

He afflicted you and let you hunger, then he fed you the manna that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know. (8:3)

Moshe recounts the trials and tribulations of *Klal Yisrael's* sojourn in the desert, as well as the effects it produced. Hashem had tested them, but it was for a specific purpose. As the *Ramban* explains, at times a father must chastize his son in order to prepare him for the future. It was better to endure the hardships of the wilderness, so that they would more freely appreciate the riches and the beauty of *Eretz Yisrael*. The commentators address the "affliction" and "hunger" which Moshe mentions. Moshe is referring to the Heavenly food, the manna, which *Chazal* in the *Talmud Yoma* 75 say was the food of the angels. They ate manna during their forty-year trek in the wilderness; in the manna, they perceived the taste of every food. Why would the *Torah* regard eating manna as a test?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, cites the *pasuk* in *Bamidbar* 21:5, in which *Klal Yisrael* critiqued the food/manna they were "forced" to eat. They said, "*Our soul is disgusted with the lechem ha'klokel, insubstantial food.*" We note that as this was declared at the end of the fortieth year in the wilderness, the individuals who were issuing this complaint were the new generation, those about to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. These people had been born in the desert. They were not the people who left Egypt during the Exodus. What was their problem with the manna?

Their description of the manna, *lechem ha'klokel*, is noteworthy. *Ibn Ezra* says that the word "*ha'klokel*" is derived from the word "*kal*," which means light or easy. The generation that suffered in Egypt, that was subordinated to Pharaoh's cruel and merciless bondage, yearned for the day when they would obtain their food *b'derech kal*, through an easy, simple manner. They hoped for a *neis*, miracle, for a miraculous deliverance, when their food would be dropped down from Heaven. They valued the miracle of the manna. They understood only too well the difficulty of *avodas perach*, crushing labor. Yes, they appreciated the value of the Heavenly food.

The second generation, those who had not been in Egypt, who had never really suffered, who were raised on manna in the desert, had a different perspective. They had no need for Heavenly food. They did not and could not appreciate a food that was literally delivered to their door, that had in it every taste known to man. They did not want a gift; they wanted to work for their bread. They wanted to earn their bread; they sought no favors. "*By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread*" (*Bereishis* 3:18). The curse of *Adam Ha'Rishon* was a blessing for them! They wanted to sweat for their bread. Working constituted a *mitzvah*. Moshe understood this generation's dissatisfaction with the manna. They remained hungry after eating manna because it was not their bread, which they had earned. They could not assimilate its wonderful attributes into their being, because it was not what they viewed as their type of sustenance. True, they were afflicted, and they were tested - but they had brought it upon themselves.