

This week we jump from the story of the burning bush in Exodus 2, 3 and 4, and the promise of God to Moses in Exodus 3:7-8 "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey". The Israelites have survived the plagues which overwhelmed the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and yet still he pursues the people of God out of vengeance and anger. They have escaped miraculously through the sea, demonstrating beyond a doubt that the God revealed in the burning bush keeps the divine word-promise, and sojourns with the people. But, here the people are beginning to despair of their itinerant life as dispossessed refugees, wandering in the stark wilderness (or desert of Sinai) remembering the past, doubting the future, complaining of how good they used to have it in the face of uncertainty and a wide-open future.

**complained** : The Israelites are fearful of the uncertain future, and so turn back to the known quantity of the past, even if it was uncomfortable and oppressive. This story is used repeatedly as a sort of midrash throughout both testaments. A midrash is an interpretive act, seeking the answers to religious questions (both practical and theological) by plumbing the meaning of the words of the Torah. (In the Bible, the root d-r-sh is used to mean inquiring into any matter, including occasionally to seek out God's word.) Midrash responds to contemporary problems and crafts new stories, making connections between new Jewish realities and the unchanging biblical text. [[www.myjewishlearning.com/article/midrash-101](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/midrash-101)]

As so this metaphor of complaining as both doubt and a lack of vision is taken up and developed in Psalm 95:6-9

<sup>6</sup> O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

<sup>7</sup> For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!

<sup>8</sup> **Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,**

<sup>9</sup> **when your ancestors tested me,**  
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work."

And Hebrew 3:12-19 which quotes Psalm 95 and further develops the story.

<sup>12</sup> Take care, brothers and sisters, **that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.** <sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup> As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice,  
**do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."**

## SCRIPTURES FOR

SUNDAY 10.8.2017

Exodus 16:1-18 & John 6:51

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in **THE LAND OF EGYPT**, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not." <sup>5</sup> On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." <sup>6</sup> So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup> and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?" <sup>8</sup> And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord."

<sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" <sup>10</sup> And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. <sup>11</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and said, <sup>12</sup> "I

<sup>16</sup> Now who were they who heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? <sup>17</sup> But with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

It also occurs in Philippians 2: 12-18

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> **Do all things without murmuring and arguing,** <sup>15</sup> so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. <sup>16</sup> It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you— <sup>18</sup> and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

**“What is it?”** in Hebrew this is written [man hu] or מנה this phrase leads to the name for the bread of manna. It now means all spiritual food or nourishment.

**omer** :an ancient Israelite unit of dry measure equal to about 3.64 litres

### Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- **What shimmers for you in this passage?**
- **What image most speaks to you today?**
- **How does the story of the complaining of the people and God’s giving of manna intersect your own story?**
- **How have you experienced God’s manna in your life? How do you struggle to trust that provision promise?**

have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

<sup>13</sup> In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup> When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, **“What is it?”** For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each of you needs, **an omer** to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.’” <sup>17</sup> The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.

John 6:51 in the context of John 6  
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup> When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup> He said this to

test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. <sup>11</sup> Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

<sup>15</sup> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

<sup>22</sup> The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; <sup>38</sup> for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

<sup>41</sup> Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup> Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**"

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; <sup>55</sup> for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup> He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.