

Numbers 11:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

Analysis

This verse provides physical description of the manna that sustained Israel for forty years. The comparison to 'coriander seed' (Hebrew gad, גָּד) indicates small, round whitish seeds about 2-3mm diameter, suggesting manna's size and appearance. The reference to 'bdellium' (Hebrew bedolach, בְּדָלָךְ) describes a translucent, aromatic resin ranging from white to pale yellow, indicating manna's color and perhaps its luminous quality.

This detailed description emphasizes that manna was a real, physical substance, not merely mythological or symbolic. God provided tangible, daily bread for His people—supernatural in origin but natural in consumption. The manna's pleasant appearance (coriander seed) and association with precious bdellium suggests that God's provision was not merely adequate but excellent—He gave His people something beautiful and valuable.

Yet despite manna's adequacy and beauty, the people complained (verses 4-6), revealing that human sin twists even divine blessings into occasions for discontent. The New Testament reveals that manna prefigured Christ, the true Bread from heaven (John 6:31-35). Just as Israel ate manna daily and lived physically, believers must feed on Christ daily through faith and Scripture to live spiritually. The manna's physical beauty points to Christ's spiritual beauty and complete sufficiency for our souls' needs.

Historical Context

The manna appeared six days per week throughout Israel's wilderness wandering (Exodus 16). Jewish tradition and rabbinic sources describe bdellium as a precious pearl-like substance, reinforcing the idea that God's provision was generous, not grudging. The comparison to familiar substances (coriander and bdellium) helped Israelites describe the unprecedented phenomenon. Archaeological expeditions in Sinai have documented natural substances (like tamarisk tree secretions) that superficially resemble manna descriptions, but these occur in far too limited quantities to sustain millions. The biblical manna was clearly miraculous—supernatural provision for an entire nation daily for decades.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing the excellence of God's provision (not merely its adequacy) deepen your gratitude and combat complaining?
2. In what ways does daily dependence on manna anticipate the Christian life of daily dependence on Christ as our spiritual bread?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת	כִּי	תִּשְׁאַל	וְאֵת	וְאֵת	כִּי	וְאֵת
And the manna	seed	was as coriander	H1931	and the colour	and the colour	H5869

בְּדֵלָה:
of **bdellium**

H916

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 16:31 (Parallel theme): 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.

Genesis 2:12 (Parallel theme): And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

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