



***Manna** (the "Bread from Heaven"):
What does the word mean in the original Hebrew language?*

The miraculous "bread of heaven" (Psalm 78:24) that God provided for the Israelites, while He led them through the Red Sea on dry ground and into the Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16).

The "small round substance" (v. 14) may have been produced by insects that punctured the fruit of the tamarisk tree, though it was consistently regarded in the Bible as a miraculous gift from God, rather than as a mere product of nature. It was certainly miraculous in terms of its timing and quantity.

Manna looked like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey (v. 31). When the Israelites first saw it, they asked each other, "What is it?" (Hebrew: man hu).

This led to the name "manna, " "what?". It came each morning, except on the Sabbath day. It could be collected each day for that day alone, and only as much as could be eaten in one day. [Give us this day, our daily bread. (We need to be TOTALLY reliant on God for our daily needs.)]

If a person tried to [greedily] collect more than needed or to store the manna for future needs [hoard], it would grow wormy and foul (v. 20). In this way, it was impossible for the Israelites to evade total dependence on God or to use the manna greedily for personal gain. Miraculously, the manna could be preserved on the sixth day and eaten on the Sabbath, and it was not to be found on the Sabbath morning (vv. 22-29).

Eventually, [unfortunately] the rebellious Israelites grew tired of the manna and regretted the day they were delivered from their bondage (Numbers 11:6). They came to detest the manna and longed instead for the rich foods of Egypt (v. 5). But God continued to give the Israelites a steady supply of manna during their forty years of desert wanderings. When Joshua and the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the promised land at Gilgal, they celebrated the Passover and ate the produce of the land. On that day, the manna ceased, again illustrating its miraculous provision (Joshua 5:12).

The purpose of the manna was to test Israel's faith, to humble them, and to teach them that one "does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3,16). A hungry Jesus used this quote to refuse Satan's suggestion, that he turn stones into bread (Matthew 4:4). Like the Israelites in the desert, Jesus was totally dependent on the provisions of His heavenly Father while in the wilderness of temptation (Matthew 4:11).

The people in Jesus' day misunderstood the significance of the manna. They longed for a physical miracle, like the manna, which would prove to them that Jesus' words were true (John 6:31). But Jesus wanted his disciples to seek for the bread of heaven that gives life to the world, instead of physical bread to satisfy their appetites. When they asked, "From now on give us this bread," he answered, "I am the bread of life" (vv. 32-35).

To the church in Pergamos*, Jesus encouraged faithfulness by promising that true believers would receive "hidden manna" to eat (Revelation 2:17). Just as Moses' manna brought with it physical blessing, so this heavenly reward will bring eternal life.

(***Pergamum** was a center for the worship of Dionysus, Zeus, and other pagan gods; the ancient city of Aeolis, Greece; which the Book of Revelation references as the "Seat of Satan".)

(SR: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/manna/>)