

Numbers 11:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

Analysis

This verse describes Israel's preparation of manna, detailing the ordinary process (gathering, grinding, baking) applied to extraordinary provision. The people 'went about and gathered it' daily, emphasizing human responsibility within divine provision—God gave manna, but Israel had to collect it. The methods of preparation (grinding in mills, beating in mortars, baking in pans, making cakes) show that God's provision required human effort to be fully enjoyed.

The phrase 'the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil' (Hebrew *leshad hashemen, l'pach hashemen*) indicates rich, pleasant flavor—some translations render this 'taste of cakes baked with oil.' This contradicts the people's complaint (verse 6) that they had 'nothing' but manna. Their claim of deficiency revealed spiritual blindness, not actual lack. God's provision was genuinely delicious and satisfying, but sin distorted their perception.

The grinding and baking process illustrates an important principle: God's gifts must be appropriated through diligent effort. Spiritual nourishment likewise requires active engagement—Bible reading, meditation, prayer, worship. The manna didn't automatically become bread; it required work. Similarly, spiritual growth requires applying ourselves to the means of grace God provides. The parallel to Christ our Bread extends here: we must actively feed on Him through faith, not merely acknowledge His availability.

Historical Context

The detailed description of manna preparation suggests the account comes from eyewitness testimony—someone familiar with the daily routine. Mills and mortars were common household tools in ancient Near Eastern societies for processing grain. The mention of 'pans' (Hebrew *parur*, פָּרוּר) and 'cakes' (*ugot*, עֲגוֹת) indicates familiar cooking methods. This ordinary preparation of extraordinary substance emphasized that God's miracles don't eliminate human activity but rather sanctify it. The taste comparison to 'fresh oil' suggests richness and palatability, reinforcing that God provided generously.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the requirement to gather and prepare manna teach about the relationship between divine grace and human responsibility?
2. How does the people's complaint about manna despite its excellence warn against the danger of spiritual ingratitude even while receiving genuine blessings?

Interlinear Text

שָׁטוּ went about H7751	הָעָם And the people H5971	וַלְקָטוּ and gathered H3950	וְטָחְנוּ it and ground H2912	בְּרִיחַ יָם it in mills H7347	אִם H176	וְכָדוּ or beat H1743
בַּמִּדְבָּה it in a mortar H4085	וּבִשְׁלוּ and baked H1310	בַּפָּרֹר it in pans H6517	וַעָשׂוּ and made H6213	אֶת H853	עֵגֹת cakes H5692	וְהָיָה H1961
כֹּטֶם of it and the taste H2940	כֹּטֶם of it and the taste H2940	לֶשֶׁךְ of fresh H3955	הַשָּׁמֶן: oil H8081			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 16:31 (Creation): 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.