a small portion. Potassium, when mildly deficient in humans, typically shows no symptoms. However, symptoms of a lack of potassium intake can present in the form of muscle weakness, muscle cramps, or constipation.²⁰ Humans lose potassium mainly through excessive fluid losses such as sweating, polyuria (urinating often due to medications or diuretics such as caffeine), and fluid losses from being sick (vomiting).

Quail eggs also contain twice as much vitamin A and B2 as a chicken egg. A list of bodily functions in which vitamin A plays a role might present some help-vision, gene transcription, embryonic development and reproduction, bone metabolism, skin and cellular health, and antioxidant activity. Vitamin B2 is also known as riboflavin. Riboflavin deficiency classically presents itself via the cracked edges of the mouth (Angular cheilitis), photophobia (light sensitivity), dermatitis (dry scaling skin), and red bloodshot eyes (accompanying that photophobia). Lack of riboflavin can cause stunted growth and “failure to thrive” in animals.²¹

The quail egg is more affluent in phosphorus and calcium than a chicken egg. Women and children especially need extra calcium in their diet. Calcium promotes bone health. Calcium is essential for living organisms, particularly in cell physiology, where the movement of many calcium ions (Ca^{2+}) into and out of the cell is a signal for many cellular processes. As a primary material used in mineralizing bones and shells, calcium is the most abundant metal by mass in many animals. Phosphorus is essential for life. As phosphate, it is a component of the genes. Quail eggs have been used for thousands of years as a healing food. Chinese medicine uses quail eggs to help with rhinitis, asthma, hay fever, and skin conditions. Quail egg is often in facial and hair products.²²

Quail eggs have a high HDL cholesterol content (“good fat”), and they are a high protein food providing higher levels of the B-Complex and are a non-inflammatory food.²³ HDL cholesterol helps balance the bad LDL cholesterol in blood levels. So Quail eggs have a good kind of fat. Not all cholesterol is terrible. It is reasonable to add that God always gives his children good things. Giving the Israelites the best meat and eggs for their sojourn was to satisfy the divine attribute of his goodness. The Bible supports this when the Psalmist retorts, *“The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need them, and you fill them with good”* (Ps 145:15, NIV).

4. Exegetical Analysis of the Passages (Exodus 16:13-18, 35)

Exodus continues the narrative begun in Genesis. The book’s title is derived from the Greek word *Exodos* meaning “exit” or “departure.” It refers to God’s mighty deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and their departure from that land as the people of God.

Two issues related to Exodus background have involved major controversy; the date of Israel’s exodus from Egypt and the book’s authorship. Traditionally Moses is thought to be the writer. There is, however, disagreement between conservative and liberal biblical scholars over the mosaic authorship of the book of Exodus. Modern interpreters often view the book as a composite work by various editors, completed much later in Israel’s history than the time of Moses (called the JEDP theory).²⁴ However, Jewish tradition from the time of Joshua onward (Joshua 8:31-35), plus the testimony of Jesus (Mk 12:26), early Christianity, and contemporary conservative scholarship, all attribute the book’s origin to Moses.

Furthermore, internal evidence supports Moses’ authorship. Numerous details in Exodus indicate that the author was an eyewitness of the recorded events. E.g., Exodus 2:12, 9:31-32, and a portion of the book testify to Moses’s direct involvement in its writing.²⁵ E.g., Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27.

Concerning the date of writing, there is no consensus among scholars. An early date (also referred to as the biblical date) is derived from 1 Kings 6:1, which states that it occurred 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon’s reign. This dates to the exodus *ca.* 1445 B.C. Also, in Judges 11:26, Jephthah (*ca.* 1100 B.C.) declared that Israel had occupied this land

for 300 years, which would date the conquest to approximately 1400 B.C. This chronology for the exodus, the conquest, and the period of the judges fits well with the datable history of Israel's first three kings (Saul, David, and Solomon).

5. Contexts of the Passage (Exodus 16:13-18,35)

After the Israelites left Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for over forty years. In the wilderness, they faced several challenges, including battles, the religions of the people they passed on their way(s), weather harshness, lack, and many others. However, God saw the people through and safely and successfully led them to the Promised Land.

Specifically, the context of the passage bothered the period when the people of Israel lacked food in the wilderness. They had complained to Moses, and Moses had, in turn, complained to God, and miraculously, God had provided what to eat for them – Manna and Quails. These mysterious foods (Bread and Meat) sustained the people until they finally and fully settled on the Promised Land. The questions have always been: what are these Manna and Quails? Of what nutritional value are they? Could God still sustain His people in such a miraculous and mighty way today?

6. The Text and The Translation

Text in Hebrew

13 הַנֶּחֱמַל בַּיָּבֶס לַמָּוֶה תִּבְכַּשׁ וְהַתִּיָּה רִקְבָּבוּ הַנֶּחֱמָה-תָּא סָפְנוּ וְלִשְׁשָׁה לַעֲוֹן כְּרָעַב יָדָנוּ:
14 צָרָא-הָלַע רִפְפֹּכ קֵד סָפְסָחָם קֵד רִבְדָּמָה יִגְפ־לַע וְהָנְחוּ לַמָּוֶה תִּבְכַּשׁ לַעֲוֹנוֹ:
15 אוֹיָה מְהֵלָּא הָשֵׁם רַמְאָנוּ אוֹיָה-הֵם וְעָדִי אֵל יְיָ אוֹיָה נִם וִיחָא-לָא שִׂיא וְרַמְאָנוּ לְאֶרֶש־יִינָב וְאָרָנוּ:
הַלְכָאֵל סָקֵל הַוָּדִי נָתַן לִשְׂאָה סָתְלָה:
16 שִׂיא מְכִיתֶנְשָׁפֵן רִפְסָם תְּלִגְלָגֵל רִמְנַע וְלָכָא יִפֹּל שִׂיא וְיָמָם וְסָקֵל הָוָדִי תִנְצַ רִשְׂאָה רִבְדָּה הַוָּדִי:
וְתִקַּח וְלָדָאֵב רִשְׂאָה:
17 טִיעַמְמָהוּ תִבְרָמָה וְטָקֵלִי לְאֶרֶש־יִינָב נְבִישְׁעֵנוּ:
18 וְטָקֵל וְלָכָא-יִפֹּל שִׂיא רִיסָחָה אֵל טִיעַמְמָהוּ תִבְרָמָה הִידְעָה אֵלֵינוּ רִמְעֵב וְדָמָנוּ:
מְאָב-דַּע וְלָכָא נְמָה-תָּא תִבְשׁוֹן צָרָא-לָא מְאָב-דַּע הָגֵשׁ מִיעֲבָרָא נְמָה-תָּא וְלָכָא לְאֶרֶש־יִינָבוּ:
נַעֲנֵב צָרָא הַצָּק־לָא:

English Translation

13 In the evening, quail appeared and covered the camp; in the morning, there was a fall of dew about the camp. 14 When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” —for they did not know what it was. And Moses

said to them, “That is the bread which הוה has given you to eat. 16This is what הוה has commanded: Each household shall gather as much as it requires to eat—an omer to a person for as many of you as there are; each household shall fetch according to those in its tent.” 17 The Israelites did so, some gathering much, some little. 18 But when they measured it by the omer, anyone who had gathered much had no excess, and anyone who had gathered little had no deficiency: each household had gathered as much as it needed to eat.

35 And the Israelites ate manna forty years until they came to a settled land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

7. Interpretation of the Passage (Exodus 16:13-18, 35)

Verses 13-14.

13: הַנֶּחֱמַל בַּיָּס לֶמַח תִּבְכַּשׁ הַתִּנִּיָּה רָקִיבּוּ הַנֶּחֱמַד־תָּא סָבְתוּ לְלִישָׁה לַעֲתוּ בְרָעַב יְהִי
14: יִצְרָאֵל־לֵע רֶפֶכּ כִּד סִפְסָחֻם כִּד רִבְדָּמָה יִגְפ־לֵע הַנִּיָּה לֶמַח תִּבְכַּשׁ לַעֲתוּ

13 In the evening, quail appeared and covered the camp; in the morning, there was a fall of dew about the camp. 14When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

In the early part of this chapter, we saw how people complained to Moses about the food provision they were lacking, and God heard them (Exodus 16:1-12). God promised he would send food, and the quail came and covered the camp in the evening. This proved how reliable God is when He makes promises. He can never fail at what He promised to do. He sent the quail that evening without delay. His help cannot come later, but at the appointed time, He will surface. The food needs of Israel were provided for by the immediate hand of God. He makes them a feast at night of delicate fowl. ²⁶ Quail, pheasants, or some wildfowl covered the camp, so they might take up as many of them as they pleased. The following day God raised manna upon them, which was to be continued to rain upon them for their daily bread. God gave them all that they needed. God has everything you need to go through life in His hand.

Verse 15.

אִיָּה מִתְלַא הָעָם רִמְאֵן אִיָּה־הֵם וַעֲדִי אֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי נִם וַיַּחֲזֶ־לָא שִׁיא וְרִמְאֵן לִאֲרָשִׁי־יִגְבּ וַאֲרָן
הִלְכָּאֵל מִכָּל הַיּוֹד וַתֵּן רִישָׁא סִתְלָה

When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” —for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “That is the bread

which **יִי** has given you to eat.

That which was provided for them was manna, for nourishing and strengthening food without anything else. They called it manna, מַנָּה (man hu) meaning ‘What is this.’ God is in the business of doing surprises in His people’s life. The incredible power of God fed the people; He gave them bread to eat. It is reasonable enough to think of that great power of God which fed the Israelites in the wilderness and made miracles their daily bread. Never was there such a market of provision as this where so many hundred thousand men were furnished daily without money or price. Never was there such an open house kept as God kept in the wilderness for forty years together, nor was such free and plentiful entertainment given of that constant providence of God. The same wisdom, power, and goodness that now brought food daily out of clouds are employed in the constant course of nature, bringing food yearly out of the earth and giving us all things richly to enjoy.

Verses 16-18.

שיא מְכִיתֶשֶׁפֶּנּוּ רַפְסֵם תְּלִגְלִגֵּל רִמְעֵ וְלִבָּא יִפֹּל שִׂיא וְנִמְמֵ וְנִמְמֵל הִוְדִּי תִנְצֵ רִשָּׁא רְבֻדָּה הֵנָּה 16
וְתִתְקַת וְלִהְיֵאב רִשָּׁאֵל:

טִיעַמְמֵהוּ הִבְרַמָּה וְטַקְלִין לְאַרְשִׁי יִנָּב נֶכְ-וּשְׁעֵיו 17

וְטָקַל וּלְכָא־יִפֹּל שִׁיאַ רִיסְתָּהּ אֶל טִיעַמָּהּ הִבְרַמָּה רְיָדְעָה אֵלָיו רַמְעַב וְדַמְיוֹ 18

16This is what הוֹרִי has commanded: Each household shall gather as much as it requires to eat—an omer to a person for as many of you as there are, each household shall fetch according to those in its tent.” 17The Israelites did so, some gathering much, some little. 18But when they measured it by the omer, anyone who had gathered much had no excess, and anyone who had gathered little had no deficiency: each household had gathered as much as it needed to eat.

They were to gather it every morning as much as each needed for a day. To this daily rain of manna and gathering of manna, our Saviour Jesus seems to allude when He teaches us to pray and gives us our daily bread. We are now taught:

- (1) prudence and diligence in providing food convenient for ourselves and our household. What God graciously gather?
- (2) Contentment and satisfaction with sufficiency. They must gather every man according to his eating. Enough is as good as a feast, and more than enough is as bad as a surfeit. As many that obeyed

dependence upon the providence of God, they gathered what they needed for the day, trusting that God with the following day will bring them their daily bread. As they trusted and obeyed God, they were not disappointed. Those who gathered did not lack what they needed, and those who gathered much did not have a surplus. God deals with them on an equal bases. As we obey God, He makes available all that we need one at a time. ²⁷

Verse 35.

35וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָכְלוּ מַנָּה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה עַד אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ אֶל-בְּרֶגֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָכְלוּ מַנָּה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה עַד אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ אֶל-בְּרֶגֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

35And the Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a settled land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

God having provided manna to be his people's food in the wilderness, we are here told how the memory of it was preserved. An Omer of this manna was laid up in a golden pot, as we are told (Heb 9:4), and kept before the testimony or the ark, which it was afterward made (Exodus 16:32-34). Note that eating bread must not be forgotten. God's miracles and mercies will forever be remembered for our encouragement to trust him. The mercy of it was continued as long as they had occasion for it. ²⁸

The manna never ceased till they came to the border of Canaan where there was bread enough and to spare (Exodus 16:35). The manna is called spiritual meat (1Cor 10:3) because it was typical of spiritual blessings in heavenly things: Christ himself is the true manna, the bread of life, of which this was a figure (Jn 6:49-51).

The word of God is the manna by which our souls are nourished (Matt. 4:4). The comforts of the spirit are hidden manna (Rev. 2:17). These came from heaven as the manna did and are the support and comfort of the divine life in the soul, while we are in the wilderness of this world. It is to gather Christ in the word is to be applied to the soul, and the means of grace are to be used. We must all gather for ourselves in the morning of our days, the morning of our opportunities of which, if we let it slip off, it may be too late to gather.

The manna they gathered must not be hoarded up but eaten; those that have received Christ must, by faith, live upon him and not receive his

grace in vain. However, those who ate manna hungered again and died at last, and God was not pleased with many of them. Whereas, those that feed on Christ by faith shall never hunger and shall die no more; with them, God will be forever well pleased.

8. Lessons for Evangelical Christians in Africa

1. God Provides for the Sustenance of His People (vv 13-14)

As they journey through the desert region to the southeast of the Bitter Lakes, the cruelty and suffering of Egypt are quickly forgotten when the people become hungry. They even suggested that it would have been better for them to have died by the Lord's hand in Egypt rather than starve in the desert. In response, God graciously sent quails in the evening and a bread-like substance in the morning; these were later called manna because the people said what is this.²⁹

When the people complained, God miraculously provided for their needs to sustain them. God constantly provides for the sustenance of His people, and He graciously does this exceedingly abundantly beyond all His children ask or think. Here are some lessons from the study for humans flourishing from God's providential acts: God provides abundantly for all their needs- As our loving Heavenly Father, God knows and provides for all our needs - material, emotional, and spiritual.

God provides abundantly for our material needs. The Bible story respecting God's provision for the Israelites teaches believers in Jesus Christ that though as humans, no one has a "divine right" to prosperity, they do not need to feel guilty about the material things God provides for them. Christians in Africa, therefore, should hold these things lightly, remembering that the provisions in the first place belong to God, not to them. They are just managers for Him, not owners. To whom much is given, much shall be required (Luke 12:48). Christians need to be careful "not to be conceited or to fix (their) hopes on the uncertainty of riches" and "to be generous and ready to share" storing up treasure in heaven. However, when God blesses them materially, they can enjoy what He has richly supplied them (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

God provides abundantly for the emotional needs of His children. God wants His children to be emotionally whole, so He provides for them. He may not always do it instantly or when people think He should. He often does it by bringing healing to relationships with family members

and others who have hurt them. However, even if they never respond, the Lord teaches them how to forgive and to have every emotional need met in Him. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) describes an emotionally whole person. Fruit takes time to grow, but every believer who walks in the spirit is promised that fruit of emotional wholeness.

God provides abundantly for their spiritual needs. God's ultimate goal is always spiritual. He always has a spiritual reason behind any material blessings He supplies or withholds. In the Bible, His chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, who were to be His channel for blessing all nations, were once in danger of being polluted by the corrupt Canaanites. God had even prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would become strangers and slaves for 400 years in a land that was not theirs until the iniquity of the Amorite was complete (15:13-16). So there came a famine, and they moved to Egypt. These seemingly ordinary circumstances worked out God's spiritual purposes for His people, which He had spoken of almost 200 years before. Things do not just "happen." God uses things to shape Christians to be His channel to convey His blessings to lost people. To do that, He has provided abundantly in Christ for all of humanity's spiritual needs, even when they are unaware of them. God works through trials to mature believers in Jesus Christ spiritually. If Christians at large, specifically the Christians in Africa, call upon Him for their need, it will certainly provide for their sustenance.

2. God Surprises his People in His Provisions (v15)

The Israelites were surprised when they saw the miraculous provision from God. Today God is still in the business of surprising his people. When we think that all hope is lost, that is when God shows up with a surprise. This can be attributed to God providing for needs in His timing, not in/man's timing. Again, God provides in ways that even His children would never expect. A final discovery is that God provides for us through grace, not merit. If Christians in Africa will look up to him will surprise them beyond their expectations.

3. God Expects His People to Obey His Commands as they wait upon him (v.16)

God tested the Israelites by issuing specific stipulations concerning the collection and storage of the manna. To demonstrate their faith in God's provision, the people were not supposed to keep any manna from one day to the next. However, on the sixth day of the week, Friday, double

the quantity of manna was to be collected and prepared; the next day (Sabbath) was to be a day of rest. Some of the people did not heed these instructions. Although they had been delivered from the Egyptians by remarkable displays of God's power, they still lacked total commitment and loyalty to him 45

It has been discovered that obedience always brings blessings. The Lord's simple requests often serve as stepping stones to life's most beautiful blessings. There is so much that humans do not expect that can happen when they say yes to God. Obedience is the essential Christian life:

- a. Obeying God in small matters is an essential step in receiving God's greatest blessings: Very often, God's greatest blessings come from man's willingness to do something that appears very insignificant.
- b. The obedience of one individual always benefits others: God's call to obedience always demands an appropriate response. In giving the appropriate response, God often rewards others—in particular, those closest to the one obeying Him—as a result of their obedience. For example, when a father obeys the Lord, his entire family reaps the reward of God's blessings. Likewise, a child's obedience will bless his or her parents. This does not mean those who disobey the Lord will escape His discipline because of someone else's godly walk. His call to obedience always demands an individual response. However, when people live obedient lives, those who know and love them will sense the peace and joy that God gives. Instead of conflict, there will be contentment—just one part of experiencing God's goodness.

4. Those who obey God will never be disappointed ³⁰

Based on the above, whenever God gives a command, he expects his people to obey his instructions. This is the basis for his continuous blessings in the life of Christians. Therefore, God expects the Christians in Africa to obey him in all things constantly. By this, God shall bless them, and their needs will be met. It is disheartening to see that God's people disobey his command; this may be why his blessing keeps on eluding Christians.

5. Obedience to God has Far-reaching Reward for God's People (vv. 17-18)

Verse 1 indicates they were still going from Egypt to the Promised Land. Verse 2: The Israelites complained against Moses and God for the third time (Exodus 14:10-12; 15:24). Despite all that God has done for them,

they quickly lost faith in His goodness, wisdom, and will for their lives (Num. 14:2; 16:11; 41). Paul warns New Testament believers not to follow Israel's example (1 Cor. 10:10) when serious problems arise; instead of accusing God of neglect and unfaithfulness, we should commit our way to Him, moreover, humbly as for help in resolving the problem trusting Him to act on our behalf.

This bread from heaven is called manna (verse 15); it was an exceptional food miraculously sent from God to feed the people after their exodus from Egypt; it was a white substance that resembled frost, took the form of thin flakes, and tasted like honey (verse 14, 31), (Nm 11:19). The supply of manna eased when the Israelites enter the Promised land and other foods became available (Jos 5:12). Manna was a type of foreshadowing of Jesus, who is the authentic Bread of Heaven. (Jn 6:32; Rv 12:17), that gives eternal life (Jn 6:33-58).

The people were instructed about the bread from heaven to test their willingness to trust and obey God (*cf.* Dt 8:2-3). In the same way, God sometimes orders the circumstances of our lives to test our faith and loyalty to Him.³¹ God gave orders to gather only enough for each day to teach the people that their daily existence depended exclusively upon His gift (Mt 6:11).

Through His instructions regarding the seventh day (verses 22-30), God wanted to emphasize that His people were to respond by resting, just as He rested on the seventh day of creation (Gn 2:1-4). God knew from the very beginning that if His people failed to observe the Sabbath, they would deplete both their physical and spiritual strength by continual earthly worries and pursuits; this failure would result in spiritual, godly concern being relegated to a place of most minor importance in their lives (Mt 12:1; Lk 6:2-10).

Although they had been delivered from the Egyptians by remarkable displays of God's power, some still lacked total commitment and loyalty to him. As the Exodus story reveals, the Israelites frequently displayed their obstinacy toward God. Nevertheless, such is the constancy of God that he provides manna for the next forty years; only when the people settled in the land of Canaan did the manna cease (v. 35-36). As a testimony to future generations, an Omer of manna was preserved in a jar (v.33).

As they journeyed (the Israelites) through the desert region to the southeast of the Bitter Lakes, the cruelty and suffering of Egypt were quickly forgotten when the people became hungry. They even suggested that it would have been better for them to have died by the Lord's hand in Egypt rather than starve in the desert (v3-4). In response, God graciously sent quails in the evening (v13) and a bread-like substance in the morning; the latter was called manna because the people asked what it was. God tested the Israelites by issuing specific stipulations concerning the collection and storage of the manna (v 4-5, 16, 23). To demonstrate their faith in God's provision, the people were not supposed to keep any of the manna from one day to the next (v.19). However, on the sixth day of the week, Friday, double the quantity of manna was to be collected and prepared, for the next day (the Sabbath) was to be a day of rest. Some people did not follow these instructions (v 20, 28). Although they had been delivered from the Egyptians by remarkable displays of God's power, some still lacked total commitment and loyalty to him.

As the Exodus' stay reveals, the Israelites frequently displayed their obstinacy towards God. Nevertheless, such is the constancy of God that he provides manna for the next forty years; only when the people settled in the land of Canaan did the manna cease (v. 35-36). As a testimony to future generations, an Omer of manna was preserved in a jar (v. 33).

In the New Testament, Jesus compares himself with the manna divinely provided in the wilderness, "I am the living bread that came down from heavens. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the world's life. (Jn 6:48-58, KJV)."

Studies have shown that Quail and Manna are highly nutritious, with a high level of vitamins, carbohydrates, minerals, proteins, lipids, etc. When comparing quail with chicken, the level of macronutrients and micronutrients in quail is far more nutritious than chicken, and manna is more nutritious than ordinary bread. This bread, called manna and quail, was exceptional food miraculously sent from God to feed the people after the exodus from Egypt.

The supply of manna and quail ceased when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, and other foods became available (Joshua 5:12). Manna was a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ, who as the true bread from heaven (Jn 6:32; Rv 2:17) gives eternal life (Jn 6:33, 51, 58). If Christians in

Africa could depend solely on God's providence and love, He would supply all their daily needs.

The people were given exact instructions about the bread and quail from heaven (Ex 16:4) to test their willingness to trust and obey God (Dt 8:2-3). In the same way, God sometimes orders the circumstances of our lives to test our faith and loyalty to Him. Christians in Africa are similarly expected to develop a high level of faith and loyalty to God for God to demonstrate His power and authority in their lives. God gave orders to gather only enough for each day to teach the people that their daily existence depended exclusively upon His gift (Ex 16:21; Mt 6:11).³²

Through His instructions regarding the seventh day (v. 22-30), God wanted to emphasize that His people were to respond by resting, just as He rested on the seventh day of creation (Gn 2:1-4). From the beginning, God knew that if His people failed to observe the Sabbath, they would deplete their physical and spiritual strength by continual earthly worries and pursuits. This failure would result in spiritual, godly concerns being relegated to a place of most minor importance in their lives (Mt 21:1; Lk 6:2-10). This instruction is relevant to Christians in Africa, and they are expected to abide by it to be spiritually and physically meaningful; by this, they will be helpful to Christians in evangelizing the continent and the world generally.

If Christians in Africa solely depend on God for provision and sufficiency, He will equally sustain them. Every obedience to God's command brings an unprecedented reward that is far-reaching. If Christians in Africa obey God in all their ways, the reward will be unprecedented and far-reaching.

6. God's Reward/Blessing for His People has a Lasting Duration (v35)

As the exodus story reveals, the Israelites frequently displayed their obstinacy towards God. Nevertheless, such is the constancy of God that he provides manna for the next forty years; only when the people settled in the land of Canaan did the manna cease.³³ When God blesses His people, it has lasting effects; it is not momentary; it stands the test of time, and He is dependable and reliable. The manna miraculously sustained the Israelites for Forty (40) years, regardless of the nutritional content of the quail and manna. This must be the miracle that has lasting effects. From this episode, Christians in Africa must realize that only God rewards and that all blessings and rewards, not from God, have no lasting value and

must not be taken.

9. Conclusion

Studies show that quail and manna have nutritional values. Quail as meat contains a high level of vitamins, proteins, lipids, minerals, and a low percentage of carbohydrates, while manna as bread is rich in carbohydrates. These macronutrients and micronutrient, if deficient, leads to nutritional diseases. When the people of Israel cried to God in the wilderness for food, He gave them this wholesome food'. It was strange to them, and they called it manna "What is this." It was surprising to them. Moses said unto them, "This is the bread which the Lord had given you to eat." The Lord responded to their cry and made miraculous food available in the wilderness.

The modalities by which this provision should be handled were provided. God is a God of orderliness, and everything He does must be orderly. "This is the thing which the Lord had commanded; gather of it every man according to his eating? An Omer for every man, according to the number of persons; in your tenth take you every man for them which are in his tent". As they obeyed, they lacked nothing. God provided for them according to their needs. "And the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less." Obedience, therefore, is the key to the supernatural supply of all Christians' needs. Suppose Christians in Africa cry to God for their daily needs, as God surprised the people of Israel and met their needs; their needs will be met. However, obedience remains the key to this divine provision. They were sustained with the same manna for forty years, yet they did not develop any nutritional disease.

Although it is physiologically impossible to feed on the same component of food items without developing one form of the nutritional disease, the critical study of the text shows that the manna sustained the Israelites for forty years without any reports of the nutritional disease this manna must have been a special kind of bread that carried a divine connotation to sustain people for forty years. As Christians in Africa look up to God for their sustenance, He will miraculously provide a divine kind of bread to permanently satisfy their daily needs for the rest of their life. Therefore, human flourishing is in God's desires, and obedience to His commands is critical.

10. Notes

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him in the writing of this article.

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