

It shall be a keepsake for your generations, so that they will see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness. (16:32)

Throughout the entirety of the human experience on this earth, phenomenon is remotely comparable to the *manna*. Hashem fed an entire nation for forty years in a wilderness that provided no hope of sustenance. We did receive the *slav*, quail, from Hashem, but, when one peruses the narrative, it seems that the quail was not a basic necessity for survival. The *manna* was the Jew's staple.

Hashem commands us to pattern our lives after those who ate the *manna*, the *ochlei mann*. Furthermore, Moshe *Rabbeinu* instructed Aharon *HaKohen* to place the *tzintzenes ha'mann*, a jar of *manna*, before the Testimony, *Luchos*, in the *Kodesh Ha'Kedoshim*, Holy of Holies, as a keepsake for generations. This was so that later in time, during the generation of Yirmiyahu *Ha'Navi*, it would be shown to *Klal Yisrael* as a lesson to demonstrate the level of *bitachon*, trust, in the Almighty that was evinced by the Nation then, and what was expected of the Nation today – and for all time.

The *manna* experience defined *Klal Yisrael* as the nation of the Torah. It was a prerequisite for *Kabbalas haTorah*, the receiving of the Torah. If we could not pass the litmus test of the *manna*, then we were not yet ready to accept and cherish the Torah. Why is this? How did the *manna* experience refine us to prepare us for *Kabbolas haTorah*?

Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl, explains that one of the primary messages of the *manna* is *bitachon*, trust in Hashem. We must be confident in our belief that Hashem will provide and care for our needs. Without this sense of trust, we are lacking in our ability to receive the Torah and make it our guide for life. Indeed, this is how we survived in the wilderness. Every morning, our ancestors went out in search of their sustenance. When they retired at night, nothing was left: no food, no snacks, absolutely nothing. The *manna* did not fall by the door of their tents. They had to go out with their pots and collect it. It was a nice walk, roughly twelve kilometers, a significant distance. The Jew who did not endeavor went hungry. This was his *hishtadlus*, endeavoring.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* contends that this relationship between *hishtadlus* and *parnassah* was to continue even after the *manna* ceased to descend from Heaven. The Jews would quickly realize that the bread they would eat/the sustenance from which they would survive, might appear to be the by-product of the earth from which it grows (actually the wheat from which it is made), but wheat/bread does not grow on its own. Hashem makes it grow, but man must plow, sow, weed, pray for rain and harvest the crop. Trusting that Hashem is the only Source of sustenance is the primary lesson of the *manna*. The *hishtadlus* we expend is a vital part of our *bitachon*. This principle has guided us throughout the generations. We do not sit back and expect it to “just happen.” We are *mishtadel*, endeavor, each individual in his own unique manner. *Tefillah*, prayer, is a critical component of *hishtadlus*. Prayer transforms an activity into *hishtadlus*. It is the power

source for the *hishtadlus*. Seeds do not grow simply because they are placed into the ground. Hashem allows them to grow. We must pray to Him to activate this process.

Without *bitachon*, we struggle to maintain our commitment to Hashem during difficult times. Imagine locking down one's field for an entire year during the *Shemittah*, seventh year, when all land is to lie fallow (in *Eretz Yisrael*). Three times a year, we went up to Yerushalayim on a pilgrimage to the *Bais HaMikdash*. During this time, we brought *maaser*, tithe, *Bikurim*, first fruits, and fulfilled many *mitzvos*. We spent and spent, but Who took care of our fields, our families? Hashem. This is *bitachon*. This is how a Jew lives and survives.

As I write this, I read the *pasuk* again and noted the word, *ha'echalti*, I fed. Hashem did not just provide, He fed us. This is how we should view our daily sustenance: Hashem is feeding us, just like our mothers did when we were infants. We are unable to eat on our own. We must be fed. Hashem feeds us. So, when we pick up a piece of bread, cake, any form of food, the *brachah*, blessing, that we recite is a critical part of the eating dynamic. We bless Hashem Who is now about to feed us. Think about that.