

Exodus 16:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

Analysis

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was—The name 'manna' derives from the Hebrew **מַן** (man), meaning 'What is it?'—Israel's bewildered question becomes the substance's permanent name. This ignorance is pedagogically purposeful: they must learn to receive what they don't understand, depending on God's word about it rather than their own knowledge. The phrase 'they wist not' (וְיָדָעָו, lo yad'u) emphasizes their complete ignorance, making them like children who must simply trust. Moses' explanation 'This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat' establishes it as divine gift, not natural phenomenon. Christ uses identical logic: 'This is my body...given for you' (Luke 22:19).

Historical Context

The permanent naming based on initial confusion emphasizes that God's ways transcend human understanding. Israel spent 40 years eating 'What is it?'—a daily reminder of mystery and dependence.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does not understanding God's provision test whether we trust His word over our comprehension?
2. What does naming the substance 'What is it?' teach about accepting mystery in spiritual life?

Interlinear Text

אָחִי	אֶל	אֶשְׁ	וְאָמַר	וְשָׁרָא	לִ	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	וְיִרְאָ	וְיִרְאָ
saw	And when the children		of Israel	it they said		one		to another	
H7200	H1121		H3478	H559		H376		H413	H251
It is manna			for they wist			the	and	it they said	
H4478	H1931	H3588	H3808	H3045		H4100	H1931	H559	
not what it was	And Moses				unto them	This is the bread			
	H4872		H413	H1931		H3899			H834
hath given		which the LORD			לְאַכְלָה:	לְקָם	כָּל	רַ	אֲשֶׁר
H5414		H3068			H0	H402			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 16:4 (References Lord): Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

Exodus 16:31 (References Israel): And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

John 6:58 (Parallel theme): This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

Deuteronomy 8:3 (References Lord): And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Nehemiah 9:20 (Parallel theme): Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

Nehemiah 9:15 (Parallel theme): And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

1 Corinthians 10:3 (Parallel theme): And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

Joshua 5:12 (References Israel): And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

John 6:49 (Parallel theme): Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

Exodus 16:33 (References Lord): And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.