

## ~QUAIL (213)

[Hebrew, *selaw'*]

- A small, plump-bodied bird, about 18 centimeters (7 inches) in length, that spends most of its time on the ground. Its flesh is very edible, and it is reported that by 1920 C.E. Egypt was exporting some three million **quail** annually to foreign markets, though this exportation has since decreased.
- The birds described in the Bible are evidently the common migratory **quail**, *Coturnix coturnix*, which move northward from within Africa in the spring, arrive in Egypt about March, thereafter pass through Arabia and Palestine, and return at the approach of winter.
- They travel in large flocks, making their migration in stages and often flying during the night. Their wings allow for speedy flight but not for very long distances.
- Because of the heaviness of their bodies in relation to their wing strength, they sometimes arrive at their destination in a state of exhaustion.
- **Quail**, therefore, fly with the wind and customarily fly at rather low altitudes. Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen relates that in Port said; Egypt, men at times use butterfly nets to catch **quail** as the birds fly down the streets at dawn. [Birds of Arabia, Edinburgh, 1954, p. 569]
- The first reference to **quail** in the Biblical account
- Accordingly it occurred that in the evening the **quails** began to come up and cover the camp, and in the morning there had developed a layer of dew round about the camp. (Exodus 16:13)
- Is with reference to events in the spring.
- Later they departed from Elim, and the entire assembly of the sons of Israel finally came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their coming out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 16:1)

- And so the birds would have been flying north. The Israelites were in the Wilderness of Sin on the Sinai Peninsula, complaining about their food supplies.
- In response, Yehowah assured Moses that between the two evenings they would eat meat and in the morning would be satisfied with bread.
- I have heard the murmurings of the sons of Israel. Speak to them, saying; Between the two evenings you will eat meat and in the morning you will be satisfied with bread, and you will certainly know that I am Yehowah your God. ([Exodus 16:12](#))
- That evening the **quails** began to come up and cover the camp, while in the morning the manna appeared on the earth.
- Accordingly it occurred that in the evening the **quails** began to come up and cover the camp, and in the morning there had developed a layer of dew round about the camp. ([Exodus 16:13](#))
- In time the layer of dew evaporated and here upon the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flaky thing, fine like hoarfrost upon the earth. ([Exodus 16:14](#))
- When the sons of Israel got to see it, they began to say to one another; What is it? For they did not know what it was. Hence Moses said to them; It is the bread that Yehowah has given you for food. ([Exodus 16:15](#))
- They asked, and he proceeded to bring **quails**, and with bread from heaven he kept satisfying them. ([Psalms 105:40](#))
- Again, evidently in the spring,
- Now it came about that in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day in the month, the cloud lifted itself from over the tabernacle of the Testimony. ([Numbers 10:11](#))
- So they went marching from the mountain of Yehowah for a journey of three days, and the ark of Yehowah's covenant was marching before them for a journey of three days to search out a resting-place for them. ([Numbers 10:33](#))

- About one year later, the grumblings of the Israelites over their limited diet of manna caused Yehowah to foretell that they would eat meat up to a month of days until it became revolting to them.
- And the mixed crowd that was in the midst of them expressed selfish longing, and the sons of Israel too began to weep again and say; Who will give us meat to eat? (**Numbers 11:4**)
- And to the people you should say; Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, as you will certainly eat meat, because you have wept in the ears of Yehowah, saying; Who will give us meat to eat, for it was well with us in Egypt? And Yehowah will certainly give you meat, and you will indeed eat. (**Numbers 11:18**)
- You will eat, not one day nor two days nor five days nor ten days nor twenty days. (**Numbers 11:19**)
- But up to a month of days, until it comes out of your nostrils and it has become a loathing to you, just because you rejected Yehowah, who is in your midst, and you went weeping before him, saying; Why is it that we have come out of Egypt? (**Numbers 11:20**)
- Then Moses said; The people in the midst of whom I am are six hundred thousand men on foot, and yet you, you have said; Meat I shall give them, and they will certainly eat for a month of days! (**Numbers 11:21**)
- Will flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, for it to be adequate for them? Or will all the fish of the sea be caught for them, for it to be adequate for them? (**Numbers 11:22**)
- At this Yehowah said to Moses; The hand of Yehowah is cut short, is it? Now you will see whether what I say befalls you or not. (**Numbers 11:23**)
- God then caused a wind, likely from the East or Southeast, to drive **quail** from the sea and caused them to fall above the camp, abundant like the sand grains over a wide area for several miles around the camps perimeter.
- And a wind burst forth from Yehowah and began driving **quails** from the sea and letting them fall above the camp about a days journey this way and about a days journey that way, all around

- the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the earth. (**Numbers 11:31**)
- Men ate the very bread of powerful ones, provisions he sent them to satisfaction. (**Psalms 78:25**)
  - He began making an east wind burst forth in the heavens and making a south wind blow by his own strength. (**Psalms 78:26**)
  - And he proceeded to make sustenance rain upon them just like dust, even winged flying creatures just like the sand grains of the seas. (**Psalms 78:27**)
  - And he kept making them fall in the middle of his camp, all around his tabernacles. (**Psalms 78:28**)
  - The expression, about two cubits, 1 meter (3 feet) above the surface of the earth has been explained in different ways.
  - And a wind burst forth from Yehowah and began driving **quails** from the sea and letting them fall above the camp about a days journey this way and about a days journey that way, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the earth. (**Numbers 11:31**)
  - Some consider that the **quail** actually fell to the ground, and that in some places they were piled up to that height.
  - Others, objecting that such action would undoubtedly result in a large portion of them dying and hence becoming unfit for eating by the Israelites, understand the text to mean, that the **quail** flew at that low altitude over the ground, thereby making it quite easy for the Israelites to knock them to the ground and capture them.
  - Expressing a similar idea, the **Greek Septuagint** reads; All around the camp, about two cubits from the earth, and the **Latin Vulgate** says: All around the camp, and they were flying in the air at an altitude of two cubits above the earth.
  - The Israelites spent a day and a half gathering the **quail**, the one collecting least gathered ten homers 2,200 liters. (62 bushels).
  - Then the people got up all that day and all night and all the next day and kept gathering the **quail**. The one collecting least

gathered ten homers, and they kept spreading them extensively all around the camp for themselves. (**Numbers 11:32**)

- **In view of the six hundred thousand men on foot, mentioned by Moses.**
- **Then Moses said; The people in the midst of whom I am are six hundred thousand men on foot, and yet you, you have said; Meat I shall give them, and they will certainly eat for a month of days! (**Numbers 11:21**)**
- **The number of **quail** collected must have been many millions, hence it was no simple catch resulting from ordinary migration but, rather, a powerful demonstration of divine power.**
- **The quantity collected was too great for eating then, hence the greedy Israelites kept spreading them extensively all around the camp for themselves.**
- **Then the people got up all that day and all night and all the next day and kept gathering the **quail**. The one collecting least gathered ten homers, and they kept spreading them extensively all around the camp for themselves. (**Numbers 11:32**)**
- **This may have been for the purpose of drying out the meat of the slaughtered **quail** in order to preserve as many of them as possible for future consumption. Such action would be similar to the ancient Egyptian practice, described by **Herodotus [II, 77]**, of salting fish and then putting it in the sun to dry out.**