

## 5785 - Exodus 13-17 - Beshalach (When he let them go)

### THE MANNA EATERS<sup>1</sup>

*Behold, I will rain down to you bread from heaven* (Exodus 16:4).

*The Torah was given to be expounded only to the eaters of the manna* (Midrash Mechilta, Beshalach 17).

Whenever the sublime is brought down to earth, it seems to lose something in the translation. Somehow, when theory comes into practice, or when great inspiration is applied to everyday life, the result is less pure than the original.

But then there is the manna.

The manna was the "bread from heaven" that sustained us in our first generation as a nation, as we traversed the Sinai desert and acquired the wisdom of Torah. Indeed, our sages have said that "the Torah was given to be expounded only to the eaters of the manna."

What is the meaning of this statement? While the Torah relates that Moses and Aaron preserved a jar of manna for posterity (Exo 16:33-34), the heavenly bread has not been part of our actual diet for more than 3,000 years. Does this mean that post-manna generations are incapable of expounding the Torah? Or **is there some way that we, today, can also be manna eaters?**

### FLAWLESS DIGESTION

The Torah describes the manna as the perfect food. Each individual's daily portion was exactly what he or she needed—not a morsel less or more. In addition, the manna encapsulated a person's nutritional needs so concisely that there was no waste—the body's limbs and organs absorbed and utilized it in a complete and optimum manner (Exo 16:18).<sup>(2)</sup>

Food is a prime example of the "waste" that accompanies the transition from spirit to substance. In one of the profound wonders of nature, the Creator has imbued physical foodstuffs with the power to sustain life. But because these vitalizing energies have been incarnated within physical bread and meat, and reach the body via the physical process of digestion, the transformation is not perfect. Although food is the material embodiment of a spiritual life-force, it is not a perfect embodiment; its coarser elements are nutritionally useless and are rejected by the body.

There is bread for the body, and there is bread for the soul. The book of Proverbs, calling upon us to nourish our lives with the divine wisdom of Torah, enjoins: "Come, partake of My bread" (Prov 9:5). The soul, too, has its nutritional needs, requiring a diet of wisdom, knowledge, and in-

spiration to sustain, develop, and vitalize its spiritual vision and endeavors. As is the case with the body, the soul becomes what it eats, metabolizing the stimuli it ingests and digests to make it the very substance of its being.

It might be argued that when the lofty concepts of Torah are brought down to earth and applied to our everyday existence, a certain degree of "waste" is inevitable; that certain aspects of the Torah's message and medium will prove archaic and superfluous in the course of the digestive process, as is the fate of every attempted translation from the spiritual to the material. Comes the manna to teach us: this is only true of "bread from the earth" of human attempts to apply the sublime to the pedestrian. But the Torah is divine "bread from heaven"—a perfect, utterly efficient embodiment of the divine wisdom and will.

License to interpret the Torah is thus granted only to "the eaters of the manna"—to those who appreciate that there is no waste or selectivity in the Torah's timeless application to the human experience; that the Torah is perfect food for life, to be flawlessly "digested" **by every age and culture**; that it permeates and vitalizes every limb and organ of the universe, yet is never coarsened or compromised by its application to the nitty-gritty of physical life.

(2) Rashi on Numbers 21:5.

1. *The manna was the "bread from heaven" that sustained us in our first generation as a nation, as we traversed the Sinai desert and acquired the wisdom of Torah.*

#### a. Exodus 16:31-36

<sup>31</sup>The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. <sup>32</sup>Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Take an omer<sup>2</sup> of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.'"

<sup>33</sup>So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it ... <sup>34</sup>As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. <sup>35</sup>**The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.** <sup>36</sup>(An omer is one-tenth of an ephah.)

1) Manna was the basic food of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. It occurred along with the miraculous provision of

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2 In traditional Jewish standards of measurement, the *omer* was equivalent to the volume of 43.2 chicken's eggs, or what is also known as one-tenth of an *ephah* (three *seahs*). In dry weight, the *omer* weighed between 1.56–1.77 kg (3.4–3.9 lb), being the quantity of flour required to separate therefrom the dough offering.

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1 Yanki Tauber, *The Inside Story, Exodus*, (Meaningful Life Center), pp. 137-139.

water and quail, The English spelling "manna" is derived from the LXX. In Exo 16:14 the LXX reads "*man*" but elsewhere "manna."

Although manna played a crucial role in the life of the Israelites, the word appears only fourteen times in the (Tanach), all but four of them occurring in Exo 16, Num 11, and Deu 8. Manna is called **the "bread" from God** (Exo 16:15), **"food" from heaven** (Psa 78:24 [ASV]), and "angel's food" (Psa 78:25). The translation "angel's food," while picturesque, is not accurate. The ASV **"bread of the mighty"** is preferable ... "Mighty" or "strong" is more usual, and fits the parallel structure of the Psalm better ... (TWOT)

2. *The Torah describes the manna as the perfect food. Each individual's daily portion was exactly what he or she needed-not a morsel less or more ... the manna encapsulated a person's nutritional needs so concisely that there was no waste.*

a. Exodus 16:9-21

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'" <sup>10</sup>While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. <sup>11</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>12</sup>"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and **in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.**"

<sup>13</sup>That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, **"It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.** <sup>16</sup>This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need'" ... <sup>17</sup>The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little ... <sup>18</sup>**the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.** <sup>19</sup>Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." <sup>20</sup>However, **some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning,** but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup>Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away.

b. John 6:25-69

<sup>25</sup>When the (crowd) found him (in Capernaum) ... they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" <sup>26</sup>Yeshua answered, "Very truly I tell

you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed **but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.** <sup>27</sup>Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." <sup>28</sup>Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" <sup>29</sup>Yeshua answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." <sup>30</sup>So they asked him, **"What sign then will you give** that we may see it and believe you? **What will you do?"** <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (**Exo 16:4; Psa 78:24**). <sup>32</sup>Yeshua said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>**For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**" <sup>34</sup>"Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

<sup>35</sup>Then Yeshua declared, **"I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup>But as I told you, **you have seen me and still you do not believe ...**

<sup>41</sup>At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup>They said, "Is this not Yeshua, **the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?** How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'" <sup>43</sup>"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Yeshua answered. <sup>44</sup>"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and **I will raise them up at the last day.** <sup>45</sup>It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God' (Isa 54:13). Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup>No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup>But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup>**I am the living bread that came down from heaven.** Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

<sup>52</sup>Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup>Yeshua said to them, "Very truly I tell you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,** you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup>Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup>For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

<sup>56</sup>Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup>Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the

Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup>**He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.**

<sup>60</sup>On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" <sup>61</sup>Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Yeshua said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup>The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Yeshua had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup>He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

<sup>66</sup>From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. <sup>67</sup>"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Yeshua asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

1) <sup>30</sup>*So they asked him, "What sign then will you give ... ? What will you do?"*

a) What about the fact that he just fed "5,000 men, not including women and children" with "five small barely loaves and two small fish" (John 6:9)?

2) <sup>53</sup>*Yeshua said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

a) Matthew 18:7-9 (Mat 5:29-30; Mark 9:43-47)

<sup>7</sup>Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! <sup>8</sup>**If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off** and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. <sup>9</sup>And **if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out** and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

b) Matthew 26:26-29 (Mark 14:22-16; Luke 22:17-20)

<sup>26</sup>While they were eating (the Passover meal), **Yeshua took bread (i.e., the afikomen)**, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; **this is my body.**" <sup>27</sup>Then **he took (the) cup**, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of

you. <sup>28</sup>**This is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

c. Revelation 2:12-17

<sup>12</sup>"To the angel of the *k'hilah* in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. <sup>13</sup>I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city ...

<sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup>Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup>Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the *k'hilot*. **To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna.** I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

1) **Hidden manna.** The biblical data are that God fed Israel in the wilderness with "bread from heaven" (Exo 16:4, 35; Yn 6:31-35), which was called manna (Exo 16:15, 31), and that a pot of it was preserved in the ark of the covenant (Exo 16:32-34, MJ 9:4). The Talmud says that in the third heaven mills grind manna for the righteous" (Chagigah 12b). According to 2Baruch 29:8, in the Messianic Era "the treasury of manna will again descend from on high, and those alive then will eat of it." When the first Temple was destroyed, Jeremiah (2Macc 2:4-8) or an angel (2Baruch 6:5-10) rescued the ark with its pot of manna, and they are being kept for the days of the Messiah, when God's people will again eat manna. Yochanan here uses the language of such traditions to show that believers in him will be admitted to the Messianic Banquet, "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9).<sup>3</sup>

In the ancient world a **white stone** was used as an admission ticket to public festivals; believers will be admitted to the Messianic feast. On it is written either their own new name or that of the Messiah (19:12); this reflects the quantum jump in purity and identification with Yeshua attained by those winning the victory.

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<sup>3</sup> David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary, (Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc.), p. 797.

a) 2Baruch<sup>4</sup> 29:8

<sup>8</sup>And it will happen at that time (in the days when the Messiah comes) that **the treasury of manna will come down again from on high**, and they will eat of it in those years<sup>(b)</sup> because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time.

(h) SibOr 3.746; Ps-Philo 19:10; and b. Hag 12b.

- 2) The exact origin of the Nicolaitans is unclear. Some Bible commentators believe they were a heretical sect who followed the teachings of Nicolas—whose name means “one who conquers the people”—who was possibly one of the deacons of the early (*k’hilah*) mentioned in Acts 6:5. It is possible that Nicolas became an apostate, denying the true faith and became part of a group holding “the doctrine of Balaam,” who taught Israel “to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality” (Rev 2:14). Clement of Alexandria says, “They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.” Their teaching perverted grace and replaced liberty with license.<sup>5</sup>

Other commentators believe that these Nicolaitans were not so called from any man, but from the Greek word *Nicolah*, meaning “let us eat,” as they often encouraged each other to eat things offered to idols. Whichever theory is true, it is certain that the deeds of the Nicolaitans were an abomination to (Messiah). They, like the Gnostics and other false teachers, abused the doctrine of grace and tried to introduce licentiousness (impiety) in its place (2Pet 2:15, 19; Jude 1:4).

3. *There is bread for the body, and there is bread for the soul. The book of Proverbs, calling upon us to nourish our lives with the divine wisdom of Torah, enjoins: “Come, partake of My bread” (Prov 9:5). The soul, too, has its nutritional needs, requiring a diet of wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration to sustain, develop, and vitalize its spiritual vision and endeavors. As is the case with the body, the soul becomes what it eats, metabolizing the stimuli it ingests and digests to make it the very substance of its being.*

- a. As we begin the new Torah cycle, let’s take a moment to contemplate the deeper purpose of Torah. Some may refer to the Torah as a history book; others may think of it as a book of law or a source of Jewish wisdom. While these are all true, they only scratch the surface of the Torah’s true nature. Torah is not simply a guide to

living a life of truth within this world; it is the blueprint and DNA of the world itself. Our physical world is a projection and emanation of the deep spiritual reality described in the Torah. This is the meaning behind the famous *Midrash*, “*Istakel b’Oraisa u’bara alma*—[Hashem] looked into the Torah and used it to create the world” (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:1). **Torah is the spiritual root of existence; the physical world is its expression.**<sup>6</sup>

- b. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (cf., Deu 11:18-25)

<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup>**Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** <sup>8</sup>Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup>Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

- c. Psalm 112:1

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD. Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands.

- d. Psalm 119:11, 14, 24, 47, 70, 77, 92-93, 174

<sup>11</sup>I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

<sup>14</sup>I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

<sup>24</sup>Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

<sup>47</sup>For I delight in your commands because I love them.

<sup>70</sup>Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law.

<sup>77</sup>Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.

<sup>92</sup>If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. <sup>93</sup>I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.

<sup>174</sup>I long for your salvation, LORD, and your law gives me delight.

- e. James 1:22-25

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But whoever looks intently into **the perfect law that gives freedom**, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

4 2Baruch is a Jewish apocryphal text thought to have been written in the late 1st century CE or early 2nd century CE, after the destruction of the Temple in CE 70.

5 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Nicolaitans.html>

6 <https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/jewish-columns/rabbi-shmuel-reichman/the-deeper-purpose-of-torah-wisdom-3/2024/10/22/>