ON BREAD ALONE: CASE STUDIES OF THE USAGE OF THE MANNA SYMBOL IN SCRIPTURE AND PHILO

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INTRODUCTION

The narratives that cultures tell about their history define their respective identities and what they value. In many cases, symbols refer to a specific event to provide an entry point into the rehearsal of these stories. This process keeps the traditions alive. For example, the United States values freedom as a core principle, represented by the symbol of the Liberty Bell. According to an 1847 short story, a bell-ringer rang the bell upon hearing about the vote for independence on July 4, 1776. For a long time, historians regarded this tale as truth, though they have since disproved its historicity.[1] Nevertheless, its associations with the ideal of freedom remain as the story had become thoroughly embedded into the cultural narrative.

The Bible, as part of the longstanding Jewish and Christian traditions, contains these kinds of symbols as well. Perhaps the most well-known symbol is the cross, representing redemption and forgiveness of sins, which lie at the core of Christian doctrine.

This paper examines the symbol of manna. Evoking the narrative of the people of Israel's time in the wilderness after the exodus, manna represents Yahweh's covenantal faithfulness through provision. Different authors then take this understanding, relying on the shared tradition, to make specific points and arguments.[2] The following examination takes three biblical passages and a sample of Jewish exegesis to see how the tradition of

1. David Kimball, *The Story of the Liberty Bell*, revised (Washington, DC: Eastern National [National Park Service], 2006), 56.

2. While redaction criticism plays a critical role in the evaluations of these texts, this paper focuses on the final forms of the texts as we have them. This presumes the intentionality of whatever changes, additions, or compilations might have been made.

manna assists the author's goal or understanding of their history. Exodus 16, focusing primarily on the relationship between the characters, shows how the manna gained its original meaning. Evaluating the argumentative flow of Deuteronomy 8 demonstrates Moses's preparation of the audience for the transition from the wilderness to the promised land. John 6 uses manna to center other allusions to the exodus narrative, showing how Jesus ultimately fulfills the story. Philo broadens the symbol to refer to God's nourishment of the soul in order to encourage virtuous behavior. By looking at these passages, the goal is to gain a fuller picture of the role the symbol of manna plays in biblical tradition.

EXODUS 16

The first 15 chapters of the book of Exodus depict the miraculous rescue of the people of Israel by Yahweh out of the land of Egypt. In this portion of the narrative, a conflict arises from the antagonism with Egypt, their enemy and oppressor. Yahweh challenges the Pharaoh and the Egyptian pantheon head on, defeating them decisively and thereby putting Yahweh's supreme power on display for all to see. Simultaneously, the text provides the backstory of Moses. Yahweh calls him to be the leader of Israel and appoints him to mediate Yahweh's messages and judgments to Pharaoh. The conflict ends in chapter 15 as Yahweh drowns the armies of Egypt in the Red Sea, officially freeing Israel from their oppressors. The community then celebrates the victory through joyous song and dance, praising Yahweh for their long-awaited deliverance. At this point in the narrative, Israel's victory over Egypt seems like a happy ending, but in reality, it only starts the story. The Israelites may have gained their freedom, but now they need a home and an identity. With the first segment of the book drawn to a close, a transition occurs in the narrative arc of the Pentateuch as a whole. Exodus 15:22–27 acts as an introductory episode to the much longer episode of chapter 16, in which the main characters and sources of conflict shift to accommodate this new part of the narrative: the people of Israel in the wilderness.[3] The main characters involved are the people of Israel, Yahweh, and Moses; and the main conflict arises out of the interaction between these relationships. Using manna as its focus, Exodus 16 sets the groundwork for how these characters will interact with one another throughout the rest of the wilderness narrative, portraying tension and preparation for the coming covenant.

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3. Stephen A. Geller, "Manna and Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16," *Interpretation* 59, no. 1 (2005): 8.

Characters

Throughout Exodus 1–15, the people of Israel were the central object of the conflict: their freedom from Egypt was at stake as Yahweh fought against Pharaoh over whose people they would be. The Israelites acted minimally in contribution to the story; other characters acting on their behalf drove the plot forward. However, at this point in the narrative, their actions come front and center. The new space of the wilderness sets a confined environment for evaluating the interactions between the people of Israel, Yahweh, and Moses.

The People of Israel

Chapter 16 establishes the people of Israel as a distinct collective character unit. Various forms of the phrase "all the congregation of the sons of Israel" occur ten times within chapter 16 (nine of which occur in the first 17 verses). They act, speak, and are referred to as one. Consequently, when only some of the people disobey the Sabbath command, Yahweh accuses the whole group of obstinance (vv. 28–9). The portion of the congregation who disobeyed accurately demonstrated the stereotype of the community. The collectivity also illustrates the dynamic of their relationship with Yahweh. Once the caravan arrives at Sinai, Yahweh seeks to establish a covenant with the people as a collective group. While each individual as a member of the community has a responsibility to uphold the terms of the covenant, ultimately Yahweh gives the covenant to the whole (Exod. 19).[4] Chapter 16 essentially introduces us to the "character" of the

4. A post-covenant illustration of the connection of the individual to the corporate would be Joshua 7, where Israel was defeated by Ai because of the sin of one man, Achan.

people of Israel, and the characterization here establishes the groundwork for the rest of the Pentateuch. From where do the people start, and how far do they progress from that point (if at all)?

Exodus 16:3 contains the people's only speech in the chapter (excluding their reaction to the manna), and they do not portray themselves positively. They set forth an accusation against Moses and Aaron, falsely charging them for intending to starve them. The undue romanticization of their experience in Egypt adds the element of insult to the accusation. They fantasize the plenty they had in eating all of the meat and bread they wanted, ignoring of course the perpetual misery of slavery in which they had cried out to Yahweh for help (Exod. 2:23).[5] The synecdoche "the hand of Yahweh," a phrase meant to depict Yahweh as a whole, contrasts with its prior mentions in Exodus 7:4–5 and 13:3: whereas Yahweh's strong hand represented the mode of delivery from slavery, the people here express a wish that it had been their mode of death. Even if taken hyperbolically, the complaint illustrates a blatant disregard for Yahweh's salvific action.[6] The people's words indicate that they have no trust that the one who saved them would also protect and provide for them after the fact. The closeness of these events heightens the harshness of the situation: it has only been a month and a half since they had left Egypt (v. 1).[7] How could the people so quickly forget such a miraculous salvation and the joy they had felt?

The justification of the complaint significantly affects how we characterize the people of Israel: were they really in need? If we answer yes, then the audience—

5. Paul W. Ferris, "Manna Narrative of Exodus 16:1–10," *JETS* 18, no. 3 (1975): 195.

6. Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014), 424.

7. Ferris, "Manna Narrative," 196.

especially accounting for the original audience as their descendants—should feel sympathetic toward the people. Their seemingly harsh accusations only result from intense stress and dire circumstances. Thus, we can excuse them for momentary moodiness. On the other hand, if we answer no, then the audience should view the people much more one-dimensionally. Some scholars gloss over the question of the legitimacy of their need, focusing more on the tone of the complaint and Yahweh's reply than the content. This approach tends to work under the supposition of the validity of the need.[8] However, others show two ways in which the complaint is unwarranted.

The first argument to discredit the complaint comes from logically piecing together internal details about the people's supplies to show that they had no material need. Although Exodus 16 does not indicate the amount of food left, the next chapter mentions the livestock (Exod. 17:3), which survived the wilderness wandering through their entry into Canaan (Num. 32:1).[9] Consequently, this means they had the livestock at this time as well.[10] But even without this information, given the amount of supplies with which they had left Egypt, it seems highly unlikely that just over a month into their journey they would have run completely out of supplies. Granted, due to the agrarian nature of the culture, the livestock would have been a last resort, if the need was indeed as desperate as the people made it out to be, they did have the resources to address the issue.[11]

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8. Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, (NCBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 130.

9. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 424.

10. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* (vol. 2 of *The Anchor Bible*; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 593.

11. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, (JPSTC; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 86.

A more convincing piece of evidence comes from evaluating the language of the author. In other instances of need, such as the preceding episode of the lack of water (Exod. 15:23), the narrator states the need. In this context, the characters express their hunger. This modification may indicate that the author does not side with the people in this matter, viewing their complaint as unjustified and seeking to communicate that to the reader as well.[12] Furthermore, the author wants to avoid suggesting any fault of Yahweh's. If we take the people's protest seriously, then this may imply a failure on Yahweh's part, suggesting that Yahweh had neglected to provide care for the people. Thus, since there is no justification for either the content or the tone of the complaint, the people's speech portrays them as dismissively forgetful, foolishly ignorant, and overdramatic.

The complaint highlights what will be an important theme: murmuring.[13] The word first appeared with the people's complaint for water (Exod. 15:24). In chapter 16, the verb "murmur" (לון) and its noun form appear eight times in the first twelve verses, repeating most frequently outside of this passage also in reference to the people's complaints in the wilderness for their needs (ex. Exod. 17, Num. 14).[14] Other contexts of usage include legal matters in breaches of covenantal trust.[15] Since "murmur" is not a common word, it becomes a key term associated with the portrayal of the people's

12. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 284.

13. J. Phillip Hyatt, *Exodus* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 171.

14. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 284.

15. Ferris, "Manna Narrative," 193.

attitude throughout the rest of their time in the wilderness.[16] While the density of the occurrence of the word emphasizes the people's negative attitude, the author does not use the word again in this chapter after the appearance of "the glory of Yahweh." This abrupt cutoff does not demonstrate a change in the people's character (as negated by the subsequent complaints and murmurs); rather, it shifts the focus away from the complaint onto the test. From this point in the passage onward, the author focuses on what the people's actions, not their speech, say about their character.

The people's response sheds light upon the true state of their disobedient nature. For the first of the daily appearances of the manna, Moses instructs them to each gather as much as they need per person, and they do so (vv. 15–8). But when Moses commands the people not to keep any of it, some keep it, and the manna spoils (vv. 19–20). Likewise, on the sixth day, when Moses commands them to collect a double portion for the Sabbath, they do not protest (vv. 22–6). There is some initial confusion, but Moses clears this up by explaining the Sabbath rule.[17] However, on the Sabbath, some people disobey the command and go out to collect manna despite the double portions from the day before (v. 27). The pattern suggests that the people are more likely to obey when obedience seems to benefit them and more resistant when there seems to be something to lose, exhibiting their selfishness as a priority over obedience.

16. The word occurs 18 times in the Hebrew Bible.

17. Wim Beuken, "Exodus 16:5,23: A Rule Regarding the Keeping of the Sabbath," *JSOT* 10 (1985): 3–14.

The Relationship Between Yahweh and Israel

In answer to the people's accusation against Moses, Yahweh relays a plan to Moses (vv. 4–5). Their obedience—or disobedience—in this situation predicts their obedience to the covenantal law that Yahweh intends to give them.[18]

Even though the people have no justification for their complaint (not only in content but also in harshness), Yahweh's decision demonstrates patience and care. Yahweh does not even address the negativity shown and implied through the murmuring, much less rebuke them for it.[19] This forbearing attitude diverges significantly in the book of Numbers, when Yahweh frequently sends plagues and punishments upon the people for their complaints and sin (ex. Num. 13, 20). Historical context perhaps plays a role here: Exodus 16 takes place before the giving of the Sinai covenant, and the book of Numbers takes place afterward. Essentially, at the point of Exodus 16, the two parties are still in a courting phase; the covenant makes the relationship official. The people do not yet fully know Yahweh's character, and Yahweh likewise begins to interact with them more directly. Although Yahweh has displayed glory and power through delivering the people out of Egypt, from the perspective of the people, Yahweh has been largely absent. The revelation of the name in Exodus 3 in reply to Moses's concern of the people's potential reaction emphasizes this point: their knowledge of the God of their ancestors as a whole lacks the substance and relevance that they will gain during their time in the wilderness, especially after the giving of the law at Sinai. This point in the wilderness

18. W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus* (NSBT; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 71.

19. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 285.

narrative lays the groundwork for the development of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel and the dynamics between each party. To depict this concept, Paul Ferris refers to this section of the wilderness narrative as the historical prologue to the Sinai covenant, using the terminology and structure of suzerain-vassal treaties.[20] He distinguishes the lessons these events prior to the covenant teach from the legislation to be commanded.[21] Yahweh's actions here give context and reasoning for agreeing to the terms of the covenant.

The theophany (that is, the physical manifestation of God to the people) plays an important part in determining the path of the relationship (vv. 9–12). The people have openly and willingly challenged Yahweh as if Yahweh was not actually present. Here, Yahweh proves them wrong by having them experience firsthand Yahweh's immediacy. Their grumbling results in the instruction to "draw near to Yahweh" (v. 9). The word used here (קָרַב) is a term that will be used later in reference to approaching the sanctuary.[22] This implies an intimacy that could be comforting, especially accounting for other covenantal allusions within the text. On the other hand, the phrase also has a legal connotation.[23] Because of Yahweh's holiness, the result of the presence of Yahweh—salvation or judgment—is determined by the people involved and the situation at hand. In the case of the exodus, for example, Yahweh's presence simultaneously meant the

20. Ferris, "Manna Narrative," 191–2.

21. Ferris, "Manna Narrative," 199.

22. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 287.

23. Ferris, "Manna Narrative," 199.

humiliating demise of the Pharaoh and Egyptians and the freedom of the Israelites.[24] Thus, if the people had more fully understood the meaning of Yahweh's presence, the correlation made by Moses should have inspired fear in their hearts: their grumbling has led to the real manifestation of Yahweh's presence.

The people's subsequent faltering could then demonstrate a particular choice on their part to ignore Yahweh's presence. Nevertheless, despite the tension depicted, the author does not want to go so far as to portray the people as antagonistic toward Yahweh. Alternatively, the people need to become accustomed to *actively recognizing and acting upon* Yahweh's presence. Here, the elements of testing and training for the law come into play. Since the Israelites have barely made it past the starting point, they cannot be expected to act as if they had been in long-term training. This makes the cloud through which Yahweh comes a distinct event from (though possibly arising out of) the pillar that has been acting as a guide (Exod. 13:21).[25] This theophany serves as an announcement of an invitation to a new mode of living.[26]

Though the text builds up possible anticipation of judgment, Yahweh simply speaks to Moses, repeating the same instructions as before. Just as Yahweh had heard the people's cry in their oppression in Egypt (Exod. 2:24), Yahweh hears their complaints in the wilderness and comes to respond to them. In both cases, the end goal is that the people may know Yahweh as their God. As discussed above, in contrast to later decisions that bring judgment upon the people, this decision to honor the people's request seeks to

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24. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (SOTBT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 21–7.

25. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 9–10.

26. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 424–5.

demonstrate Yahweh's role as a caring and thoughtful provider. That being said, Yahweh's positive response is not an affirmation of their grumbling. To the people, it may seem that Yahweh has given in to the demand of their challenge, but in reality Yahweh is the one testing the people.[27] Yahweh—not the people—determines the terms by which the Israelites will receive the manna.[28] The giving of the instructions and timing makes it clear that, even though the people get what they want, Yahweh ultimately controls the situation and does as Yahweh sees fit.

The people's obedience shows whether or not they take Yahweh's real presence seriously. Despite possible negative connotations of "test" and what the people's action may imply (as noted above), their obedience does not cost them. Yahweh does not ask the people to give something up in order to receive the manna. They do not need to sacrifice anything at a personal expense. Yahweh has made the provisions for them, and they only need to follow the given instructions.[29] Their response therefore demonstrates their trust or lack thereof in Yahweh's character and good intentions.

Whereas Moses responds in anger at the people's first disobedience (v. 20), Yahweh interjects after the breaking of the Sabbath ordinance (vv. 28–9). The repetition of "law" (תּוֹרָה) in Yahweh's judgment (v. 28) connects back to the plan laid out in verse 4, suggesting Yahweh's response as the anticipated point of resolution. Of course, the people did not know it was a test, but in this instance, they have failed. However, since they are still in the "learning phase," they receive not a punishment but a stern command

27. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 599.

28. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 286.

29. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 71.

to stay put, which they obey (v. 30). The abrupt shift at this point could have an optimistic connotation: the people, through their failure, learned the lesson that Yahweh was trying to teach them through the manna.[30]

The Role of Moses

Though Moses's role shows less prominently in this passage than in others, he still plays a vital part in the dynamic of the action. As depicted in Exodus 1–15, he continues to relay Yahweh's words to people. Previously, he had mediated primarily between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Although Yahweh had commissioned Moses for his role as leader of Israel in chapter 3, his primary role at the time was as deliverer. With Pharaoh removed from the narrative, the focus turns to Moses's interaction with the people. Now that the people have been delivered, they need a person to unite them as a community. As such, his role carries no importance for himself as an individual but rather as the representative of the people of Israel. Although Yahweh (in frustration) seems to express favoritism toward Moses over the people (Exod. 32), Yahweh's relationship with Moses happens not for its own sake but rather for the sake of all the people. Yahweh did not choose Moses because he was special or to make him special but rather to serve the greater redemptive purpose.

Although Moses technically does the majority of the acting and speaking, he never acts in this passage of his own accord. Rather, Yahweh relays the message for the people to Moses so that he may communicate it to them (vv. 11–2). Moses fulfills his duty by acting as a conduit. The declarative, "What are we?" indicates that Moses and

30. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 427.

Aaron, for their part, know their subjection to Yahweh's authority and that they only act as Yahweh's representatives (v. 7).[31]

The target of the people's contention needs clarification. Although the people direct their accusation toward Moses (v. 2), Moses defers their placement of blame by saying they actually contend against Yahweh (v. 8). But is Moses bringing into the open what the people know their true motives to be, or is he correcting their theology (that is, they do not realize whom they really accuse)?[32] The former implies a serious disregard for what Yahweh has done, while the latter portrays a significant amount of learning that the people must do. Brevard Childs interprets their complaint as a veil for their unbelief in Yahweh.[33] Similarly, Duane Garrett sees the matter not as a need for cognitive awareness—that is, they truly do recognize Moses's authority as being subject to Yahweh—but rather a need for the people to begin regarding Yahweh as the true leader of the wilderness expedition.[34] Furthermore, as their complaint does not need to include "the hand of Yahweh"—rendering the mention of Yahweh completely unnecessary and therefore intentional—the people essentially issue a challenge to Yahweh.[35] We can

31. While Aaron plays a crucial role in leading the people, his authority is portrayed as being subject to Moses's. When Yahweh first chooses Moses, Aaron only gets involved due to Moses's persistent resistance. In this chapter, when they address the people in verse 6, the author uses the singular form of the verb to put Moses as the main speaker. Verses 9 and 32 also portray Moses giving Aaron instructions. Thus, this evaluation centers around Moses. Nevertheless, as stated in the body, Moses's individuality is not the concern but rather the function of his role.

32. Another possibility could be that Moses tries to defend or justify himself against their attacks. However, this passage is not so concerned about the characterization of Moses (as other passages are) as much as the specific role he plays.

33. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 287.

34. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 424.

35. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 592.

balance both sides in saying that the training aspect of the test includes both attitude adjustment and mental recognition. The people must learn how to trust Yahweh and the ones whom Yahweh appoints as ambassadors before they will act properly. However, if they are to trust Yahweh, they must understand who Yahweh is.

As Yahweh's representative, Moses carries Yahweh's authority. The people cannot ignore the one whom Yahweh has chosen or treat him with contempt. Even in the theophany, which (as stated before) proves to the people Yahweh's real presence, Yahweh does not further show that presence by speaking directly to the people (vv. 9–10). Instead, Yahweh speaks to Moses the same instructions as given before (vv. 5, 11–2). The text does not make it clear as to whether or not the people could also hear the voice.[36] Nevertheless, Yahweh's appearance confirms Moses's authority as Yahweh's chosen representative.[37] Even if the people claim or believe that Yahweh is not present immediately, Yahweh is still present through the chosen leader.

Manna

Instead of chastising their unfounded complaints and correcting their skewed memory of Egypt (v. 3), Yahweh gives them the very things they desire—but not in the way that the people might have expected (vv. 12–4). The manna is the vehicle by which Yahweh decides to test the people's faithfulness (v. 4), and its collection opens the door for the introduction of the Sabbath (vv. 22–30), not only as an institution but also as a lesson in Yahweh's character.

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36. Yahweh's command to Moses to "speak to them" seems to imply that the people were at least unable to comprehend the content.

37. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 424–5.

The Characteristics of Manna

Although bread and meat are initially paired (v. 3, 13–4), the quail loses relevance in favor of focusing on the manna. Yahweh responds to the people's recollection of eating bread and meat to the full with the promise to rain bread from heaven (v. 4). Moses's words, confirmed when Yahweh appears, expands the promise: not only will they get bread, but they will also get meat (v. 12). The parallelisms in verses 8 and 12 suggests a connection between the two: the giving of bread and meat together displays Yahweh's presence.[38] Thus, despite appearing at separate times, the two form one distinct miracle.[39] However, verse 13 does not describe the people's reaction as the quail cover the camp in the evening. In fact, this is the last mention of quail in the passage, leaving it unclear whether the quail, like the manna, appears daily or just one time.[40] The ambiguity shows a lack of concern for the quail on the author's part. On the other hand, when the people go out and see the manna in the place of dew, the usage of the word "behold" (הִנֵּה) draws particular attention to the sight (v. 14). The unfamiliarity causes the people to question what it is (v. 15).[41] Even though the meat had come in the evening according to the first half of Yahweh's word, the people did not immediately associate this new substance with the bread that would fulfill the second half.[42] Hence Moses must make the

38. Ephraim Landau, "A Poetical Approach to 'Evening' and 'Morning' in Exodus 16:6–12," *JBQ* 46, no. 4 (2018): 211–225.

39. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 420.

40. Numbers 11:4–35 clarifies this, contrasting the daily manna with their desire for meat.

41. Despite other possible readings, the clarifying comment "because they did not know what it was" paired with the comment in verse 31 on the derivation of the name shows that the reaction is best understood as a question. (Alena Nye-Knutson, "Hidden Bread and Revealed Word: Manna Traditions in Targums Neophyti 1 and Ps-Jonathan," in *Israel in the Wilderness: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* [ed. Kenneth E. Pomykala; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 207–10.)

42. Zvi Ron, "'What Is It?' Interpreting Exodus 16:15," *JBQ* 38, no. 4 (2010): 300–306.

connection for them (v. 15), once again acting as a mediator of Yahweh's instructions (vv. 16, 19, 23, 29).

The stipulations Yahweh gives through Moses in regard to the collection of the manna further distinguish the nature of this "bread:" the manna comes at Yahweh's command for individualized, daily provision. First, the people collect according to the individual need—no more or less. Second, the people cannot keep any for the next day; they collect for that day's need only. Third, the people collect by Yahweh's will and command. In turn, the people's response needs to mirror the nature of the manna. If it is individualized, then each person must collect for their own need. If it is daily, then each person must collect every day. If it is by Yahweh's command, then each person must listen to Yahweh's instructions on how to collect. As the people learn about these properties of manna, Yahweh supernaturally intervenes. No matter if they had collected too much or too little, it measures to the omer (vv. 17–8). When the people attempt to keep it overnight, the manna spoils (v. 20). On the Sabbath, no manna appears, and Yahweh commands the people to stay home (vv. 27–30). Yahweh's reaction to the breaking of the Sabbath emphasizes the last of the three points, as the people insisted on disregarding Yahweh's command.

Specific details give a fuller depiction of the nature of manna, consistently pointing to its supernatural origins. The bread comes down from heaven (v. 4), not up from the ground, the opposite of the natural means.[43] The verb used in verse 4 (מָטַר) literally means "to rain." Precipitation symbolizes providence.[44] As rain is vital for an

43. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 593.

44. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 10.

agricultural society, it is ironic that the bread "rained" down from heaven comes without the need for agricultural labor. Similarly, dew, which reveals the manna (v. 14), has associations with divine favor.[45] Honey, the description of its taste (v. 31), indicates a heavenly sweetness but with it fragility, indicated through the spoiling and melting (v. 21).[46] The people's ability to eat the manna during their whole wilderness wanderings means that the manna was not bound by the constraints of terrain, season, or weather, and the need to describe it suggests that there was no manna to which the audience could compare (v. 35).[47]

Manna and Sabbath

The explanation of the people's sustenance in turn accounts for the beginning of Israel's Sabbath tradition. Though Yahweh officially institutes the day as law in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20), Yahweh first gives the ordinance here. Duane Garrett believes that the lesson of the passage is the beginning of the Sabbath. His explanation, while rightly acknowledging the Sabbath as a key societal custom, fails to illustrate how the placement of the practice's inauguration in this specific context aids in giving it a fuller meaning.[48] Alluding to the creation account in Genesis 2:3, Moses calls the seventh day holy to Yahweh; therefore, Yahweh commands the people to cease from their collection (v. 23). The phrase "to Yahweh" qualifies the statement: the purpose of the day is to honor Yahweh. Thus, stopping work is not an arbitrary command without meaning

45. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 595.

46. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 598.

47. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 425.

48. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 409; 423.

or purpose. In following the Sabbath, the people imitate their Creator's act of rest. This makes the manna event the perfect place to introduce this practice as the manna, previously unknown, displays a new creative act of Yahweh.[49] Therefore, contrary to Garrett's interpretation, the main point is not the significance of the commandment itself but the people's ability to obey it.

William Propp's note that the test itself is Sabbath observance better captures what happens in the narrative. In his understanding, the daily collection of manna sets up the test on the Sabbath.[50] Though a helpful distinction, this understanding shouldn't be taken so far as to exclude the routine gathering from being part of the test as well. A danger could arise from familiarity: the thing that was supposed to constantly remind the people of Yahweh's presence could lose its meaning if the people become too accustomed.[51]

Manna's Symbolic Nature

Yahweh instructs Moses to make manna an official symbol by placing a sample in a jar to show the future generations the way that Yahweh had provided for their forefathers (v. 32). The jar of manna physically represents Yahweh's provision and testifies to Yahweh's faithfulness. Consequently, the installment of the manna event becomes a core element in the wilderness narrative and thus Israelite self-understanding.

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49. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 12–4.

50. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 593.

51. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 599.

The association with the sanctuary incorporates manna into their cultic identity (vv. 33–4).[52]

Stephen Gellar suggests that the manna dually symbolizes the blessings of covenantal obedience and the curses of disobedience. To defend this, he points to the dual nature of Yahweh's presence, as discussed previously, saying that the theophany plays an important part in demonstrating the characteristics of the manna.[53] In keeping with the consistent allusions toward the covenant in this chapter, this is plausible. However, Gellar neglects to note in his assessment that Yahweh never refrains from giving manna to the people, despite their disobedience. The author emphasizes the extent of the consistency of Yahweh's provision with the added comment (out of place in the timeline of the overarching narrative) that the people of Israel continued to eat the manna the whole time in the wilderness (v. 35). The giving of manna itself is never contingent upon the people's obedience; the people's treatment of the gift makes the distinction in meaning. If the comparison is to be made, the manna bears a closer resemblance to the covenant itself, especially in regard to consistency. The people's choice to obey or disobey affects whether they will receive blessings or curses, yet the blessings and curses are built into the covenant itself, which Yahweh also gives as a gift. Despite consistent failure, Yahweh never takes the covenant away from the people.[54] These factors give an overwhelmingly positive portrayal of manna with possible negative connotations only arising from the

52. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 11–3.

53. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 9–10.

54. A key difference in this comparison is that the text implies that, after the Sabbath incident, the people learned their lesson and no longer had any issues in regard to the collection of the manna. They do complain about only having manna (Num. 11), but this is not a matter of their actions but their attitude.

result of the people's disobedience. Therefore, instead of saying that manna symbolizes both blessings and curses, it would be more precise to say that manna parallels the covenant in its dual nature. To clarify, this does not mean that the manna symbolizes the covenant. Rather, the manna symbolizes Yahweh's faithfulness *in relation to* the covenant.

Setting

The connection between the character interaction and the manna test influences our depiction of the setting. The majority of the first 15 chapters takes place in the land of Egypt. As the land of slavery, Egypt stands for oppression and misery. From this point through the rest of the Pentateuch, Israel will reside in and travel throughout the wilderness. The repetition of the word "wilderness" (מִדְבָּר) throughout chapter 16, especially the beginning, emphasizes this shift in scenery.

Won W. Lee criticizes approaches that see the wilderness as a symbol of testing and Israel's national birth. He believes that these elements are peripheral to the duality of the forgiveness and punishment of Israel's behavior at the core.[55] I would argue, however, that he has his order reversed. The duality Lee observes arises out of the nature of the testing in regard to the covenant, as explicated in this passage and already discussed. Yahweh tests the people's ability to hold to the covenant.[56] The covenant then will establish the nation as a legal entity.[57] Israel's identity as a people grows out of its

55. Won W. Lee, "The Concept of the Wilderness in the Pentateuch," in *Israel in the Wilderness: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Themes in Biblical Narrative (ed. Kenneth E. Pomykala; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 6.

56. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 9.

57. Gellar, "Manna and Sabbath," 12.

time of wandering and its interaction with Yahweh. The elements of forgiveness and punishment come from the terms set out by the test and then law—otherwise there would be nothing to forgive or punish.

The concluding remarks at the end of chapter 16 break up the narrative flow to state that the people continued to eat manna for forty years in the wilderness yet ceased to do so when they entered Canaan (v. 35). The provision of manna as a result contrasts the land of testing from the promised land.[58] By ending with this piece of information, the audience keeps in mind the manna story throughout the rest of the narrative as the people prepare to enter Canaan.[59] Unlike other accounts of troubles in the wilderness, the giving of manna was not a one-time event but the Israelite's daily way of life. As with the characterization of Yahweh, the people of Israel, and Moses, how the author portrays this new setting as the location of testing in this passage informs how to read the rest of the wilderness narrative.

Correlation

Exodus 16 establishes the referent of the symbol of the manna: Yahweh's provision as proof of covenantal faithfulness to the people of Israel through divine power. While characterization plays an important part in the passage, the author has a purpose above merely defining this aspect of Yahweh's character that the manna shows. Since Yahweh already had been a central figure in Exodus 1–15, faithfulness as an attribute is not new information. As Yahweh says to Moses in Exodus 3:7–8, Yahweh shows

58. This contrast in setting is addressed more specifically in Deuteronomy 8, as the people are about to enter Canaan. While the narrative anticipates Canaan as the destination, the next stop to which this chapter points forward is Sinai.

59. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 599.

faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham by responding to the cries of the Israelites. Yahweh also demonstrates control over nature through the plagues inflicted upon Egypt (Exod. 7–12). Thus, the ability to send daily bread should seem minimal in comparison to those feats.

The primary purpose of the passage comes through the juxtaposition of Yahweh's characterization against the people of Israel's characterization. This narrative depicts the first extended interaction of the people with Yahweh, that is, the exchange between Yahweh and the people's words and actions and vice versa. Yahweh uses the manna specifically as a gauge of the people's character. The people's response reveals their faithfulness, and they show instances of failure. While the giving of manna tests the people's ability to remain faithful, the premise that Yahweh will remain faithful underlies the whole test. The supernatural and heavenly qualities of the manna reinforce the order: divine faithfulness predicates human faithfulness.[60] The people can obey only as a response to Yahweh's self-revelation.

Their disobedience foreshadows the way the relationship will develop throughout the rest of the time in the wilderness: the people will complain and then act according to their own interests only to be brought back around and repeat the pattern all over again. In light of this, Carol Meyers describes the manna event as a microcosm of the Israelite's wilderness experience.[61] This cycle of behavior defines the Israelite identity through the Old Testament, becoming especially evident in books such as Numbers and Judges.

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60. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 71.

61. Meyers, *Exodus,* 130.

Israel's lack of faith in Yahweh also manifests itself in the way it continually shows contempt for Moses's leadership.

The manna may be the vehicle that exposes the people's faults, but the purpose of doing so is that the people may learn. The people may indeed be stubborn and disobedient, but they cannot stay at that place. Yahweh gives the manna, along with the commands for its care and the Sabbath, to train them to obey the law and imitate Yahweh's character as they grow deeper into the covenantal relationship.

DEUTERONOMY 8

After the initial giving of manna, the Israelites travel until they reach Mount Sinai (Exod. 20), where Moses receives the law from Yahweh as the establishment of the covenant. Despite setbacks such as the golden calf event (Exod. 32), the people ratify the covenant and build the tabernacle and everything that went along with it according to the plan Yahweh gave to Moses (Exod. 34–40). However, once the journey continues, the people's wholehearted readiness to obey (as demonstrated in their devotion to the building projects) transforms back to grumbling until the final straw at the initial arrival at Canaan (Num. 10–14). Instead of trusting that Yahweh would grant them victory, they threaten to overthrow Moses and refuse to invade the land out of fear of the report brought back by their spies. As a result, Yahweh bans that generation from entering the promised land; Israel must wait until the first generation has died out to receive the gift of the land.

Deuteronomy takes place after the forty years in the wilderness as the new generation of Israelites is now ready to enter. In regard to content, (as the Greek of its name suggests) Moses gives the law a second time to the people, encouraging them to remain obedient (unlike the generation before them). He takes care to warn the people that entering the promised land will not put an end to their troubles; the promised land, though full of blessing, also carries its own dangers. In Deuteronomy 7, the risk comes from the external threat of the native inhabitants who may lead them into idolatry.[62] Deuteronomy 8 goes on to balance their attention by warning that the threat of idolatry may come internally as well. In this chapter, Moses's correlation of active remembrance

62. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 91.

to obedience uses the giving of manna as an example of connecting remembrance of the past to the present in order to prepare the people for the future.

Form

In order to understand the rhetoric of Deuteronomy 8, the relationship between the form and the content needs clarification. Two aspects of textual form provide important insight for interpretation of the passage: genre and internal structure.

Genre

In their book *The Lost World of the Torah*, John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton seek to clarify the genre of law within the Old Testament context, arguing that Old Testament law does not prescribe legislation in the way that the modern reader would think of it.[63] Rather, it combines three genres: legal wisdom, ritual instruction, and suzerainty treaty.[64] The structure of the book of Deuteronomy makes the latter very evident as it follows the divisions of a standard treaty: the preamble (establishing the setting and parties involved; 1:1–5), the historical prologue (1:6–4:40), general stipulations (5:1–11:32), specific stipulations (12:1–26:19), blessings and curses (27:1–28:68), and witnesses (30:19; 31:19; 32:1–43).[65] The form itself implies Yahweh as the sovereign—the one in power benevolently offering protection among other rewards—and Israel as the subject obligated to faithfully abide by the law in turn. Speaking of the purpose of these treaties,

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63. John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 18–31.

64. Walton and Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah*, 33–53; 71–9.

65. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, "Deuteronomy," *ZIBD* 1:353–6.

> When the suzerain [the dominant power] imposed stipulations on the vassal, he was not asserting law. He was extending his identity (as a glorious and powerful king) to, and especially through, the vassal. The kings of the ancient world did not impose law; they gave wisdom as they forged their identity…Yahweh, like the suzerains taking vassals in the ancient world, was acting to establish his reputation, not to give something to his vassals.[66]

With this understanding, Deuteronomy 8's location within the section of general stipulations makes more sense. Not a list of strict laws by which to abide, the stipulations outlined in the chapter are words of wisdom supported by an emphasis on Yahweh's reputation in their history. Thus, the genre can also be categorized as paraenesis, a teaching genre which focuses on exhortations and admonitions in contrast to commands and prohibitions.[67]

However, another aspect of Deuteronomy's crafting adds complexity to the matter. In a practical sense, the book serves as Moses's farewell sermon to the people of Israel, as Yahweh banned him from entering the promised land with them. The speech element of the genre means that there will be an incorporation of rhetorical strategies intent on persuasion. This pairs well with the element of wisdom: not only does the law itself teach wisdom, but Moses teaches his own insights as well. He does so in order to mediate on Yahweh's behalf; his agenda is primarily Yahweh's. Furthermore, much of the rhetorical force of the passage relies on Moses's authority as leader. The knowledge that these are his final words adds extra weight of importance for the listener.

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66. Walton and Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah,* 51.

67. Robert H. O'Connell. "Deuteronomy VIII 1–20: Asymmetrical Concentricity and the Rhetoric of Providence." *Vetus Testamentum* XL, no. 4 (1990): 437–8.

Internal Structure

The purpose in identifying the structure is to illuminate an aspect of the goal of the passage. Certain types of structures point to these by design. For example, the design of a chiasmus matches mirrored sections of a passage by content or vocabulary in order to emphasis the middle section as the main point. In the early 1960s, Norbert Lohfink arranged the structure of Deuteronomy 8 into a chiasmus, setting the precedent for others following him to do the same.[68] Scholars usually take either one of two methods to adapt Lohfink's ideas into their own. The first, as proposed by Robert H. O'Connell, makes the chiasmus deeply intricate.[69] The second, as proposed by Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, simplifies the chiasmus significantly.[70] Both sides of the attempt try to make sense of the vast amount of repetition and parallel ideas found within the chapter, yet in doing so both miss key points and perhaps miss identifying the overall goal.

O'Connell's chiasmus divides the chapter into twelve tiers, the axis of which hinges on verses 7b–9. While the intricacy of his effort deserves recognition, O'Connell's own words point out the flaw in his approach: "It will be noticed that not all the matching tiers of this concentric structure find their correspondence in shared vocabulary…*The complementarity between such tiers derives, rather, from a correspondence of their relative positions in the palistrophe,* their general subject matter and their rhetorical function" (emphasis added).[71] Essentially, O'Connell admits that the correspondence

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68. O'Connell. "Asymmetrical Concentricity," 437–8.

69. O'Connell. "Asymmetrical Concentricity," 441–2.

70. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "On the Structure and Sense of Deuteronomy 8," *Proceedings* 4 (1984): 237–249.

71. O'Connell, "Asymmetrical Concentricity," 440–1.

between complementary levels is based on the levels matching up where he has decided to place them. In addition, while content in many cases legitimately determines chiastic structure, in this case the argument for "general subject matter" is a moot point. The chapter as a whole relies on connectedness of the "general subject matter" to expand upon the nuances of a single, coherent thought. Thus multiple, unmatched levels of the tier contain repetition of similar words and content. Furthermore, in defining 7b–9 as the axis of the chiasmus, he never clearly defines the purpose of this "asymmetrical concentricity"—symmetry being the defining feature of a chiasmus. Rather, in describing the rhetorical effect of these verses, he focuses on the importance of verse 3 instead as the delineation of the main point.[72] Thus, by his own explication, verse 3 and not 7b–9 ought to be the axis of the chiasmus (yet that would, of course, shift the center too much to the front and make a chiasmus nonexistent).[73] Although he makes many good observations about some of the relationships within the passage, ultimately the rigidness of his structure does not account for the natural flow of the argument of the passage. In seeking to parse the details of the content, he has lost sight of the function of the chiasmic structure.

Duane Christensen makes a similar error in his approach. In defining his section levels, he corresponds parts by paraphrasing the related term used in the passage rather than the word itself.[74] In a passage that relies on how closely ideas relate to each other,

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72. O'Connell, "Asymmetrical Concentricity," 448–50.

73. Jeffrey Tigay also puts this level (more broadly as 6–10) at the center along with verses 11–14. The central focus being the contrast between C and C' is much more plausible and does not render the structure asymmetrical. (*Deuteronomy*, 92).

74. Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9, Revised*, vol. 6A, (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 170.

this approach combines different aspects of the passage into one idea, negating how one distinction leads into another or adds a particular nuance to the argument.

Van Leeuwen's structure incurs less issues than those before. He proposes a twofold interlaced pattern, linear and chiastic, along with the usage of framing and transitional devices to achieve the structure of the passage. The linear approach accurately assesses the juxtaposed ideas of "remembering" and "not forgetting," showing the dual approach taken in the argument. He then structures the chiasmus around the wilderness versus the promised land contrast.[75] However, the second unit of the desert (vv. 14b–16) takes place within the long hypothetical of what the people's attitude may be *within* the promised land. While it rehearses wilderness history, it happens from the perspective of the promised land. (His own inclusion of verse 17 with the promised land section [vv. 11–14a] demonstrates this.) In conclusion, his chiasmic structure (as opposed to his linear structure) merely depicts the arrangement of the content of the chapter without showing the function of the structure of the content in contributing to the argument or main point of the passage.

I have taken these examples to illuminate the complexity of the passage. The amount of repeated elements and both similar and contrasting ideas naturally lead to comparison and the desire to form parallels. Nevertheless, we must exercise caution; in this case, trying to determine matching elements into such strict sections may be taking away from the natural build-up of the argument.

75. Van Leeuwen, "Structure and Sense," 237–8.

	שָׁמַר (guard)	זָכַר (remember)	שָׁכַח (forget)	יָדָע (know)	לֵבָב (heart)	אֶרֶץ (land)	מִצְוָה (commandment)
1	X					X	X
2	X	X		X	X		X
3				X			
4							
5				X	X		
6	X						X
7						X	
8						X	
9						X	
10						X	
11	X		X				X
12							
13							
14			X		X	X	
15							
16				X			
17					X		
18		X					
19			X				
20							

I have included the preceding chart of key terms used in the passage as a visual representation that, while individual terms could plausibly fit into a chiastic structure, the overall spread is not symmetrical. Thus, developing a chiasmus based on a few choice terms would be at the expense of the integration of them all. This could potentially neglect how the understanding of one term informs another.

Therefore, it may be best to first approach the text recognizing it as "a tightly constructed literary work of art."[76] The subunits within the chapter's structure unite different premises to make a cohesive message. The author intended the amount of

76. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 172.

repetition and overlap to interweave different threads of ideas together to make one fabric.

In order to evaluate the rhetorical impact of the usage of manna in this passage, we will follow the argumentative flow of the chapter from beginning to end. In line with Van Leeuwen, I have put a divide at verse 11, yet we do not want to lose sight that, despite two distinct sections and arguments, the passage forms a coherent whole toward an overall message. Van Leeuwen distinguishes the sections by the commands to "remember" and "do not forget." The use of the negated antonym, as in this case, forms a type of synonymous parallelism.[77] The purpose is not to say two separate things but to reiterate the same idea for emphasis, thereby strengthening the argument from both sides. Though these labels of the sections aren't quite precise (as will be addressed), it helpfully introduces the mindset of the passage.

To Guard… (Vv. 1–10)

The chapter opens with a summative message statement that subtly depicts underlying premises on which the remainder rests. First, the word order, use of "all" (כֹּל), and singular form of "commandment" (מִצְוָה) puts emphasis on the unity of the law.[78] The listener does not have the freedom to pick and choose what to follow. Though "commandment" in this case likely means the entire law as told through Deuteronomy, the proximity to the Decalogue in chapter 6 likely highlights these commands in

77. Francis I. Anderson, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 1st ed. (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1974), 43–4.

78. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 173.

particular.[79] Second, the unnecessary usage of the first-person pronoun reminds the audience of Moses's authority as the speaker of these admonitions. Third, obedience results in blessing: in this case, the blessing of the promised land.

Verse 1 contains the first of four uses in the chapter of the word "guard" (שָׁמַר). This word is a key theme the book, as Deuteronomy contains the highest concentration of its occurrences in the Old Testament.[80] It suggests the inherent value of the law as being something worth "protecting." The connotation then is being on one's guard or paying careful attention.[81] In this case, the author pairs the imperative form with the infinitive "to do" (עָשָׂה). Thus, Moses instructs the people to not just obey but *to be careful* to obey.[82] If it were simply a matter of "doing," then the argument of the chapter would be unnecessary: one would only need to hear the commandment to be able to follow it. Moses specifically commands carefully keeping the whole law to introduce this section, with the rest of the sermon explicating what this looks like practically.[83] The shift from second-person plural in verse 1 to second-person singular in verse 2 signals this particularization. The singular form suggests the individual responsibility of each

79. Ronald E. Clements, "Deuteronomy," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 2, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 355.

80. John R. Kohlenberger. *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 1612-5.

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81. F. Brown, S. Driver, C. Briggs, "שָׁמַר," *BDBHEL* 1:1036–7.

82. For clarification of the use of "Moses" as the speaker, this paper is not arguing for Mosaic authorship. However, the text presents itself as having been spoken by Moses, that these are his words. I have already noted how his voice adds further authority and urgency to the text.

83. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 355.

member of the audience to follow the commandments as well as the relevance it bears in light of personal interests.[84]

Although some structures separate verse 1 from the rest of the chapter,[85] the conjunction indicates the correlation between the imperatives of verses 1 and 2. Verse 2 connects the importance of guarding the commandments with remembrance, leading to the unique exhortation of this chapter: remember the lessons of the wilderness as you prepare for the future. Moses assumes that remembrance of Yahweh will lead to obedience.

English translations of verse 2 make it appear to quote closely the test given in Exodus 16:4. Indeed, the author of Deuteronomy uses the same verb "test" (נָסָה) in order to set up the mention of the manna event.[86] Moses first generalizes the whole 40 years in the wilderness—not just the manna event—as a test. However, there are noteworthy differences.

First, Deuteronomy changes terms. Exodus uses the term "instruction" (תּוֹרָה) while Deuteronomy uses "commandment." For the former, the case of the original giving of manna was a test to train for the giving of the covenant, which is associated with "instruction." The covenant had not yet come to assign official stipulations for the people; the pre-covenantal period acted as a teaching period. In the case of the latter, not only does the change in term continue the connection in verse 1, but it also fits the distinction Moses makes. The covenant is not being given anew but reiterated to prepare

84. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 354.

85. Van Leeuwen, "Structure and Sense," 237–9.

86. Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 227.

them for entering the promised land. The other change is the word "guard" in Deuteronomy from "walk" (הָלַךְ) in Exodus. This allows Moses to continue the main admonition.[87]

The second difference is the addition of connective material that explain further details of the test. First, Moses links humility to testing. The verb (עָנָה) is a term used to demean or make the other lesser. When authors use it of Yahweh, they clarify an end goal, such as to judge sin or to refine.[88] Of course, the people had not been aware of Yahweh's motivation to test them. Second, Moses uses "to know your heart" as the purpose of the test, shifting obedience to the appositional phrase. This further portrays Moses's philosophy of obedience. The Hebrew understanding of heart refers to the inner attitude or the mind, the state of which informs outer actions.[89] Since Yahweh's knowledge of the human heart informs Deuteronomic theology (Dt. 4:25–31; 5:29), the connotation of "know" (יָדַע) here is more along the lines of bringing to light.[90] In order to follow the commandment, the people must watch themselves so that they also keep aware of the state of their heart.

On coming to verse 3, since the initial giving of manna introduced the concept of testing, the event could merely be the most logical example to use. However, the explanation of the theological purpose in the second half of the verse shows that, rather

87. The word "walk" came in the beginning of the sentence, so the repetition could have added unwanted emphasis.

88. Michael A. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 2, 13 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 579.

89. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 173.

90. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 225.

than being a convenient reference, manna forms the theological core of the chapter. Gerhard von Rad notably interpreted the phrase as referring to the contrast between the physical and the spiritual.[91] But two important words signal not to make a dichotomy: "alone" (לְבַדּוֹ) and "all." The pairing means that bread—a physical thing—is one of many things that comes from Yahweh's mouth. The terms show that the contrast is not the things itself but the scope of the meaning.[92] Bread is a particular instance of the "all."

The greater difficulty then shows itself in deciphering what all exactly comes out of Yahweh's mouth. Does the text mean bread literally, thus meaning that "all" refers to all physical needs? Or does "bread" metonymously stand for physical needs in general, making the "all" even broader? Since verse 3 refers to a literal event that asked for literal food, the plainest sense suggests the former. Contrarily, different usages of the verse make the proper interpretation of the verse less clear. The LXX includes the word "word" (ῥήματί) in this phrase, rendering the translation "every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh." Jesus quotes it this way in his wilderness temptations (Mt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4). However, the Masoretic text includes no equivalent word for "word" (or a textual variant with it for that matter); it merely says "all that comes from the mouth of Yahweh."[93] The addition of the word in the LXX is likely an interpretive decision by the translator who may or may not have properly understand the author's point.[94] But if the implication is not "word," what else could it be, and why mention the mouth?

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91. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:282.

92. John T. Willis, "'Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone,'" *Restoration Quarterly* 16, no. 3–4 (1973): 144.

93. Willis, "'Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone,'" 141–2.

94. Willis, "'Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone,'" 146.

In the context of most usages of the word "mouth" in the Hebrew text, the things which comes out of it are indeed words, but this does not limit the range of meaning. Biblical authors attribute many other things to coming out of God's mouth as well, including good and evil (Lam. 3:38).[95] The specific phrase used here, "the mouth of Yahweh," is very rare. Notably, the only usage of the phrase outside of the prophets (which also use the word paired with speech) occurs in 1 Kings 13:21, saying that the prophet in the passage rebelled against Yahweh's mouth, paralleling the mouth with "commandment." This gloss of usage shows that the mouth can represent either the byproduct of its specific function or the whole person to whom it is attached.[96] In consideration of creation allusions present in the original Exodus 16 event, a combination of both usages may be viable in light of creation theology. The Genesis narrative depicts how God's speech brings all into existence.[97] Even in this understanding, the broader understanding of Yahweh's speech relates to power. Therefore, something as either the result of Yahweh's word or Yahweh essentially says the same thing. The distinction (if taking the "word" approach to interpretation) would have to come from the actual content of the word. However, it does not correlate to put bread as a subcategory of a specific, literal word.

Given the context of the chapter, especially its focus on the benefits of the promised land, the "all" in this case seems to refer specifically to the physical. The word

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95. Willis, "'Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone,'" 144–5.

96. This latter connotation is similar to the usage of "the hand of Yahweh," as discussed in relation to Exodus 16:3.

97. Admittedly, the connection here is thematic; there are no linguistic parallels (in my studies or research that I have done) that definitively support the allusion.

order puts the line of comparison between "bread" and "all," using the same verb "live" (הָיָה) to parallel. This means that the point is not to contrast two different aspects of living but to define how Yahweh provides all of it. Everything found within creation that leads to humanity's survival came from Yahweh.

Therefore, this does not allow the physical to keep separate from the spiritual. This chapter connects physical blessings with obedience to the commandments: in order to receive the physical blessings, the people of Israel must obey. Thus, their physical well-being transitively connects to their spiritual well-being, that is, physical matters are spiritual matters.[98] Van Leeuwen suggests the usage of wordplays and puns show that Yahweh demonstrates power in history, nature, and the commandments to prove that Yahweh alone is the source of life.[99] How one interprets his or her life and surroundings affects his or her view of Yahweh. Manna represents the supernatural provision of physical needs, which in turn points to all forms of divine providence.

Moses's interpretation of the initial giving of manna deserves treatment. Verse 3 uses the Hiphil form of the verb "to be hungry" (רָעַב), which intentionally assigns the cause of the people's hunger to Yahweh. The previous section in this paper on Exodus 16 had discussed how the author purposefully wanted to circumvent assigning blame to Yahweh in order to avoid a sympathetic characterization of the Israelites and a possible misconstruing of Yahweh's character.[100] In this context, however, Moses wants to

98. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 356.

99. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "What Comes out of God's Mouth: Theological Wordplay in Deuteronomy 8," *Catholic Theological Quarterly* 47 (1985): 55–57.

100. To clarify a potential discrepancy, the conclusion made in the evaluation of Exodus 16 that the people had no justification for their complaint was not to say that the people were not hungry but rather that they had the means to deal with said hunger.

attribute everything to Yahweh's providence—even the negative—in order to train the people to remember Yahweh in all aspects. In this space (as opposed to the narrative format of Exodus 16), he has the ability to justify to his audience the negative, shaping the way they are to think about Yahweh.

The manna functions in another important way. While the initial statement of hunger in verse 3 refers to their state at a specific time, Exodus 16:35 says that they ate manna until they entered Canaan. This means that the current audience of Deuteronomy 8 has been eating the manna as well. Therefore, Moses calls the people to remember the whole wilderness story through the bridge of the manna, which dually functions as a present reality and a distinct past event. The usage of the phrase "you did not know, and your fathers did not know" supports the idea of upholding generational ties through remembrance of its communal history.[101] Moses, as the leader throughout the whole time, has the responsibility to frame the events in a way that will best orient the people toward obedience.

Verse 4 goes on to expand on this point, continuing the idea of supernatural provision of physical needs as the opportunity for spiritual lessons. Not only does the verse repeat in Deuteronomy 29:5, but also Nehemiah, in his recounting of Yahweh's providence in Israelite history, implements the pairing of the manna with clothing and feet (Neh. 9:20–1).[102] Like the manna, the people could look at these physical signs as present results of a continuous truth.[103] Whereas Yahweh made up for the negligence of

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101. Terry Giles, "What Did the Fathers Know? A Discussion of Deuteronomy 8:3, 16," *Proceedings* 10 (1990): 39–40.

102. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 355–6.

103. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 226.

the wilderness's nature to provide food in the first case, Yahweh suspended nature's ability to cause wear (both through time and the environment).[104] Yahweh, as Creator, demonstrates supernatural power over creation when it proves insufficient toward reaching Yahweh's purposes.[105]

The remainder of the section demonstrates the way Moses frames the people's mindset to alleviate possible negative connotations of Yahweh causing the test and hunger by elevating Yahweh's character. Verse 5 continues the connection between past and present: Moses uses the active participle of "discipline"—the training and testing of the wilderness is happening at that moment. The father-son comparison adds an element of intimacy. Though the treaty formula denotes Yahweh's role as the suzerain to provide for the Israel as the weak vassal, Yahweh cares for the well-being of the people for their own sake, not out of personal gain. Yes, Yahweh does have the ultimate power and authority, but, as a father shapes a child, Yahweh seeks to use this power to guide the lesser for their own good. Israel, in turn, when it has reached maturity, has the responsibility of upholding the family honor. The comparison invites the audience to embrace their important role. The combination of "know" and "heart" also echoes back to verse 2. Their proper understanding of Yahweh's intentions will inform whether or not they will guard the commandments, the command from verse 1 repeated in verse 6.

Verses 6–7a parallel the thoughts from verse 1: guarding the commandments to enter the promised land. 7b–9 expands this by focusing on the beauty of the land in a poetic-like description. The word "land" (אֶרֶץ) repeats seven times, indicating the land's

104. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," 359.

105. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 93.

perfection.[106] The details themselves point to an abundance of both practical needs and luxuries. As opposed to the wilderness—which produced nothing—the promised land naturally would produce plenty of variety.[107] The people's complaint of the monotony of manna would no longer be an issue (Num. 11). The vivid details influence the people's willingness to obey: surely, they would not want to lose such a good land. Verse 10 ends the section with a final command, a command to be thankful when they have partaken of the goodness of the land.[108] Of the 39 occurrences of "bless" (בָּרַךְ) in Deuteronomy, only here does it refer to humanity blessing Yahweh.[109] It practically demonstrates the properly ordered perspective Moses seeks to cultivate, putting Yahweh at the center. The following section shows the opposite case, turning the rich, extensive idyllic description of the luxuries awaiting the people in the promised land into a double-edged sword.

…Or Not to Guard (Vv. 11–20)

Verse 11, as the introduction to the new section, shows why the negated antonym structure proposed by Van Leeuwen is not quite precise as well as a problem with chiastic structures of the chapter. With the repetition of "guard," "commandment," and "I am commanding you today" and the shared emphasis of the extent (the use of "all" in verse 1 and the repetition of the related terms of "commandments, judgments, and statutes" in verse 11), verse 11 clearly parallels verse 1. Van Leeuwen's linear structure, which could otherwise fit, excludes verse 1 to focus on the theme of forgetting in contrast

106. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 93.

107. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 356.

108. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 232.

109. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," 580.

to remembering.[110] However, the opening imperative in verse 11 is not, "do not forget" but rather, "be on your guard." The conjunction "lest" (פֶּן) then correlates forgetfulness as the result of not being on guard, shown through not "guarding" the commandments. This parallels the first section's connection between remembrance and guarding. In verses 11–20, the negated antonym serves to emphasize the importance of the positive by delving into the hypothetical result of the opposite. Since the covenant binds the people to meticulous obedience, they must alertly watch out for themselves, or they may easily slip into disobedience and bring themselves to ruin.[111] Moses expresses his concern that the lack of continual dependence on supernatural aid—as represented through manna—will cause neglect for proper worship and thanksgiving and ultimately disobedience to the conditions of the covenant. Verse 11 begins an extensive hypothetical that continues all the way through verse 17 as one continuous thought and sentence, all stemming from what happens if a person would not stay on his or her guard.

The repetition of the conjunction "lest" in verse 12 signals a shift in the hypothetical, which begins to portray a lengthy description of the promised land, much in the same vein as verses 7 through 10. The hendiadys (that is, two verbs being combined into one action) of eating and being satisfied repeats here from verse 10, suggesting a contrast of different outcomes. While the first mention of "eating and being satisfied" built up to blessing Yahweh, this section builds to "blessing" oneself, completely ignoring the element of thanking Yahweh. What ought to be a signal of divine favor gets

110. Van Leeuwen, "Structure and Sense," 237–8.

111. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 232.

overlooked by this hypothetical person.[112] Instead of recognizing what Yahweh has done in giving them a *good* land, the person moves on to focus on individualized efforts of building *good* houses.[113]

The stakes elevate as the person goes from comfort to prosperity. Verse 13, though short, repeats the verb "to grow" (רָבָה) three times, careful to avoid giving any credit to the person.[114] Their livelihood (livestock) and then their wealth grows until the third emphatic use says that in every that they have, they have grown to be prosperous. This person has no need or want for anything.

Verse 14 reveals the danger behind the blessing: pride. Repeating once again "heart," the promised land, if not properly seen, potentially could undo the wilderness's whole purpose of instilling the proper perspective of humility. "Forget" repeats here, showing the incompatibility between self-reliance and reliance on Yahweh. Moses then emphasizes the foolishness of the former through reminding the people of the identity of the one they may choose to forget.

This section of the reminder of Yahweh's identity in verses 14–16 adds another element of the concept of remembrance in this passage. In the first section, Moses associated remembrance with witnesses of the present. Here, Moses mentions several specific events for which the immediate audience may or may not have been present, in consideration of the age restrictions set in Numbers 14:29–30 (and if they were present, too young to remember for themselves). The fact that the people are where they are

112. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," 581.

113. The word order puts emphasis on the adjective in this case, suggesting that the author wants the audience to notice it specifically in this case.

114. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 95.

witnesses to Yahweh's faithfulness through these events. However, unlike manna, the nature of the witness of history is physically intangible and therefore requires a properly ordered understanding to perceive. Thus, remembering as it functions here is not so much recollecting from one's own memory banks (though that could certainly play a part) but an active rehearsal of the tradition of communal history. Moses uses the Hiphil forms of the verbs (also used in verse 3 to refer to Yahweh bringing hunger) to explicitly define Yahweh as the divine agent of supernatural and wonderful power, on whom their whole identity stands.

This history naturally begins with the exodus. The reference to Egypt as the "house of slavery" contrasts with the "good houses" hypothetically built in verse 12. Moses juxtaposes the state of oppression with the state of divine favor, reminding the audience that without Yahweh's deliverance, they would have nothing. However, from this point on, Moses adjusts the chronology to end with the test of manna as the defining event. The "fiery serpents" appeared in Numbers 21 as punishment for the people's complaints. Those who wished to survive needed to look to the bronze snake as a sign of trust in Yahweh's ability to heal, showing that life comes from Yahweh. Even more significant are the two accounts of water coming out of rock. The first immediately follows the manna account. The second occurrence, in Numbers 20, bears personal significance for Moses. Instead of the people receiving punishment, Moses suffers the consequence of his disobedience through Yahweh's declaration that Moses will not enter the promised land. Moses has already reminded the people of this restriction twice in this book (Dt. 1:37–8; 4:23–28). Although he ultimately blames the people's stubbornness for his actions, not admitting plainly that he made a mistake, the underlying supposition (as

with all mentions of history) implies that the people should learn from this event. In a moment of pride, Moses disregarded Yahweh's command and brought the water out of the rock by striking it instead of speaking to it. If the leader of the people who has interacted so intimately with Yahweh cannot escape such a severe punishment for a single act of disobedience, how will the people expect to, if their continual state is one of pride?

In culminating the history with the manna, verse 16 repeats verse 3 while expanding the purpose of the test. Yahweh, in disciplining and testing, always had their ultimate good as the end goal.

The text ends its important digression of emphasizing the primacy of Yahweh in Israelite history and resumes the hypothetical situation proposed. Because the person has become prideful and forgotten Yahweh, instead of looking at the blessings of the land in thanks to Yahweh, this person declares his autonomy in self-adoration and praise. The word order places emphasis that nobody else but the person himself brought about his prosperity. "For me" could be taken as either "I did this for my own benefit" or "I did this without help." If taken the first way, the person essentially separates himself from the group, violating the communal sense of the covenant. If taken the second way, the phrase furthers the person's sense of self-sufficiency. Both nuances are grammatically and logically plausible and have connections with the rebuttal in the following verse.

Moses answers the claim by accepting the content of the declaration for argument's sake. Very well, he says. Your strength and abilities may be the source of your prosperity, but what (or in this case, who) is the source of your strength? In this, he brings the theological premise of verse 3 full circle: all natural causes have their first

cause in the supernatural, that is, Yahweh. Both deprivation and prosperity are tests.[115] In some sense, this generation faces a harder test than that of their fathers due to its more subtle nature.[116] Deprivation of natural means often turns attention toward the supernatural. In the case of the wilderness generation, Yahweh met the natural deprivation with the supernatural response of manna.[117] The test comes in viewing the supernatural either as a source of solution or a source of blame. In prosperity, the problem comes when focusing on the natural desensitizes a person to the supernatural.[118] Thus, the point of the test of the promised land is diligence and purposeful remembrance.

Furthermore, the purpose of bestowing these abilities and gifts is not primarily for the individual's own benefit. Rather, Yahweh has given covenants to bind the people of Israel and Yahweh together. Provision signals faithfulness to that relationship. As a member of the community, a person receives the benefits at an individual level, but he himself is not the primary focus. Thus, the law makes provisions for the poor and the needy (Dt. 24:19) and commands the giving of first fruits and tithes to Yahweh (Dt. 26). If a person, blinded by pride, sees all that he has derives from his own efforts, he is more likely to develop a sense of entitlement and resistance to following the commands that dictate how they ought to properly order their resources.

Verses 19 and 20 end the chapter on an unexpected solemn note. The verses summarize the promised land warnings of chapters 7 and 8. The individual effects of

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115. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 235.

116. Clements, "Deuteronomy," 357.

117. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 233.

118. Walter Brueggeman, *Deuteronomy* (Abingdon; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 109–110.

verses 11–17 contrast the corporate effects of verse 19 and 20 through the switch of the second-person singular to plural. In the Masoretic text, these verses appear as a separate section, suggesting that the forgetting Yahweh in itself—even without the worship of other gods—is a serious evil.[119] If Moses's logic holds up, then the danger comes not just from foreign idols but from the temptation to make oneself one's own god.

The strong language reinforces the severity of the threat. The infinitive absolute form, employed to strengthen the verb's function, is used twice to contrast the extremities of forgetting and perishing against each other: a little slip of the memory versus the assurance of complete and utter destruction.[120] Moses also draws a harsh comparison between Israel and the wicked nations: failure to listen to Yahweh degrades them to the level of pagans. Unlike other nations, Israel has had the privilege of experiencing blessings, provisions, and protection at the hand of Yahweh. Moses consistently uses this history as the reason to obey. The Israelites have no excuse to act as the people in the land do.

Correlation

Within the larger scope of the sermonic nature of the whole books, Deuteronomy 8 acts as a mini-sermon on the manna event that fits nicely within Moses's overall goal to prepare the people to enter the promised land. Just as obedience predicated their fathers' potential entry into Canaan, obedience dictated the following generations' remaining in Canaan. Like Exodus 16, obedience connects to a recognition of who Yahweh is. The difference here is that, while the people of Israel were in the beginning stages of learning

119. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 96.

120. Grisanti, "Deuteronomy," 583.

about Yahweh, this generation has the whole 40 years in the wilderness to attest to Yahweh's character. Therefore, Moses emphasizes the importance of actively rehearsing memories, both personal and cultural. Thus, the chapter also gives meaning to the consistent repetition of Israel's history throughout the book. In light of the structure of a suzerain-vassal treaty of the covenant, past events form the foundation for the new stage in the relationship.

Manna bridges the correlation between their present situation to their history. Not only was the giving of manna a specific account of the past that the people could point to as a lesson, but it was a part of their everyday lives as well. Moses's fear that, without having to trust daily in Yahweh's faithfulness to provide manna, the Israelites might be tempted to rely on the land itself, eventually lead to forgetting Yahweh altogether. If they forget Yahweh, they will not keep the terms of the covenant and so risk receiving the due curses—up to total annihilation. Though Moses's time has come to an end, as the leader who has faithfully guided the people from the beginning stages of their community, Moses is personally invested in the outcome and so makes one final plea.

JOHN 6

As predicted in the covenant, the people of Israel faced the consequences of forgetting the lessons of their history. Though having periods of great success, they could never seem to get to the heart of their problem until their banishment from the land. In exile, struggling to figure their identity, many returned to the central event to understand their history: the exodus-wilderness period. (This is evidenced in the Deuteronomistic History.) Though the Israelites did have the opportunity to return to the land, they faced the struggle of occupation. They longed for a return to the "glory days" of Israel as an independent nation. Like their forefathers in slavery to Egypt, they yearned for another Moses to give them another deliverance from the powers of Rome.[121] This is the context in which Jesus comes. Although he has come to fulfill their needs, like the manna, he does so in an unexpected way on his own terms.

The Gospel of John gives a contrasting yet complementary portrait of Jesus to the Synoptic Gospels. While Jesus performs miracles and teaches in both, when Jesus speaks in the Synoptics, he teaches mainly about the kingdom of God and its function, inviting the audience to participate. In John, however, he speaks mainly about himself and explains his identity, often relating it to the situation at hand. Thus, one of the key characteristics of the gospel is its variations of "I am" (εγω ειμι) discourses.

The first of these comes in John 6.[122] It follows the account of the only miracle in Jesus's ministry told in all four gospels, suggesting its important in the oral tradition: the

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121. George R. Beasley-Murray, John, (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 88.

122. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 153.

feeding of the 5,000.[123] An extensive narrative, John incorporates Exodus typology into the miracles and subsequent discourse to depict Jesus not just as the new Moses but the fulfillment of Israel's hopes through the ultimate offer of eternal life.[124]

Context: Chapter 5

The chapter preceding the feeding miracle depicted the controversy Jesus caused in Jerusalem over the healing of a lame man (5:1–18). This is depicted as the first real opposition that Jesus faces in his ministry. The religious leaders resist Jesus's authority to heal as he did (vv. 12, 16–18), resulting in a discourse on the relationship between the Son and the Father. The Son does the works of the Father (vv. 19–30), which bear witness to Jesus's authority (v. 36) along with John the Baptist and the Father (vv. 33, 37). The tense tone of the discourse escalates more and more as Jesus accuses them. Due to their profession of studying the scriptures which witness to him, these people should be the first ones to recognize him. Instead, they resist him, showing not only that they do not believe the scriptures but also that they resist God (vv. 38–44). The final witness, suggesting his importance, is Moses. The writings of Moses—the books of the law by which Jesus's opponents accuse Jesus—bore witness to him and can find their true meaning only through him.[125] The chapter ends on a climactic note with a question to

123. Gail R. O'Day, "John," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 593.

124. Thomas R. Valletta, "The 'Bread of Life' Discourse in the Context of Exodus Typology," *Proceedings* 11 (1991): 129–30.

125. Christopher A. Maronde, "Moses in the Gospel of John," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 77 (2013): 31–4.

which the author does not depict a response, either verbal or nonverbal. The author leaves the audience to ponder the nature of the connection between Moses and Jesus.

The Feeding of the 5,000 (Vv. 1–15)

The text uses a simple transitional phrase to shift to a different narrative scene, disregarding the time that has passed since the last account (v. 1). It is now Passover again (v. 4), the second of three that occur during the course of the Johannine narrative and the only one not in Jerusalem.[126] There may be confusion due to no mention of Jesus's return from Jerusalem and the question of why he would choose not to celebrate the important Jewish festival in the city. However, the author had intentionally left Jesus in a tense and unresolved situation in Jerusalem to keep the question posed on the forefront of the audience's mind as they read this new section.[127] It also keeps the consistency with the Galilean ministry of Synoptic tradition.[128] The reference to the Passover is the most important element introduced to the backdrop of the text, alluding not only to the exodus theme as a whole but elements of sacrifice and deliverance as well.[129]

The exchange between Jesus and the disciples sets up the premise of the miracle (vv. 4–9). Jesus initiates the question to his disciples, who in turn verify the extremes of the situation. The greatness of the crowd contrasts almost humorously with the meager

126. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 142–3.

127. Colin G. Kruse, *John* (TNTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 182–3.

128. O'Day, "John," 593.

129. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 97–8.

portions that the boy has brought.[130] Their lack of a feasible solution suggests that nothing but divine intervention can satisfy the need at hand.[131]

The parallels between the feeding accounts of Exodus 16 with other details and John 6 are numerous, hinting to the coming of a new era. Like Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus ascends a mountain (v. 3). Just as Moses led the people in the wilderness, a crowd of people follow Jesus (v. 2). And just like those Israelites needed food, these ones do as well (v. 5). In both cases, the need is met through supernatural provision coming after an exchange with God (implied by "giving thanks") (v. 11). As with the collection of manna, everyone had their needs filled. Yet John goes a step above to stress that they ate to the full, not just an allotted and approved ration (v. 11). Both accounts also stress the importance of leaving no waste. In Exodus, this came through the spoiling of manna if left for the next day, showing that it must be completely used that day. Here, the leftover pieces are collected, amounting to twelve, a number of completion (vv. 12–3).[132]

Evidently, the crowd recognized some form of these signs as well. In their declaration, they refer to the prophet like Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 (v. 14). However, their wrong interpretation leads to the wrong reaction, as the people attempt to force Jesus into leadership (v. 15). In the case of Moses, the people of Israel did not choose him as their leader; God initiated and confirmed Moses's position. Jesus had previously discussed this dependence of God for his authority in the last chapter.

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130. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 144.

131. O'Day, "John," 594.

132. O'Day, "John," 594.

Walking on Water (Vv. 16–20)

What seems like an interruption to the connection of the miracle and its interpretation actually continues the trajectory of the exodus-wilderness themes. God, in parting the Red Sea, demonstrated power in controlling the powers of watery chaos so that the people of Israel could cross. Jesus in turn subverts the natural order to cross the water (v. 19). Interestingly, the text does not mention that Jesus calmed the water, focusing instead on the immediate arrival on the other side of the lake. Thus, the author focuses more on the actual crossing. The disciples' reaction of fear to this divine display and Jesus's response of "εγω ειμι" echo the theophany of the burning bush, which also caused Moses's fear, and the revelation of the divine name (vv. 19–20).[133] Even if the phrase functions practically as a self-identifier, in light of the author's intention for the reader to read this in light of the Passover backdrop, the undertones are still present. Indeed, God's power over water appears frequently in the wilderness account, as it is an essential need (Exod. 15, 17; Num. 20).

The Bread of Life Discourse (Vv. 21–59)

When the people find Jesus on the other side and ask him about how he arrived, Jesus unabashedly confronts their motives (vv. 25–6). He criticizes their inability to see what the miracle truly signified.[134] Moses made the similar connection for his audience in his sermon on the feeding in Deuteronomy 8: manna meant more than just nourishment (as discussed before). However, unlike Moses, Jesus sets up a contrast between the

133. Gary M. Burge, *John* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 195–6.

134. Robert H. Mounce, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 441–2.

physical and the spiritual that becomes much stronger throughout the discourse.[135] On the surface, this seems incompatible with what we have already determined. But verse 27 importantly establishes the angle from which to interpret the rest of the argument: the true reason for the separation comes from the physical's perishable nature and the spiritual's imperishable nature, not because of the inherent evil of the physical.

The people misunderstand Jesus, thinking that he is referring to the works of the law (v. 28). However, Jesus clarifies that they need to do only one work: believe (v. 29). The crowd correctly identifies that Jesus is referring to himself and demand a sign as proof (v. 30).[136] In doing so, they cite specifically the giving of manna, connecting the one sent by God with the prophet like Moses (v. 31). This hints that their true motives are to get more out of Jesus, and they ironically neglect to realize the tremendous miracle they had just witnessed.[137] If they do not realize the significance of that miracle, then performing it again or others like it would be pointless unless their viewpoint is first corrected. Therefore, Jesus attempts to do this, addressing two misconceptions at once (vv. 32–3). First, God, not Moses, gave bread to the people. Moses had to make the same clarification in Exodus 16, that God, not Moses, is the true leader. Moses wasn't anything in himself; he acted only as an instrument of God's authority. Similarly, what the people here need is not another Moses to minister to them a source of life but the one whom God has sent as the direct source of life itself. Second, bread to satisfy physical desire is not their primary need. Since the people focus on their desire for the physical benefits Jesus

135. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 150.

136. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 151.

137. O'Day, "John," 599.

provides, Jesus emphasizes the other side of their need in contrast to shift them away from their disordered priorities.

The people, now intrigued, respond with interest (parallel to the Samaritan woman), so Jesus answers plainly (vv. 35–40). He is not talking about physical bread but about himself, going on to include motifs of the book such as seeing yet not believing (Jn. 1:10–12, 5:19ff) and losing none of whom the Father has given (Jn. 10). In specific reference to the wilderness, Jesus came down from heaven just like the manna (Exod. 16:4; cf. 3:31–2). Also, verse 40 echoes back to John 3:14–16, which referred specifically to the bronze serpent incident in the wilderness as a comparison of the Son being lifted up and then the response of the people to look to him for eternal life (Num. 21). The implications of this bread are eschatological.[138]

In response, the people grumble (v. 41). The verb here is the same one used in the LXX in reference to the people's murmuring in the wilderness.[139] They refute Jesus's claim that he came down from heaven by referring to his parents (v. 42). Jesus, perceiving their attitude, reiterates his points to build up for the shift in verse 51 (vv. 43–50). Up to this point, the people's qualm was not Jesus's identification with the bread, taking it metaphorically, but rather his claim of divine origin. Verse 51 shifts the language so that Jesus calls himself the living bread and then identifies his flesh as the bread. Thus, he makes the meaning of the comparison much more literal. When the people debate about this, Jesus once again escalates the situation. He emphasizes the unconditional nature of the point that one must eat his flesh and drink his blood to gain

138. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 97–8.

139. Vallenta, "Exodus Typology," 141.

eternal life, as controversial as it is (vv. 53–8). It is true food and drink. He switches the term from "eating" to "chewing," connoting a much more vivid image (v. 56).[140]

Peter's Declaration (Vv. 60–71)

The response of the people rounds out the narrative and ought to inform the overall interpretation of the chapter.[141] Though the people may have understood that Jesus was speaking metaphorically, his bold and novel approach made it hard to accept even among his disciples (v. 60). However, Jesus does not back down from or apologize for his approach, since he already knew who would and would not believe, just as God knew the hearts of the Israelites. In fact, he issues one last challenging claim, causing many of them to leave (vv. 61–6).

In light of this, he turns to the twelve. Just as there were twelve basketfuls of leftover pieces, here the text says that there are twelve disciples remaining (v. 67). His question to them, though it offers a choice, expects a negative response, suggesting that he knows and expects them to stay (v. 67).[142] Simon Peter, for the first time in the gospel, speaks up and affirms that they have understood his message: eternal life can only be found in the Son (vv. 68–9). He functions typologically as the prophets did in confirming the witness.[143] However, instead of leaving the narrative on this optimistic note, Jesus reveals that there is a traitor among them (v. 70–1). This emphasizes that Jesus chose the

140. Bruce, *The Gospel of John,* 154.

141. Beasley-Murray, *John,* 99.

142. Bruce, *The Gospel of John,* 154.

143. Vallenta, "Exodus Typology," 141.

disciples, not the other way around, just as God, initiated the covenant, though the people agreed to it.

Correlation

The "bread of life" theme of John 6 goes much deeper than merely comparing Jesus to manna. Rather, allusions and references to the whole exodus-wilderness event run through the narrative. (Though other studies more thoroughly delve into the richness of the passage, noting these comparisons suffices the goals of this study.) In referencing the wilderness saga, Jesus's identity takes on many angles. The feeding of the 5,000 presents him as the prophet like Moses. The account of walking on water identifies him with Yahweh. The sermon ends by presenting him as the true manna. Thus, Jesus takes the role of three of the factors within the manna event: he is the giver, the channel, and the gift. This leaves one important element out: the people of Israel. For this, Jesus invites the audience to participate. Just as their forefathers fed on the manna, the crowd of Jews fed on the loaves and the fish given by Jesus. As a broader response to the truth of the miracle, Jesus calls them to feed on himself. While the manna satisfied the people's physical needs, it did no good, as Moses pointed out, if it did not point them toward their larger spiritual need. While the manna's sustenance was temporary, Jesus promises eternal life to all who feed on him.

PHILO

While the previous chapters of this paper have dealt with biblical texts, biblical authors are not alone in their incorporation of manna. Since manna symbolizes a part of the cultural narrative, it shows up in outside Jewish writings as well.

Philo was an upper-class Jewish exegete and philosopher contemporary to Jesus. He resided in Alexandria, which, in his time, was the center of Hellenistic thought.[144] The Alexandrian Diaspora community had the task of contextualizing their faith to the philosophical traditions around them. Therefore, influences such as Platonism and Stoicism appeared in much of his writing (at times negatively), yet he remained thoroughly Jewish in his convictions. For Philo, secular philosophy must be subservient to the scripture.[145] This is shown in his devotion to the study of the Pentateuch, of which he says,

> Behold, therefore, I venture not only to study the sacred commands of Moses, but also with an ardent love of knowledge to investigate each separate one of them, and to endeavor to reveal and to explain to those who wish to understand them, things concerning them which are not known to the multitude (*Spec. Leg.* 1.5.)

The writings of Philo have been demonstrated to be an essential component in understanding not only the Jewish thought during the New Testament time but Christianity's understanding of it, as Christians, not Jews, preserved these works.[146] In particular, his work, on the Logos, provides a starting point for studies in the Gospel of

144. Jean Daniélou, *Philo of Alexandria*, trans. James G. Colbert (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2014), 2.

145. Daniélou, *Philo of Alexandria*, 90.

146. Torrey Seland, "Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction," in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 22.

John.[147] Peder Borgen, in his book *Bread from Heaven*, argues that John and Philo use the same traditions in their incorporations of manna as well.[148] In light of our previous discussion of John 6, Philo presents himself as a natural candidate for the purposes of this paper.

Philo's most fully expounded discussion of the subject of manna comes in his *Allegorical Interpretations*. An extensive exegesis of Genesis, it supposes a basic knowledge of philosophy. For many Hellenist philosophers who interpreted Eastern texts, allegory through the lens of philosophy was a viable hermeneutic.[149] While Philo's understanding of manna clearly demonstrates his Hellenistic influences, his reasoning for such has legitimate grounds in Jewish thinking as well. Specifically, Philo understands the allegory of manna in the same vein as the Book of Wisdom, another Jewish-Alexandrian text contemporary to him.[150] In this passage, Philo interprets manna as the Wisdom of God, the only true nourishment of the soul. He incorporates this interpretation in the arguments of other works as well.

Allegorical Interpretation, III

The work begins by setting up the premise of the virtuous man who resides in the city of virtue and the wicked man who runs away, illustrated by the examples of Adam

147. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 54–73, 263–65.

148. Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, 2nd ed. (Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 1–3.

149. Gregory E. Sterling, "'The Jewish Philosophy': Reading Moses via Hellenistic Philosophy According to Philo," in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 125–6.

150. József Zsenellér, "'The Taste of Paradise:' Interpretation of Exodus and Manna in the Book of Wisdom," in *Studies in the Book of Wisdom* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 210–1.

and Eve, Jacob versus Esau and Laban, and Moses versus Pharaoh. The virtuous man lives subject to wisdom, while the wicked man lives subject to passions and pleasures (*Leg. All, III.* 1.1–7.21). This premise threads through the rest of the writing.

Philo eventually goes on to define the belly as the dwelling place of pleasure because the intensity of other pleasure hinges upon its satisfaction (47.138; 50.146). The perfect man, in this case, disregards his natural cravings in order to "[nourish] himself completely on the contemplation of the divine" (48.140–2). Although acknowledging that our physical nature demands certain necessities, he argues that the feeding of the soul outweighs the feeding of the flesh in importance (52.151–2). Ultimately, fleshly pleasure comes from our earthly nature, while our soul "consists of air, being a fragment of the Divinity…is supported by nourishment which is ethereal and divine, for it is nourished on knowledge, and not on meat or drink, which the body requires" (55.161).

This discussion on the body's need for food and drink allows the opportunity for Philo to incorporate the giving of manna. When he quotes Exodus 16:4's moniker "bread from heaven," he already has equated this with knowledge, not bringing in its literal sense (56.162). In order to steer away from the vice of covetousness, he warns the audience through the instructions given for the manna collection. Like the manna, they should gather only the right amount and the amount for that day (56.163–6). The mention of daily portions brings in a brief note on the contrast between light and darkness (58.167–8), illustrated by manna coming in the morning dew (59.169).

With that, he moves from equating manna to knowledge to specifically the word of the Lord by comparing their shared characteristics.

> You see now what kind of thing the food of the Lord is, it is the continued word of the Lord, like dew, surrounding the whole soul in a circle, and allowing no

> portion of it to be without its share of itself. And this word is not apparent in every place, but wherever there is a vacant space, void of passions and vice, and it is subtle both to understand and to be understood, and it is exceedingly transparent and clear to be distinguished, and it is like coriander seed. And agriculturists say that the seed of the coriander is capable of being cut up and divided into innumerable pieces, and if sown in each separate piece and fragment, it shoots up just as much as the whole seed could do. Such also is the word of God, being profitable both in its entirety and also in every part, even if it be ever so small (59.169–170).

For Philo, to eat of this word results in a rejection of passion and vice (60.172–3). Incorporating Deuteronomy 8:3, he refers to the test of hunger as a hunger caused by vice. In its place, God offers the word,

> …the most universal of all things, for manna, being interpreted, mean "what?" and "what" is the most universal of all things; for the word of God is over all the world, and is the most ancient, and the most universal of all things…For the mouth is the symbol of the language, and a word is a portion of it. Accordingly the soul of the more perfect man is nourished by the whole word; but we must be contented if we are nourished by a portion of it (61.175–6).

He starts shifts away from this part of his argument with the clarification that God gives all good things, yet deliverance from evil comes specifically through God's word (62.177–8). Using the contrast between Leah's fertility and Rachel's barrenness, Philo says that God ultimately brought about their pregnancies, impregnating them with virtue (63.180–1). The discussion of seed then brings into the discussion Genesis 3:15, which he uses to compare the enmity of vice and the senses (64.182–66.186).

Other Uses

Philo's work *On Flight and Finding* gives additional small though helpful details on the nature of his view on manna. Once again equating it to divine knowledge, he goes on to say that it is the efficient cause of all things. Although only fully appreciated by contemplative persons who seek to understand the nature of God (the most noble pursuit), it nevertheless tastes sweet to all people (*Fug*. 137–142).

On the Change of Names clarifies that, although "God sends from above [heavenly wisdom] upon those souls which have a longing for virtue," ultimately their own desire for virtue does not cause it. It is given solely by God (*Mut*. 44.258–60). It also refers to it in relation to creation.

Who Is the Heir of Divine Things reiterates the idea that God gives "the heavenly food of the soul" in equality, going on to relate this impartiality with the Passover (*Quis Her.* 40.190–4).

Correlation

In summary, as a part of his larger purposes of encouraging the cultivation of virtue over vice, Philo likens manna as a representation of knowledge from God that feeds the soul. He contrasts this to the satisfaction of bodily pleasure.

The dichotomy between virtue and vice that Philo makes has much influence from Greek thought. Aristotle posited that the end goal of human life was *eudaimonia,* a type of completion or perfection that was cultivated through the pursuit of virtue (*EN*, 1.4–12). At the heart of this was the virtue of thought, in which the virtuous found their true pleasure apart from pleasure (*EN*, 6; 10.6–8). Philo's explanation of virtue and vice contains these ideas. However, the distinction Philo makes is that ultimately the source of virtue is not the self but God.

Though using the language of Greek philosophy, Philo's incorporation of these principles makes sense within the context of the Jewish understanding as well. The authors of Exodus and Deuteronomy define the giving of manna as a test that gauges the status of the people's ability to obey. Like Aristotle, morality is seen as a communal issue, concerned with making citizens who will be obedient (*EN*, 1.2). Deuteronomy 8

specifically outlines the notion that the active remembrance of Yahweh will keep the people away from sin. In this way, knowledge and virtue are connected. Nevertheless, while Philo does say that God fulfills both, the clear division between bodily needs and spiritual needs may undermine the conclusion previously made that bodily needs are ultimately spiritual needs. They are not less important; the physical impacts the well-being of the spiritual and vice versa. Furthermore, some of Philo's language of the soul as a part of the divine and the necessity of divine knowledge parallel gnostic thought, deemed heretical by the church.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have looked at four passages that incorporate the symbol of manna. Exodus 16 demonstrates the contrast between Yahweh's faithfulness and the people of Israel's unfaithfulness by telling the story of the original giving of manna. Deuteronomy 8 uses manna to connect the people of Israel's past experience to the present and future, imploring the audience to rehearse the lessons learned. John 6 depicts Jesus as fulfilling the original meaning of the manna story. Philo interprets manna as wisdom from God, the only true sustainer of the human soul.

These evaluations have demonstrated that, while the authors share the same underlying premise of manna as God's faithfulness in provision, each one adds a unique nuance to the understanding. Exodus 16 establishes the basic understanding of the symbol's meaning. Deuteronomy 8 expands the manna to refer to all physical provision while showing the relationship between physical and spiritual needs. This connection allows for John 6 to highlight the importance of recognizing the spiritual truth to which the physical points. Philo, in contrast, dismisses the importance of the physical by emphasizing manna as wisdom for the soul.

Although imagery and symbols blend throughout the biblical narrative, the placement of manna at the beginning of the cultural narrative of ancient Israel's formation as a nation make this symbol especially important. This brief evaluation has only scratched the surface of this topic, but hopefully, this survey of manna has achieved its primary goal of sparking appreciation for the richness of the biblical narrative tradition, especially of the small details often taken for granted.

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