



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

CHALLAH, THE MANNA AND YOU!

SOURCE AND DISCUSSION SHEET



Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch, a great 19th century rabbi, says that of all the amazing, dramatic miracles that God did for the Jewish People in Egypt and in the desert, none is as amazing as raining down bread from the sky daily for 40 years. Who could make that up if it weren't true?

This bread was called Manna and it is the basis for many of our Shabbos traditions surrounding Challah. We can learn a lot about Challah, Shabbos and our relationship with God by looking at the sources describing Manna in the Torah.

Challah, Shabbos and Mitzvos - The Global and The Individual

SOURCE 1: Introduction of concept of Manna Shemos (Exodus) 16:4

And the G-d said to Moses, "I will rain down **bread for you from heaven**, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day's portion—that I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instructions or not. (Shemos 16:4-5)

..In the morning there was a layer of dew surrounding the camp- it was over the surface of the wilderness, something thin, exposed -- thin as frost on the earth. The children of Israel saw and said to one another, "**It is Manna**"-- for they didn't know what it was. (Rashi. prepared food) (Shemos 16:13-15)

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הֲנִי מִמְטִיר לָכֶם
לֶחֶם מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַלְקֻטֹּי
דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנֹסֵנוּ הִילֵךְ
בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם־לֹא:

וּבִבְקֹר הָיְתָה שְׁכַבַּת הַטֵּל סָבִיב
לַמַּחֲנֶה:

וַתַּעַל שְׁכַבַּת הַטֵּל וְהָיָה עַל־פְּנֵי
הַמִּדְבָּר דֶּק מִחֹסֶפֶס דֶּק כִּכָּפֹר עַל־
הָאָרֶץ:

וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־
אָחִיו מִן הוּא כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מִה־הוּא

Q: Wouldn't it be amazing to go out on you front doorstep and collect all the food you would need for that day, without shopping, preparing and best of all, not working for it? Why do you think the Torah says this was a test to see whether they will follow My instructions?

We worry day in and day out about what tomorrow will bring, will we have jobs, be able to support our families. There is a great temptation to leave Hashem out of this equation and "store up as much money/food as we can" to take care of ourselves. The daily portion of the Manna tested us to see if we trusted God enough to provide for us day to day.

Q: Can you relate to this in your own lives? How does trying to take control of your own livelihood influence your decisions, business, personal and even on an ethical level?

Q: The Manna is referred to as "bread from heaven". As we are told later on, it wasn't actual bread. Why do you think the Torah calls it bread? What does bread, lechem, represent in our lives?

Bread is the staple of life, the essence of a meal, the foundation of our livelihood. Its significance goes beyond the bread itself and extends to the most basic form of our sustenance.

However, Manna is “spiritually miraculous bread” directly from heaven. Bread and Manna are tied together because our spiritual and physical sustenance in life is tied together. Consider the following famous source linking this concept directly to the Manna.

SOURCE 2: . *Devarim 8:3* -- “not by bread alone”.

He subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you Manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man **does not live on bread alone, but by the word of God.**

וַיַּעֲבֹד וַיִּרְעֲבֶךָ וַיֹּאכְלֶךָ אֶת־הַמָּן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־
יָדַעְתָּ וְלֹא יָדְעוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן הוֹדִיעֶךָ כִּי
לֹא עַל־הַלֶּחֶם לִבְדּוֹ יְחִיָּה הָאָדָם כִּי עַל־
כָּל־מוֹצֵא פִי־יָהּ יְחִיָּה הָאָדָם:

One of the goals of the Manna in the desert was undoubtedly to teach us that our bread really does emanate from Heaven, and we best “look upward” all the while putting our best foot forward to “take it from the ground”.

The next source introduces the concept of “lechem Mishneh”, or double bread, which you may be familiar with if you have seen the two Challos put on the Shabbos table at each meal.

SOURCE 3: *When the Manna Came Down from Heaven, Shemos 16:22*

On the sixth day they gathered “double bread”, **two omers for each...** And the Princes brought it to Moshe and told him the People gathered a double bread. (two portions)

וַיְהִי אִ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי לָקְטוּ לֶחֶם מִשְׁנֶה
שְׁנֵי הָעֹמֶר לְאַחַד וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל־נְשֵׁי־
הָעֵדָה וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמֹשֶׁה לֵּקְטוּ לֶחֶם מִשְׁנֶה

Question: The term “double bread” is a strange way of saying that they got a double portion of bread. What do you think it means?

Let’s take a look at the commentator Rashi’s comments on this verse for more insight:

SOURCE 4A: *Rashi’s Commentary on “Double Bread” Shemos (16:22)*

לקטו לחם משנה They Collected Double Bread — when they measured in their tents what they gathered they found double — **two omers for each person**

לָקְטוּ לֶחֶם מִשְׁנֶה. כְּשֶׁמָדְדוּ אֶת
לְקִיטָתָם בְּאֹהֲלֵיהֶם מָצְאוּ כפֹּלִים, שְׁנֵי
הָעֹמֶר לְאַחַד.

Rashi is telling us that the unusual language, “double bread”, alludes not to the fact that they collected a double portion on the sixth day, but rather that their single portion of manna was turned into a double portion when they measured it. There was a hidden miracle, a blessing within the Manna that they collected on the sixth day before Shabbos.

Q: How can we relate this to our lives each week as we work to earn a living and yet, prepare for Shabbos, a day when we are asked to stop working?

Take a look at the last phrase of the Rashi above in source 4a, “**two omers for each person**”.

Q: Why do you think the verse is highlighting the amount (omer) and the fact it was for each person? These points seem either obvious or unimportant.

We mentioned above that in verses 4-5 the Torah presents the **Manna - bread from heaven - in a more global general sense**. The Rashi above on verse 22 ,paints a more nuanced picture in his explanation of the term “lechem mishneh” - double bread. He quotes the Torah in verse 22, specifying they gathered “ a double bread, two omers for each”.

Although everyone received two omers of manna (**the global**), it is stressed that it was for each person. (**the individual**)

The Manna is a symbol which carries both an element of the group and also of the individual.

Rashi adds another mystical interpretation of the phrase “lechem mishneh” -- double bread – which reinforces this observation:

SOURCE 4B: Rashi Cont. 16:22

A Midrashic explanation is that **לחם משנה** in **משנה** signifies **מְשֻׁנָּה** different, changed, — that day it was changed for the better as regards its smell and its taste (Tanchuma Yashan).

ומדרש אגדה: לחם משנה - מְשֻׁנָּה,
אותו היום נשתנה לשבח בריחו
וטעמו שם

This mysterious comment also seems to add an element of variability which corresponds to the individual. Consider the next source from the 4th book of the Torah – Bamidbar- which develops this thought more fully:

SOURCE 5: Torah Book of Bamidbar 11:8 and Rashi's Commentary

The people would stroll and gather it, and grind it in a mill or pound it in a mortar and cook it in a pot or make it into cakes, and it tasted like dough kneaded in oil. (Numbers 11:8)

Rashi: **The Manna was not actually put in a mill, nor in a kettle , nor a mortar but its flavor would (miraculously) change into foods cooked in these ways, based upon what you wanted it to taste like. (according to the Sifrei 89)**

שְׁטוּ הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ וְטָחְנוּ בְּרִחִים אוֹ
דָּכוּ בַמִּדְכָּה וּבִשְׁלוּ בַפֶּרוֹר וַעֲשׂוּ אוֹתוֹ
עֲגוֹת וְהָיָה טַעְמוֹ כְּטַעַם לֶשֶׁד הַשָּׁמֶן:

וטחנו ברחים וגוי. לא ירד ברחים
ולא בקדרה ולא במדוכה, אלא
משתנה היה טעמו לנטחנין ולנדוכין
ולמבשלין (ספרי)

Wow! On the one hand, everybody did the same action of collecting the Manna. However, each person had a completely different experience of the Manna.

Q: What can this amazing miracle teach us about life, Shabbos and all other mitzvos of the Torah?

We are born into a global template, with familiar forms and experiences, but no mitzvah, no Shabbos, no experience is really ever the same for any two people. It's really up to each one of us to “flavor” and give meaning to our daily life experiences. (Think Ground Hogs Day with Bill Murray)

II. Manna and Challah - Its Appearance on Our Shabbos Table

SOURCE 6: Torah Book of Exodus 16:13-14

In the evening quail appeared and covered the camp; in the morning **there was a layer of dew** about the camp. When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

וַיְהִי בָעֶרֶב וַתֵּעַל הַשָּׁלוּ וַתִּכַּס אֶת־הַמַּחֲנֶה
וּבִבְקֹר הַיְּתֵה שִׁכְבַּת הַטֵּל סָבִיב לַמַּחֲנֶה:
תֵּעַל שִׁכְבַּת הַטֵּל וְהָנָה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמִּדְבָּר דֶּק
מַחֲסָפֹס דֶּק כְּכֹפֶר עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

This verse refers to the falling of the manna from heaven, and the layer of dew that covered it. Take a look at Rashi's commentary below:

SOURCE 6A: Rashi's Commentary on Exodus 16:13 "there was a layer of dew"

There Was a Layer of Dew — Consequently the **dew was lying upon the Manna**. In another passage, however, it says, (Numbers 11:9) "And when the dew came down [upon the camp at night, the manna fell upon it]" and **so there was dew under the Manna!** Thus, we see that the dew fell upon the ground and the Manna fell upon it, and then dew fell again upon it, and so it was as though it were carefully packed in a chest (Yoma 75).

הִיתָה שִׁכְבַּת הַטֵּל. הַטֵּל שֹׁכֵב
עַל הָמֶן, וּבְמָקוֹם אֲחֵר הוּא
אוֹמֵר (בַּמִּדְבָּר י"א) "וַיִּבְרָדָת
הַטֵּל וְגו'", הַטֵּל יוֹרֵד עַל הָאָרֶץ,
וְהָמֶן יוֹרֵד עָלָיו, וְחוֹזֵר וַיִּוֹרֵד טַל
עָלָיו, הֵרִי הוּא כְּמִנְחָה בְּקַפְסָא
(יוֹמָא שָׁם): הִיתָה שִׁכְבַּת הַטֵּל

The Tur, an early halachic authority, explains that this is the basis for our custom to have a tablecloth on our shabbos table, and a covering for the Challah (dew above and below). Our two challahs, "lechem Mishneh" (double breads) recall this beautiful daily gift of Manna in the desert.

Q: What do you think the double layer of dew represents, that we have so carefully maintained this tradition of covering the challos from above and below to this very day?

The Talmud in Yoma addresses the reason for the double layer of dew:

SOURCE 7: Mechilta R. Shimon Bar Yochai and Talmud Yoma 75b

In order that the manna remain clean, a north wind would blow, sweeping the ground, and then rain would wash it. The ground would then be covered with a layer of dew, and the Manna would fall upon it, after which the Manna was covered with another layer of dew **as if it were packaged in a box**. (Mechilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai 16:14 and Talmud, Yoma 75b.)

In presenting the Manna to the Jewish People God carefully washed the ground upon which it fell and wrapped it in a beautiful, pure gift box of dew; Not just on day one, but every day for the next 40 years; A care package from our Creator with love!

Q: By the way, anyone know the blessing that the Jews would say on the Manna?

Baruch ata hashem elokenu melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min hashamiam!

That's right! Blessed are you Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the heavens!

A daily kiss from our God for 40 years in the desert. This is what we should be thinking about as we spread the white tablecloth for Shabbos and wrap our two golden challos in its cover.