

# Freedom is Dependence (Exodus 16:1-26)

## Video 1

The Israelites are out of Egypt. Pharaoh and his armies are just memories. The people are on the way to a land of their own.

Yet Exodus shows that, if the people are to know freedom to the full, they still have much to learn.

It's illustrated in the strange next episode of their story.

You need to know that Egypt is surrounded by desert. So, having escaped Egypt, the people find themselves in a wasteland. Here's their problem: they've run out of food. And they have no possibility of growing anything.

The people quickly get desperate. And their desperation leads them to turn against Moses – and against God.

“If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt!” they say. “There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

The people have forgotten how God has provided for them. They think they have to provide for themselves. And so they despair. In fear, they long to return to the slavery that they'd just been rescued from.

But God is about to provide again. Offering them freedom from the hopelessness and fear of needing to provide for themselves.

He will **rain down bread from heaven** – a bread that the people call 'manna'.

Exodus tells us that manna was the size of a coriander seed. It was white. It looked like flakes of frost. So, each morning, the desert ground would be covered with a layer of dew. Then manna would fall upon it. Then the layer of manna would be covered with another layer of dew.

It all showed: the people couldn't provide for themselves. They must depend on God. And he will provide.

But God gives further instructions about gathering the manna.

The people must only gather as much as their family needs for the day ahead. They mustn't hoard it or keep it overnight. But on Fridays, things are different. On Fridays, they can gather a double amount. They can then spend the Sabbath resting and worshipping God.

To our ears, these extra instructions seem strange. It all seems quite inefficient! Why couldn't God have provided a month's worth of manna in one go? Or even just a week's worth?

Some Israelites felt the same way. Yet those who tried to cut corners soon learned that God's provision had to be received on his own terms. Those who kept manna overnight found that it was full of maggots. It began to smell.

Elsewhere, the Bible explains why God set things up in this way: "I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God."

Rather than being chained to the anxiety of having to provide for themselves. God wants his people to know the freedom of relying on him, *daily*. Person by person, family by family, whatever their place in society.

In teaching them this daily rhythm, God is setting his people free. They never need despair. Yes – they are needy. Yes – they require his help.

But there will never be a day in which he won't provide.

And as we learn these same rhythms of dependence, we can be set free from fear and self-reliance too.