**Contemplative Service for Wednesday,**

**September 20, 2023**



*Israelites Gathering Manna
From Histoire de la Bible et de l'Assomption de Notre-Dame
French (Paris), c. 1390-1400*

**First reading**: Exodus 16: 4, 13-15

And YHWH said to Moses, “I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion…”

In the morning there was a fall of dew about the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, and look, on the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “*Man hu?*” (“What is it?”) for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “That is the bread which YHWH has given you to eat….”

**Music**: “Bread of Heaven,” (Cwm Rhondda) performed by Jonathan Nicholson

<https://www.google.com/search?q=youtube%2C+cwm+rhonnda%2C+solo+flute&client=firefox-b-1-d&sca_esv=566788144&sxsrf=AM9HkKlxL_NDcCphwur5Fw7Xr2X4ztO1aw%3A1695173449948&ei=SUsKZdbFOd2f0PEPg5ynwAk&ved=0ahUKEwiWjsSahbiBAxXdDzQIHQPOCZgQ4dUDCA8&uact=5&oq=youtube%2C+cwm+rhonnda%2C+solo+flute&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiIHlvdXR1YmUsIGN3bSByaG9ubmRhLCBzb2xvIGZsdXRlMgcQIRigARgKMgcQIRigARgKSNxRUKgFWI5QcAF4AJABAJgB2wGgAY8XqgEGMjkuMi4xuAEDyAEA-AEBwgIIEAAYogQYsAPCAgsQABiJBRiiBBiwA8ICBBAjGCfCAhEQLhiKBRixAxiDARjHARjRA8ICCxAAGIoFGLEDGIMBwgILEC4YigUYsQMYgwHCAggQLhiKBRixA8ICDhAuGK8BGMcBGLEDGIoFwgIIEAAYigUYsQPCAgQQABgDwgITEC4YigUYsQMYgwEYxwEY0QMYCsICBhAAGBYYHsICCBAAGBYYHhgKwgIFEAAYogTCAggQABiJBRiiBMICBRAhGKsC4gMEGAEgQYgGAZAGAg&sclient=gws-wiz-serp#fpstate=ive&ip=1&vld=cid:13d88c3a,vid:gni971yrdVc,st:0>

**Second reading**: from “Manna and Mystical Eating” by Joel Hecker

The Zohar [offers] an opportunity for mystical engagement in the ostensibly mundane act of eating. No longer is it only those who eat angels’ bread [that is, manna] that unite with Divinity—the tribe wandering in the wilderness—but the common person who aspires to discern the supernal within the worldly.

[Mysticism] bridges the chasm between divine and human realms, and so manna is a wonderful test case for illuminating the possibility of convergence between these domains, occurring within the very personhood and body of the mystic. To paraphrase Claude Levi-Strauss, manna is good to think with: an instance of material that crosses the heavenly-earthly divide, leading ancient writers, rabbis, and kabbalists to ponder those two spheres and the means of dissolving their boundaries. But it is not only celestial food that excites the imagination of the ancient thinkers as they contemplate scripture and laws regarding eating. Even the familiar Jewish tradition of Grace after Meals is transformed into a vehicle for a this ideal which bridges the divine and the mortal.

**Music**: “Bread of Heaven” performed by Helen Miller

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02dcM6yDYRU

**Time of Silent Contemplation**

O Thou,
the Sustainer of
our bodies, hearts, and souls,
Bless all
that we thankfully
receive.

- Inayat Kahn

**Communal Blessing**

You who are sustenance, this is a prayer of gratitude.

In the richness of being, we are fed by all things:

even air, even silence, even light.

Goodness is so often humble.

May this goodness always lead us to savor.

Food of our hearts, there is always more than enough. Amen.

**Music**: “Say a Little Prayer” performed by Biko’s Manna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSWA3vin7i4>

*May you find manna in unexpected sites and as a direct response to your hunger.*