



O God, thou art my God;  
early will I seek thee.

—Psalms 63:1



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**Bible Lens**

**Life**

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## from Section 1

### 4 | Proverbs 3:1

*My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments.*

In addition to calling for obedience to God's law, this charge stresses engagement of the heart. A commentator notes that the law was entwined in every aspect of daily life, "from food to offerings to social interactions to warfare"—a fact that may have made it tempting to focus on mere observance of human codes.

The Apostle Paul later warns, "We should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6).

### 4 | Proverbs 3:18

*[Wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her.*

In the ancient Near East, the tree of life was a common symbol of vitality and immortality. It is first mentioned in Scripture in the allegory of Adam and Eve as an inaccessible ideal (see Genesis 2:9). The image recurs several times in Proverbs, representing the reward of righteousness and the essence of wisdom.

In the final chapters of the Bible, the Revelator's spiritual vision of the tree of life promises its fruits to "him that overcometh" and "they that do [God's] commandments" (Revelation 2:7 and 22:14).

## from Section 2

### 6 | Exodus 16:4

*Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day.*

*Bread* (Hebrew, *lechem*) can mean food in general as well as bread itself. To the Israelites in the wilderness, the "bread from heaven" was an unknown substance. Some scholars identify it with a secretion from the tamarisk tree, but it appeared in such great quantities that it was recognized by the people as promised divine supply—provision that has been celebrated throughout Jewish history (see example in Nehemiah 9:20).

The word *manna* means "What is it?"—as alluded to in v. 15: "When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was." It was said to taste "like wafers made with honey" (Exodus 16:31), and cakes made from it "as the taste of fresh oil" (Numbers 11:8). The people were not to hoard manna, but to gather one omer (about two quarts or liters) per person each day, and two for the sabbath (see vs. 16–25).

### 6 | Exodus 16:13

*It came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp.*

Quails are small, pheasant-like birds that migrate annually over the Mediterranean and the Sinai peninsula. Although they were known to be easily caught after their



# An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“...a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.” —Mary Baker Eddy

long flights, God’s action is seen in the uncommonly large numbers of birds made available for the Hebrew people (see also Numbers 11:31, 32). Unlike the daily supply of manna, quails were gathered and preserved—over a hundred bushels per person—for future use.

The Psalmist praises God’s provision in the wilderness: “The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven” (Psalms 105:40).

## from Section 3

### 11 | John 6:16, 17

*When even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.*

Over time, the sea in this account has been known by four different names—*Chinnereth*, *Galilee*, *Gennesaret*, and *Tiberias*. *Chinnereth* was an Old Testament Hebrew name. *Galilee* (its contemporary name) referred to the region surrounding this freshwater lake, the site of much of Jesus’ ministry; *Gennesaret*, to a plain and town northwest of the sea; and *Tiberias*, to the capital of Galilee, built on the western shore in honor of Roman emperor Tiberius.

### 11 | John 6:20

*He saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.*

The words “It is I” (Greek, *egō eimi*) were used by individuals to identify or announce themselves to others—as well as in accounts of divine self-revelation and in announcing prophecy or law. In this verse, it is Jesus’ assurance of his spiritual identity that calms the disciples’ fear.

## from Section 4

### 16 | Luke 1:5

*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia.*

Temple priests were divided into 24 groups called courses, each group serving twice a year for a week at a time. Zacharias was a member of the eighth course, named the course of Abia (called *Abijah* in the Old Testament; see I Chronicles 24:10). Zacharias’ participation in the ministration of burning incense on the altar (see Luke 1:8, 9) was an honor that normally came only once in a lifetime.

King Herod, first of a line of Judean monarchs known by that name, was called “Herod the Great.” Rome appointed him first governor of Galilee and later king of Judea. In both positions he ruled over mixed populations of Jews and Gentiles.

Herod’s title “the Great” was an acknowledgment of his massive building projects, including a major restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem. Personally, however, he was known to be a brutal and ruthless killer—not only of Hebrew infants at the time of Jesus’ birth, but of his family members. He was succeeded by his son Herod Antipas, the ruler responsible for the death of John the Baptist.

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#### Resources quoted in this issue

**Cit. 4:** Mounce, William D., ed. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

# From wilderness to holy ground

By Jeremy Carper

From the October 2007 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*

No matter where we are, God *is*. This great theme runs through the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, from the accounts of Abraham, Hagar, Moses, the prophets, and up to the Jonah story. In times of trouble, these spiritually receptive individuals found God's presence their comfort and guide. Out there in the stark life-and-death reality of the desert, with hopes exhausted, they discovered that God not only exists — but that He sustains.

Now, as then, the awareness of the presence of God might jump into our thinking spontaneously, especially when the distractions of sophistication, comfort in matter, and pleasant human relationships are most absent. At such points in our lives—like characters from these Old Testament narratives—we may find ourselves no longer in a hopeless situation, but standing on holy ground.

Understanding this juxtaposition of despair and spiritual renewal, Mary Baker Eddy gave this definition of *wilderness* in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “Loneliness; doubt; darkness. Spontaneity of thought and idea; the vestibule in which a material sense of things disappears, and spiritual sense unfolds the great facts of existence” (p. 597). This is a radical definition of wilderness, because it tells us that just when it appears we have the least reason to hope, this moment itself can be the springboard to healing and regeneration.

[T]he book of Exodus tells of the children of Israel and their forty-year search for the Promised Land. Perhaps we, too, have times when we feel we're in some kind of metaphorical Sinai, not sure where we're going—and unable to return to where we were.

But in whatever state of mind we find ourselves, God already *is*. Maybe we've forgotten this great fact. Perhaps in our wanderings it has just receded to an abstract teaching from a living, provable reality. Or the challenges of the world have crowded out our awareness of God's presence.

Yet, acknowledging the existence of Deity is a necessary first step to recognizing the divine presence that's been there all along. Seeing that God is not a fairy tale, but the actual source of all intelligence and power breaks through the illusion of hopelessness, of our own wilderness state of limited thinking.

Going back to the children of Israel, God didn't just abandon them in the Sinai. Even though it took forty years for them to reach their destination, the Bible says that every morning God provided them with “manna”—daily inspiration for daily needs.

God's love binds us to Him at all times, even when we are asleep to it or feeling unworthy or just left out. We don't have to do some kind of penance for every minute we've lost sight of God and our unbroken relationship to Him. It's a matter of opening our eyes and lifting our awareness to God's goodness. Then the gentle recognition of God's care dawns in our thought.

God awakens in us a certainty that there is always resolution to every circumstance, always healing. Blessing His creation is entirely natural to God, and these blessings come with holy spontaneity—Love-gifts from our divine Parent. We don't have to earn these blessings. They come because He loves us so much.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to [jsh.christianscience.com/from-wilderness-to-holy-ground](http://jsh.christianscience.com/from-wilderness-to-holy-ground).