

Exodus 16:2-15ⁱⁱ

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him, what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD." Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. The LORD spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw

it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

ii About the Exodus 16:2-15

Today's reading recounts one of the many instances of the people's murmuring during the time of the exodus (see also Exodus 32 and Numbers 11 and 14). The Israelites long for the meat and bread they ate in Egypt. The Lord responds by providing for them both flesh and bread, but on God's own terms, one day at a time. Thus God may "test" (v. 4) their faith.

God acts, saying: "You shall know that I am the Lord your God" (v. 12). This statement of recognition occurs in the priestly writings, in Isaiah and in Ezekiel. God's actions disclose, to believer and unbeliever, the Lord of our world and life. God provides from nature's bounty for the Israelites, reliably supplying the needs of an unreliable people.