

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. (11:8)

Three expressions in the text address the “delivery” of the *manna*. In *Sefer Bamidbar* (11:9), “When the dew descended upon the lamp at night, the *manna* would descend upon it.” In *Sefer Shemos* (16:4), “The people went out to collect it.” Last (*Bamidbar* 11:8), “The people would stroll and gather it.” We derive from here that, for some, it descended at their front door. Others were compelled to leave the camp and gather it. Last, were those who had to stroll far out of the environs of the camp in order to gather their daily portions.

Likewise, we find three descriptions of the *manna*: bread – ready to eat; cakes, which required baking; ground or pound and cook it – which required preparation prior to cooking. The commentators explain that the recipients of the *manna* (being that it was Heavenly bread) received their portion through varied degrees of effort. What they received -- whether it was “ready-to-eat” or required preparation -- also varied. They explain that it was all based upon one’s spiritual proximity vis-à-vis Hashem. Was the individual righteous or wicked, or perhaps he was a *beinoni*, intermediate, somewhere in between, not righteous and not evil, average.

The *tzaddikim*, righteous Jews, received their *manna* at their doorstep, ready-to-eat; it required effort neither in gathering it, nor in preparing it. The *beinoni*, average/intermediate Jew, was forced to include *manna* gathering in his “morning exercise,” which required that he walk from his tent to the outer perimeter of the camp, and, even then, what he received required baking. It was not yet ready to eat. Last were the *reshaim*, wicked ones, who still had to eat. They went for a morning stroll, or power walk, because their *manna* was far beyond the camp’s perimeter. Furthermore, their portion necessitated pounding or grinding prior to cooking it. Nothing came easy for the *reshaim*, nor should it have.

The *Zohar HaKadosh* explains that the “*reshaim*, “wicked ones,” were actually all observant Jews. Their failing was in their level of conviction. They lacked the requisite *emunah*, faith, the *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem’s ability to provide for their material and physical needs.

In a well-published lecture, *Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, underscored the importance of trusting Hashem to provide our needs, and, concomitantly, the futility of thinking that without *emunah* and *bitachon*, one can achieve any measure of enduring success. He related the story of Chaim, who thought himself to be the stellar public servant, who would daily don his civil service uniform, and, with extreme dedication, leave to carry out his position directing traffic at Yerushalayim’s busy city center. He carried a large baton and a shiny whistle with him and he would go to work with this mission – “to serve and protect” -- upper most on his mind. He did not simply make sure that traffic moved smoothly. It was his life’s mission, his *raison d’etre*, his life. Neither rain nor sleet, frigid cold or brutal heat, deterred him from executing his function. He stood proudly all day in the

center of the intersection: hands up to stop the cars; and, when he was ready for them to move, he vigorously waved his hands for them to move onward. Chaim's determination and commitment were matched by his engaging smile. He was such a "great guy," the perfect civil servant.

Chaim did not work alone. It would have been too much. He had a partner from day one. His partner was, likewise, very dedicated; he had never missed a day of work, he was always on time, and he did not ever take a lunch break. Chaim's partner was a traffic light. When Chaim's wife asked him one day why he ran to work and worked so hard, he said, "The light does its job, and I do mine." This is the meaning of *hishtadlus*, endeavoring.

One day, Chaim's anxiety got to him, and his heart, which had heretofore been the repository of all of his emotions, gave out under all the stress. Chaim was rushed by ambulance to the emergency room, where he was immediately connected to a monitor, and his heart stabilized. Chaim was in a panic. Who would watch and direct the traffic? Who would protect the drivers from an accident? The more anxious Chaim became, the lower his chances were for recovery.

One of the visitors to the emergency room attempted to allay his fears: "I know the intersection well. There is an excellent traffic light there. You have nothing to worry about." Chaim's wife peeked in, "Do you think that a traffic light can take the place of my husband? If that were to be the case, why has Chaim been working so hard all of these years?"

Rav Sholom employs this story to remind us that in many ways we too are "Chaim." We work insane hours, expending much physical and emotional energy just to remain in the rat race. We rush through *davening* (for those who bother to attend); pay mere lip service to what we are saying to Hashem; go through the day doing everything we can - earn the mighty, elusive dollar. We come home at the end of the day, tired, miserable, no significant time to spend with our families. Our wives and children suffer. Our Torah learning suffers, because who has the strength and the mental stamina to apply himself to a *blatt Gemora*? We convince ourselves that we must do this now, so that later in life we will put up our feet, relax and learn and *daven* and be a father and a husband - a normal, sociable person.

Where did we go so wrong? How are we like Chaim and his loving wife? We think that we are the ones who generate our material success. We are as wrong as Chaim. The cars stop and go commensurate with the traffic light's signal. We succeed or fail based upon the *ratzon Hashem*, will of G-d. We should keep this in mind when we quickly pay our (lip service) respects in the morning on our way to work, when we have no time to learn or do all the spiritual endeavors expected of us. When we align our priorities with those of Hashem, we can hope for true success.