

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: October 1, 2017  
Lesson Title: "Sufficient"  
Lesson Passage: Exodus 16:1-5, 11-20

ABOUT THIS LESSON

As we read the biblical accounts concerning the Israelites, from the time Moses joined them in Egypt until they had begun their journey in the wilderness, their faith in Yahweh and his representatives often seems immature. For instance, they happily joined Moses and Aaron when they began the Exodus (Exod.12:51), but when they saw the Egyptians pursuing them as they neared the sea they complained to Moses, "What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt...it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Exod. 14:11-12). Then, again, when they encountered brackish water at Marah, they "murmured against Moses" (Exod. 15:23-24). And, in this week's lesson, when they grew anxious about their food supply, they complained once again to Moses and Aaron, "you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. 16:3). Our lesson passage tells us how this third crisis was resolved.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) List three reasons the Israelites complained against Moses. (2) Suggest a probable reason for the day-by-day rationing of the manna and quail.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Begin with these thoughts:* In all fairness, we should acknowledge the fact that the Israelites encountered circumstances that would test anyone's faith. Yahweh had destroyed Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, but they still faced a torturous pilgrimage through a harsh wilderness. They had to endure thirst, hunger, intense heat, armed enemies and other hazards, such as dangerous beasts, scorpions and venomous reptiles. But the biblical account implies that these trials were tests of their faith in Yahweh as He molded them into a unique "people of God".

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Refer briefly to the setting in which the episode described in this lesson occurred: Nothing is known about a "wilderness of Sin," which is mentioned only in Exodus 16:1, Ex. 17:1 and Num. 33:11-12. But perhaps Exodus 16:1 is referring to the wilderness of Zin, which lies to the south of Judah and is referred to numerous times in the Old Testament (e.g., Num. 13:21, 20:1, 27:14, 33:36, 34:3; Deut. 32:51; Josh. 15:1,3). It included Kadesh-barnea (Num. 20:1), an extremely hot, arid region.

2. Comment on the complaint of the people in Exodus 16:2-3: (1) They probably had reason to begin worrying about food, because, having trekked

through the barren wilderness for 32 days, they probably would have exhausted any provisions they had brought out of Egypt. (2) Confronted by the threat of hunger, the whole congregation of Israel turned against Moses and Aaron (16:2). (3) They complained that, rather than dying of starvation in the wilderness, it would have been better had they died in Egypt ("by the hand of the Lord" in v. 3 suggests that they were referring to the night of the death plague). For, in Egypt, they said, they had pots filled with meat and plenty of bread to eat. NOTE: Very possibly, their recollection of such an abundant supply of food in Egypt was inflated by their imagination; for, people in slavery probably would have suffered a much more frugal existence.

3. Note what the Lord reveals to Moses concerning His unique plan for providing food for the Israelites (Exod. 16:4-5): (1) God's plan for resolving the food problem was delivered to Moses (v. 4), and he, in turn, was given the task of explaining it to Aaron, his spokesman (v. 9). (2) "Bread" in verse 4 means, more broadly, "food." "Gather a day's portion every day" is a key thought: By providing food for only a day at a time, Yahweh will test the people to see if they will have faith in his mercy and will walk in His instruction (i.e., *torah*, often translated "law") day by day. (3) The provision of twice the daily quota of bread on the sixth day (thus, avoiding the necessity of gathering on the seventh day) anticipates the sixth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11.

4. Observe that in the first part of the Lesson Passage (Exod. 16:1-5) God revealed to Moses how He intended to resolve the food crisis; then, in verses 10-20, we are told how the Lord implemented His plan: (1) The "glory of the Lord" (v. 10) was a manifestation of God's presence (known by the technical term, "*shekinah*"). (2) In 16:11-12 the plan is summarized. Moses is to tell the people they will have meat to eat each evening and bread will be provided every morning. (3) In vv. 13, the quails arrived in abundance ("covered the camp"). NOTE: "Quail" (Heb., *selaw*), apart from this passage, appears only in Num. 11:31-32 and Psalm 105:40. (In the Mediterranean area, even today, quails winter in Africa and migrate northward in vast flocks in the spring. This is an exhausting flight, and when the birds alight to rest, they are easily caught. It probably was a cloud of migrating birds that came down upon the Hebrew encampment.) (4) The manna, which was found in the morning, is described in v. 14 (RSV) as "a fine, flake-like thing." (5) Upon seeing the manna, the people ask, "What is it?" (v. 15), and Moses explains that the manna is "the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." (6) Then he instructs them to gather only a designated portion each day, just enough for their daily needs (vv. 16-18). And when they ignore this order, their surplus manna is spoiled (v. 20).

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

*A closing thought:* This provision for gathering just enough food for daily needs, no more and no less, is reflected in the instruction of Jesus to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11), in contrast to the greedy man in his parable who had to build bigger barns in order to hoard all his produce (Lk. 12:18).