

A Taste of Torah

Eat, Drink, & Be Holy

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

I've often wondered what the exact intent is when a particular food is described as "heavenly". Heavenly cheesecake, heavenly ice cream, I even saw a recipe for heavenly halibut. (For some reason, chocolate is always "sinful". Go figure.) Food, as a rule, tends to be a most physical experience, yet is described in a most spiritual term.

While you're thinking about that, let me tell you about the genuine heavenly food discussed in this week's parsha. That's right, I'm referring to the man, the manna, that descended from heaven on a daily basis (except for Shabbos and holidays), and which sustained the Jewish People during their forty-year sojourn in the desert. And while the man undoubtedly was heavenly, one does wonder why it was necessary for G-d to send them such victuals. Wouldn't it have been more natural for G-d to miraculously provide them with wheat in the desert? Maybe stick a few farmers' markets in strategic locations? Why food from heaven?

Our Sages tell us that the Torah could only be given to those who ate the man. No man, no Torah. What's the connection, you ask? Let me share a thought from the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905).

Everything we have in this world is G-d given, including the food we eat. That being the case, one may wonder why we bother eating food; let us receive the nourishment directly from heaven! The answer is that because we are physical beings, we cannot absorb nourishment coming straight from heaven, as it is far too spiritual; it must grow from, or be sustained by, the earth, the epitome of the physical world, in order for us to utilize it. However, if a

person were to reach an exalted spiritual state, it would then be possible for him to eat food in its original, heavenly state. This condition was achieved by the Jewish People in the desert. And it had to be achieved. After all, if they were to be given the Torah, they needed to rise above their physical nature as much as possible to be able to connect with such potent spiritual power. Thus, their ability to be sustained by man - food free of physicality - attested to the fact that they had attained great heights, and the consumption of such ethereal sustenance further refined them and brought them to the level of sanctity needed to receive the Torah.

In today's world, food from heaven seems like the stuff of fantasy, but it is certainly worthwhile to contemplate what food is really all about. Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1947-2001) would speak about the opportunity of connecting to Hashem through eating, for it is He Who is providing us with our needs. If we would realize that although our food comes from the physical world, its power to nourish and provide enjoyment is a G-d given gift, our appreciation of His kindness would be greatly magnified. This is a major aspect of the blessing we make both prior to and after eating; it is the acknowledgement that G-d is the One who provides. If we put in the effort, our food can become truly heavenly, as we recognize that all our food, be it angel food cake or deviled eggs, is a kindness bestowed upon us by our Father in heaven.

Stories For The Soul

A Miraculous Payback

One night, Yoav, an IDF soldier in Chevron, was shot by an Arab sniper and left for dead. It was 4 a.m., and no one was awake to rush to his aid.

One soldier, however, did hear something. He went to investigate and found Yoav bleeding to death. He did what he could to stabilize the wound until an ambulance arrived. The doctors later told Yoav's parents that had it not been for that soldier, Yoav would not have survived.

Yoav's parents contacted the army to find out the name of the soldier so they could thank him, but his name had not been recorded in the incident report. They owned a small grocery store in Kiryat Malachi, so they put up a poster in their store, describing the miracle and asking if anyone knew the identity of Yoav's savior.

A year passed. One day a woman walked into the store and saw the sign. She was positive that her son Doron had mentioned such an account. She took out her cell phone and called him. Sure enough, it was he who had saved Yoav's life.

"You don't remember me," Doron's mother told Yoav's parents, "but twenty years ago, I was standing in your store feeling lost. You noticed and asked what was the matter. I explained that I was pregnant and overwhelmed. You both stopped everything and offered me encouragement and support. Because of you, I chose to keep my baby.

"I no longer live around here, but I was passing through and figured it would be nice to visit your store and thank you. My beloved Doron, who

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Kollel Happenings

TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Schachne Sommers for "Trust Thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concept of bitachon/trust in G-d. The class takes place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m. at Aish. For info email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.



KOLLEL'S 15TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION FEB. 26TH

The Kollel will be celebrating fifteen years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry on Tuesday, February 26th, at 6:30 pm, at the newly-renovated McNichols Building, 144 W. Colfax Ave. (corner of Colfax & Bannock). Tribute journal in honor of Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, who will be present at the event to receive an award. Ad deadline: Feb. 8th. Ads for Rabbi Amsel, as well as other Kollel personnel, can be emailed to journal@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855. To reserve, visit www.denverkollel.org or contact 303-820-2855.



A DEEPER LOOK

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issues, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights 7:40-8:30 pm at the Kollel, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at Aish Denver 8-9 pm.

Interpersonal Issues

If the Item Isn't Claimed

There is an alternative to putting away the unclaimed item: First, the finder should first determine its market value. Since this can be difficult, it is best to ascertain its value as new. If there is no set value, three people who are familiar with the value of such items should appraise the item. The finder should then record the value along with

all pertinent information regarding the case, such as date, time, and place the item was found. He may then do with the item as he sees fit. Whenever he discovers the owner, he will reimburse him.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi Shakesprayer

Burt Falkenstein wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why is it when we pray to Hashem, many people "shuckle" back and forth while others do not? Isn't it disrespectful to sway back and forth when we are "talking" in our own way to Hashem? Thanks.

Dear Burt Falkenstein,

'Shuckling' - swaying back and forth during prayer and Torah study - is a legitimate custom. Several reasons are offered for this custom:

The soul is akin to a flame. Just as a flame always flickers and strives upward, so too the soul is never still, constantly moving and striving to reach upward towards Hashem.

Shaking allows you to pray with your whole body, as King David said "Let all my bones exclaim, 'Hashem, who is like You!'"

When we stand before Hashem in prayer, we tremble in awe of the King of Kings.

A valid alternative to shuckling is to stand completely still, like a soldier

standing at attention in front of the king.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zatzal, one of the foremost halachic authorities of our generation, was known to stand stock still during the silent prayer. He explained that, while living in Russia, he was once arrested for teaching Torah. One form of torture he experienced during his imprisonment was being forced to stand completely still facing a wall. The threat was that if he were to move he would be shot. It was on one of these occasions that Rabbi Feinstein was struck with the realization that if he could stand with such intense concentration for the sake of his captors, then he should afford at least the same respect when standing in front of Hashem.

Deciding whether to 'shuckle' or stand still depends on which one helps you concentrate better. In any case, a person shouldn't move his body or contort his face in any way that will make him look weird.

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Stories for the Soul

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would not have been born were it not for you, grew up to save your son's life."

The Jews in Egypt were faced with near extinction. But they did not give up. They survived - and were witnesses to the greatest miracles in history, the

10 Plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the Torah. And those miracles continue until today.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.