

Hunger

Want and Plenty



שיחה *Sicha*

Interfaith Day of Learning
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Temple Beth Or
Raleigh, North Carolina

Hunger: Want and Plenty

Setting out from Elim, the whole Israelite community came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. In the wilderness, the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 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, when we ate our fill of bread! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to starve this whole congregation to death.”

And the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion—that I may test them, to see whether they will follow My instruction or not. But on the sixth day, when they apportion what they have brought in, it shall prove to be double the amount they gather each day.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “By evening you shall know it was the Lord who brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning you shall behold the Presence of the Lord, because He has heard your grumblings against the Lord. For who are we that you should grumble against us? Since it is the Lord,” Moses continued, “who will give you flesh to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to the full, because the Lord has heard the grumblings you utter against Him, what is our part? Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord!

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole Israelite community: Advance toward the Lord, for He has heard your grumbling.” And as Aaron spoke to the whole Israelite community, they turned toward the wilderness, and there, in a cloud, appeared the Presence of the Lord.

The Lord spoke to Moses: “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Speak to them and say: By evening you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; and you shall know that I the Lord am your God.”

In the evening quail appeared and covered the camp; in the morning there was a fall of dew about the camp. When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?”—for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “That is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: Gather as much of it as each of you requires to eat, an *omer* to a person for as many of you as there are; each of you shall fetch for those in his tent.”

The Israelites did so, some gathering much, some little. But when they measured it by the *omer*, he who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no deficiency: they had gathered as much as they needed to eat. And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until the morning.” But they paid no attention to Moses; some of them left of it until morning, and it became infested with maggots and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

So they gathered it every morning, each as much as he needed to eat; for when the sun grew hot, it would melt. On the sixth day they gathered double the amount of food, two *omers* for each; and when all the chieftains of the community came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a day of rest, a holy Sabbath of the Lord. Bake what you would bake and boil what you would boil; and all that is left put aside to be kept until morning.” So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered; and it did not turn foul, and there were no maggots in it. Then Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath of the Lord; you will not find it today on the plain. Six days you shall gather it; on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.”

Yet some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found nothing. And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to obey My commandments and My teachings? Mark that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you two days’ food on the sixth day. Let everyone remain where he is: let no one leave his place on the seventh day.” So the people refrained on the seventh day.

The house of Israel named it manna [meaning, *what is it?*]. It was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like wafers in honey. Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Let one *omer* of it be kept throughout the ages, in order that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out from the land of Egypt. And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, put one *omer* of manna in it and place it before the Lord, to be kept throughout the ages.” As the Lord had commanded Moses, Aaron placed it before the Pact, to be kept. And the Israelite ate manna forty years, until they came to a settled land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. The *omer* is a tenth of an *ephah*. **(Exodus 16)**



The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.” But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. **(Luke 9:12-17)**

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 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?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 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. 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. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 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."

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.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 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. But he said to them, "It is I, do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

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.

Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 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.

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 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. 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." Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 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? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

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. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always."

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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 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. 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. 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."

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 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'?"

Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 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. 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. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father."

"Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 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."

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 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. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 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." He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum... (John 6:1-59)

A certain woman, the wife of one of the disciples of the prophets cried out to Elisha: “Your servant, my husband is dead and you know how your servant revered the Lord. And now a creditor is coming to seize my two children as slaves.” Elisha said to her, “What can I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house?” She replied, “Your maidservant has nothing at all in the house except a jug of oil.” “Go,” he said, “and borrow vessels outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, as many as you can. Then go in and shut the door behind you and your children and pour [oil] into all those vessels, removing each one as it is filled.”

She went away and shut the door behind her and her children. They kept bringing [vessels] to her and she kept pouring. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” He answered her, “There are no more vessels”; and the oil stopped. She came and told the man of God, and he said, “Go sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your children can live on the rest.” (2 Kings 4:1-7)



A man came from Baal-shalishah and he brought the man of God some bread of the first reaping—twenty loaves of barley bread and some fresh grain in his sack. And Elisha said, “Give it to the people and let them eat.” His attendant replied, “How can I set this before a hundred men?” But he said, “Give it to the people and let them eat. For thus said the Lord: They shall eat and have some left over.” So he set it before them; and when they had eaten, they had some left over, as the Lord had said. (2 Kings 4:42-44)



Narrated By Abu Huraira: By Allah, except Whom none has the right to be worshipped, (sometimes) I used to sleep on the ground on my liver (abdomen) because of hunger, and (sometimes) I used to bind a stone over my belly because of hunger. One day I sat by the way from where they (the Prophet and his companions) used to come out. When Abu Bakr passed by, I asked him about a Verse from Allah's Book and I asked him only that he might satisfy my hunger, but he passed by and did not do so. Then Umar passed by me and I asked him about a Verse from Allah's Book, and I asked him only that he might satisfy my hunger, but he passed by without doing so. Finally Abu-l-Qasim (the Prophet) passed by me and he smiled when he saw me, for he knew what was in my heart and on my face. He said, "O Aba Hirr (Abu Huraira)!" I replied, "Labbaik, O Allah's Apostle!" He said to me, "Follow me." He left and I followed him.

Then he entered the house and I asked permission to enter and was admitted. He found milk in a bowl and said, "From where is this milk?" They said, "It has been presented to you by such-and-such man (or by such and such woman)." He said, "O Aba Hirr!" I said, "Labbaik, O Allah's Apostle!" He said, "Go and call the people of Suffa to me." These people of Suffa were the guests of Islam who had no families, nor money, nor anybody to depend upon, and whenever an object of charity was brought to the Prophet, he would send it to them and would not take anything from it, and whenever any present was given to him, he used to send some for them and take some of it for himself. The order of the Prophet upset me, and I said to myself, "How will this little milk be enough for the people of As-Suffa?" I thought I was more entitled to drink from that milk in order to strengthen myself, but behold! The Prophet came to order me to give that milk to them. I wondered what will remain of that milk for me, but anyway, I could not but obey Allah and His Apostle so I went to the people of As-Suffa and called them, and they came and asked the Prophet's permission to enter. They were admitted and took their seats in the house.

The Prophet said, "O Aba-Hirr!" I said, "Labbaik, O Allah's Apostle!" He said, "Take it and give it to them." So I took the bowl (of milk) and started giving it to one man who would drink his fill and return it to me, whereupon I would give it to another man who, in his turn, would drink his fill and return it to me, and I would then offer it to another man who would drink his fill and return it to me. Finally, after the whole group had drunk their fill, I reached the Prophet who took the bowl and put it on his hand, looked at me and smiled and said. "O Aba Hirr!" I replied, "Labbaik, O Allah's Apostle!" He said, "There remain you and I." I said, "You have said the truth, O Allah's Apostle!" He said, "Sit down and drink." I sat down and drank. He said, "Drink," and I drank. He kept on telling me repeatedly to drink, till I said, "No. By Allah Who sent you with the Truth, I have no space for it (in my stomach)." He said, "Hand it over to me." When I gave him the bowl, he praised Allah and pronounced Allah's Name on it and drank the remaining milk. (**Sahih Bukhari Volume 8, Book 76, Hadith 459**)

'Uthman an-Nahdi reported that 'Abdurrahman ibn Abi Bakr as-Siddiq informed him that the companions of as-Saffah were poor and that the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, said: "He who has enough food for two, let him invite a third, and he who has food for four, let him invite a fifth or a sixth." (**Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Hadith 55**)

And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails, saying: “Eat of the good things We have provided for you.” (But they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls. (**Al-Baqara, 57**)



“(The righteous are those) who give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive for the love of God, saying: ‘We feed you for the sake of God alone; we seek from you neither reward nor thanks.’” (**Surah 76 The Human Being: 8-9**)



The Prophet Muhammad said: “Feed the hungry, visit the sick and set free the captives.” (**Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Hadith 55**)



שיחה *Sicha*
continuing the conversation

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