

### W3: The Environmental Challenge (Christianity's role in the ecological crisis)

Day a: *Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, Lyn White Jr

Day b: Romans 8

Day c: *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson

Day d: Genesis 11

Day e: *The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*, Wendell Berry

Day f: Exodus 16

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### **The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis, Lyn White Jr**

#### **Introduction**

*In 1967, the American historian Lynn White Jr (1907-1987) wrote an article for Science magazine. In it, he charged that Christianity was at the root of the ecological crisis. His opinion is not always accepted by Christian and non-Christian thinkers, but his essay had a significant effect on the way Christians started to engage with environmental issues. It is also important to note that towards the end of his essay, not quoted in the extract below, he notes that although Christianity had a role in creating the current ecological challenges it also has an important role to play in resolving them.*

#### **Extract**

While many of the world's mythologies provide stories of creation, Greco-Roman mythology was singularly incoherent in this respect. Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had a beginning. Indeed, the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time. In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as non-repetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.

Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as the 2nd century both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.

At the level of the common people this worked out in an interesting way. In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

The Christian dogma of creation, which is found in the first clause of all the Creeds, has another meaning for our comprehension of today's ecologic crisis. By revelation, God had given man the

Bible, the Book of Scripture. But since God had made nature, nature also must reveal the divine mentality. The religious study of nature for the better understanding of God was known as natural theology. In the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men: the ant is a sermon to sluggards; rising flames are the symbol of the soul's aspiration. The view of nature was essentially artistic rather than scientific. While Byzantium preserved and copied great numbers of ancient Greek scientific texts, science as we conceive it could scarcely flourish in such an ambience.

However, in the Latin West by the early 13th century natural theology was following a very different bent. It was ceasing to be the decoding of the physical symbols of God's communication with man and was becoming the effort to understand God's mind by discovering how his creation operates. The rainbow was no longer simply a symbol of hope first sent to Noah after the Deluge: Robert Grosseteste, Friar Roger Bacon, and Theodoric of Freiberg produced startlingly sophisticated work on the optics of the rainbow, but they did it as a venture in religious understanding. From the 13th century onward, up to and including Leibniz and Newton, every major scientist, in effect, explained his motivations in religious terms. Indeed, if Galileo had not been so expert an amateur theologian he would have got into far less trouble: the professionals resented his intrusion. And Newton seems to have regarded himself more as a theologian than as a scientist. It was not until the late 18th century that the hypothesis of God became unnecessary to many scientists.

It is often hard for the historian to judge, when men explain why they are doing what they want to do, whether they are offering real reasons or merely culturally acceptable reasons. The consistency with which scientists during the long formative centuries of Western science said that the task and the reward of the scientist was "to think God's thoughts after him" leads one to believe that this was their real motivation. If so, then modern Western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology. The dynamism of religious devotion shaped by the Judeo-Christian dogma of creation, gave it impetus.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *How convincing do you find Lynn White Jr's argument for the negative effects of Christian thought and action?*
- *What is your experience of contemporary Christian attitudes towards the environment?*
- *What is the Church uniquely equipped to contribute to current ecological discussions and action?*
- *What would you like to see the Church doing or saying to influence Christians' attitude towards nature?*

### **Some further reading**

Lynn White Jr. (1967) "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" in *Science*

John Passmore (1974) *Man's Responsibility For Nature*

Thomas Berry (1988) *The Dream of the Earth*

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### **Day 2: Romans 8**

## **Introduction**

*Saint Paul has probably had the single greatest influence on Christian theology of any single individual after Christ. His theology is rich, complex and interpreted in a wide variety of ways by theologians from differing Christian traditions and at different times. Martin Luther in the reformed tradition saw Paul as advancing an argument that faith was the primary or possibly singular means of salvation and rejected his previous allegiance to Jewish Law. More recently some theologians have suggested that Paul retained more of his Jewish heritage than Martin Luther and others suggested.*

*Paul's letters are deeply pastoral and are largely responding to specific questions and concerns raised by the communities where he planted churches. Romans is the least pastoral of his letters with the longest sections of sustained theological argument. In this passage, Romans 8, Paul is discussing the law and the Spirit. It is an example of a Biblical passage which some Christians have argued shows that a focus on the things of this world, like nature, are wrong and instead our focus should be on the world to come. You will have to decide the merits of this argument. It is worth keeping in mind two facts about Paul while reading this passage. First Paul had an expectation that the second coming of Christ would happen very soon and this informed his theology. Second Paul frequently uses the rhetorical device of contrasting two things which he then later modifies through further exploration.*

## **Romans 8**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

## **Future Glory**

<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been

groaning in labor pains until now;<sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.<sup>24</sup> For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?<sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.<sup>27</sup> And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup> We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family,<sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *Lyn White Jr. argues that Christianity is a religion of escapism from the natural world. What does Romans 8 tell us about our relationship to the created world?*
- *If we instinctively want to conserve and protect our environment how do we make sense of passages which appear to suggest we are focussing on the wrong things?*
- *What is the importance of humanities link with the whole of creation in verses 19 to 23?*

### **Further reading**

E.P. Sanders (2015), *Paul*

C.K. Barrett (1957) *The Epistle to the Romans*

John Zeisler (2010) *Pauline Christianity*

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## **Silent Spring**

### **Introduction**

*Important in the development of the modern ecological movement, Silent Spring is concerned with the widespread use of chemicals in America in the 1960s. Chapter by chapter, it documents the impact of chemicals on water, soil and plants, river systems and their supporting aquatic, mammalian and bird life. Rachel Carson (1907-1964) makes a powerful case for the idea that if humanity poisons nature, nature will in turn poison humanity. The title – Silent Spring – refers to the apocalyptic vision of the future Carson paints, a silent spring where no birds sing and children, stricken with illness, no longer play. The book is a critique of humanity's arrogance expressed in three ways: man's attempt to subdue and control nature; man's indifference to nature and failure to recognise man's survival is wholly dependent on it, and finally, man's belief nature exists only to serve man.*

### **Extract**

The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been moulded by the environment. Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight. Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species – man – acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.

During the past quarter-century this power has not only increased to one of disturbing magnitude but it has changed in character. The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world— the very nature of its life. Strontium 90, released through nuclear explosions into the air, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn or wheat grown there, and in time takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until his death.

Similarly, chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie long in soil, entering into living organisms, passing from one to another in a chain of poisoning and death. Or they pass mysteriously by underground streams until they emerge and, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, combine into new forms that kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells. As Albert Schweitzer has said, 'Man can hardly even recognize the devils of his own creation.'

It took hundreds of millions of years to produce the life that now inhabits the earth— eons of time in which that developing and evolving and diversifying life reached a state of adjustment and balance with its surroundings. The environment, rigorously shaping and directing the life it supported, contained elements that were hostile as well as supporting. Certain rocks gave out dangerous radiation; even within the light of the sun, from which all life draws its energy, there were short-wave radiations with power to injure. Given time— time not in years but in millennia— life adjusts, and a balance has been reached. For time is the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time.

The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature. Radiation is no longer merely the background radiation of rocks, the bombardment of cosmic rays, the ultraviolet of the sun that have existed before there was any life on earth; radiation is now the unnatural creation of man's tampering with the atom. The chemicals to which life is asked to make its adjustment are no longer merely the calcium and silica and copper and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the synthetic creations of man's inventive mind, brewed in his laboratories, and having no counterparts in nature.

Among them are many that are used in man's war against nature. Since the mid-1940s over 200 basic chemicals have been created for use in killing insects, weeds, rodents, and other organisms described in the modern vernacular as 'pests'; and they are sold under several thousand different brand names. These sprays, dusts, and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests, and homes— nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the 'good' and the 'bad', to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in the streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger on in soil— all this though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects. Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a barrage of poisons on the

surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life? They should not be called 'insecticides', but 'biocides'.

Some would-be architects of our future look toward a time when it will be possible to alter the human germ plasm by design. But we may easily be doing so now by inadvertence, for many chemicals, like radiation, bring about gene mutations. It is ironic to think that man might determine his own future by something so seemingly trivial as the choice of an insect spray. All this has been risked— for what? Future historians may well be amazed by our distorted sense of proportion. How could intelligent beings seek to control a few unwanted species by a method that contaminated the entire environment and brought the threat of disease and death even to their own kind? Yet this is precisely what we have done. We have done it, moreover, for reasons that collapse the moment we examine them.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *How far do you agree with Carson's proposition that if we negatively harm nature, it will in turn harm us?*
- *Do you agree that humanity has irrevocably upset the balance of nature?*
- *Education, and the 'right to know', are major themes in *Silent Spring*. In your opinion should more be done to inform Christians about the dangers of environmental destruction, including that wrought by chemicals?*
- *At *Silent Spring's* end, Rachel Carson observes mankind stands 'where two roads' diverge and that the more difficult path is the one which assures the preservation of the earth. What can the Church do to ensure that humanity chooses the 'right road'?*

### **Some further reading**

Gaia Vince (2014) *Adventures in the Anthropocene*

Paul Hawken (2007) *Blessed Unrest*

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## **Genesis 11: The Tower of Babel**

### **Introduction**

*The early chapters of Genesis can be read as a series of escalating acts of disobedience by humanity against God, nature and one another. The story starts with the goodness of creation before Adam and Eve disobey God; Cain murders Able; the people sin and God sends a flood but saves creation in the Ark and finally the Tower of Babel. Each case of sin has a corresponding consequence.*

*In previous examples the sin of humanity has been to ignore or violate the laws which God had revealed to humanity. In the case of the Tower of Babel the sin of humanity is to try and replace God. The passage is a story of competing for power with God by dominating all of the earth. The result is the fragmentation of humanity.*

*The harmony between the creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.*

### **Extract**

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup> And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." <sup>5</sup>

The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup> So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup> Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *What does this passage teach us about humanity's arrogance?*
- *What do you think are the modern equivalents of building the Tower of Babel?*
- *As Christians reading this passage what does Christ's death mean for our unity with one another, God and all creation?*

### **Further reading**

Leon Kass (2006) *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*

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### **The Mad Farmer Liberation Front by Wendell Berry**

#### **Introduction**

Wendell Berry is a farmer-author whose work in essays, poems and novels expresses an agrarian ecology that seeks to integrate a deep concern for the natural world with the production of food. His work is not without its critics. To some he is a naive romantic wishing to return the American countryside to a bygone era and to others his environmentalism sits at odds with a generally socially conservative worldview. The poem *The Mad Farmer Liberation Front* is a provocative piece of writing with an intentionally provocative title. At the heart of the poem is a certain ambiguity about who is mad and who is being liberated from whom.

#### **The Mad Farmer Liberation Front**

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,  
vacation with pay. Want more  
of everything ready-made. Be afraid  
to know your neighbours and to die.

And you will have a window in your head.  
Not even your future will be a mystery  
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card  
and shut away in a little drawer.

When they want you to buy something  
they will call you. When they want you  
to die for profit they will let you know.  
So, friends, every day do something  
that won't compute. Love the Lord.  
Love the world. Work for nothing.  
Take all that you have and be poor.  
Love someone who does not deserve it.

Denounce the government and embrace  
the flag. Hope to live in that free  
republic for which it stands.  
Give your approval to all you cannot  
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man  
has not encountered he has not destroyed.

Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.  
Say that your main crop is the forest  
that you did not plant,  
that you will not live to harvest.

Say that the leaves are harvested  
when they have rotted into the mould.  
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.  
Put your faith in the two inches of humus  
that will build under the trees  
every thousand years.

Listen to carrion – put your ear  
close, and hear the faint chattering  
of the songs that are to come.  
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.  
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful  
though you have considered all the facts.  
So long as women do not go cheap  
for power, please women more than men.

Ask yourself: Will this satisfy  
a woman satisfied to bear a child?  
Will this disturb the sleep  
of a woman near to giving birth?

Go with your love to the fields.  
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head  
in her lap. Swear allegiance  
to what is highest your thoughts.

As soon as the generals and the politicians  
can predict the motions of your mind,  
lose it. Leave it as a sign  
to mark the false trail, the way  
you didn't go.

Be like the fox  
who makes more tracks than necessary,  
some in the wrong direction.  
Practice resurrection.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *Who is the 'Mad Farmer' the farmer that pursues the 'quick profit' or the farmer that 'listens to carrion'?*
- *In what ways might being a 'fool for Christ' (1 Corinthians 4:10) mirror the tension which Wendell Berry highlights about being a 'Mad Farmer'?*
- *How do we balance feeding a growing global population with respect for nature?*

### **Some further reading**

Wendell Berry (1967) *A Place on Earth*

Henry David Thoreau (1854) *Walden*

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## **Exodus 16**

### **Introduction**

As Christians we tend to turn to Genesis for the foundation of environmental ethics. The former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was asked which passages in the Bible he would use to base a Jewish system of environmental ethics. He pointed towards Deuteronomy 20:19 "If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?".

Lord Sacks direction helps the Christian reader see greater richness in texts which can appear to the modern reader as legalistic. God's instruction not to destroy trees is a warning against greed and given to protect and promote the common good. In Exodus 16 the provision of manna raises the same questions.

## **Exodus 16**

Bread from Heaven

16 The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.' 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?' 8 And Moses said, 'When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.'

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, "Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining."' 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. 11 The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 12 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God."'

13 In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' [a] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is what the Lord has commanded: "Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents."' 17 The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. 18 But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. 19 And Moses said to them, 'Let no one leave any of it over until morning.' 20 But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

22 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 he said to them, 'This is what the Lord has commanded: "Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning."' 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. 25 Moses said, 'Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. 26 For six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none.'

27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. 28 The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? 29 See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of

you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.’ 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, ‘This is what the Lord has commanded: “Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, in order that they may see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.”’ 33 And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord, to be kept throughout your generations.’ 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the covenant,[b] for safe-keeping. 35 The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 An omer is a tenth of an ephah.

### **Questions for reflection**

- *What motivates the people of Israel to gather more manna than they need?*
- *Where in our own lives can we cut out waste and use fewer resources?*
- *What role does the Sabbath play in your life?*

### **Some further reading**

Deuteronomy 20

Jonathan Sacks (2010), *Exodus: The Book of Redemption*