

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 *לְשָׁדַׁחַת שְׁמֵן*) 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, פָּרֹר) 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

וַיֵּלֶךְ	וְיָמָם	וְיָמָן	וְיָמָן	וְיָמָן	וְיָמָן	וְיָמָן
went about	And the people	and gathered	it and ground	it in mills	H176	or beat
H7751	H5971	H3950	H2912	H7347		H1743
בְּמִדְכָּה	וְבָשָׂלָה	בְּפֶרֶר וְרָא	וְעַשְׂתָּה	וְתַּעֲשֵׂת	וְתַּעֲשֵׂת	וְתַּעֲשֵׂת
it in a mortar	and baked	it in pans	and made	H853	cakes	H1961
H4085	H1310	H6517	H6213		H5692	
כְּתַעֲמֵד	לִשְׁמָןָה	כְּתַעֲמֵד	לִשְׁמָןָה	כְּתַעֲמֵד	לִשְׁמָןָה	כְּתַעֲמֵד
of it and the taste	of it and the taste	of fresh	oil			
H2940	H2940	H3955	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.

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