



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Beha'aloscha

May 28, 2021

A Taste of Torah Food Fight

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Imagine that you are made an offer to be supplied with the food you need every day, and that you can choose any food you'd like at any time. However, there are a few items that are unavailable: Fish, cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions and garlic. Would you accept that offer? No need to respond in writing or by email, because I think most people (save for diehard garlic lovers), would respond "Yes!!" in a heartbeat.

Well, the Jewish People lived this reality every day while in the desert. They received a daily portion of *mon* (manna) as their food, and it tasted like any food they desired, with the exception of the above-mentioned items. Rashi explains that these foods were off-limits because a nursing mother is not supposed to eat them, as they end up in her milk and are harmful to the infant.

Instead of being grateful for the *mon*, the Jewish People complained about having to eat nothing but *mon*, saying that they missed being able to eat those particular foods! The apparent ingratitude of the Jewish People is mind-boggling, and demands some sort of explanation. We are not dealing with a bunch of bratty 5 year olds, but with one of the greatest groups of people to ever walk the Earth, a people who witnessed mind-blowing miracles, experienced G-d speaking to them at Sinai, and had all their needs provided for in the desert for forty years. How could such a great nation complain about something so petty? Additionally, it is difficult to understand why the *mon* could not taste like foods that can be harmful when transmitted to an infant via its mother's milk. After all, no one is actually eating these foods; it is merely their flavor that would have been present in the *mon*.

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (1923-1986) explains that the ire of the Jewish People

was not focused on the food they could or couldn't eat. He cites an idea of the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna; 1720-1797) that the Jewish People in the desert existed in a state similar to that of a newborn infant. The process of the Egyptian exile is compared to the development of a child in the mother's womb; the Exodus is the birth of the Jewish Nation. Thus, G-d provided for all the needs of the nascent nation during their desert sojourn as a mother cares for her child and provides for its every need. G-d's bestowal of the *mon* is akin to a mother nursing the child; the child does nothing for its food except to attach itself to its mother. By the same token, the main goal of the Jewish People in the desert was to attach themselves to G-d and allow Him to provide for them.

The problem with this existence is that the child has almost no independent existence. It does not accomplish anything on its own, it does not earn its food, it does not choose how it will live its life. Rather, it is totally dependent upon the mother. The complaint of the Jewish People against the *mon*, explains Rabbi Friedlander, was not so much about what foods they would have preferred. Rather, it was an expression of frustration of their state of total dependence upon Hashem, with no independent existence wherein they could choose their own path, make their own decisions, and accomplish things on their own.

Based on Rabbi Friedlander's approach, a deeper understanding of the *mon*'s lacking of the aforementioned food flavors is now possible. The spiritual state of the Jewish People in the desert is akin to a nursing child. The *mon*, which is described by the Ramban as a spiritual source of sustenance with the barest level of physical existence, is analogous to mother's milk. It is thus logical that foods that should not work their way into a mother's milk must also

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

A Cut Above

Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira of Munkatch (1868-1937), better known as the Minchas Elazar, was travelling on a train, where he saw a man eating a ham sandwich.

The Minchas Elazar exclaimed, "Jew, it is forbidden to eat the meat of a pig!"

The man looked up, bewildered. "I am not Jewish!" he said, and resumed eating.

Moments later, Rabbi Spira again told the fellow, "Please listen to me - you cannot eat this meat!"

The man again insisted he was not Jewish, and tried to eat his sandwich. However, the Minchas Elazar did not back down, and admonished the fellow a third time.

This time, the man turned to the train window and tossed the sandwich out of the train. He then turned back to Rabbi Spira and, crying, asked him, "How did you know I am Jewish?!"

"I watched you eat," replied Rabbi Spira, "and you ate like a Jew. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 170:10) rules that one should not bite off a piece of food and return the remainder to the table, as others will not want to eat it. Rather, one should cut off a piece that he will eat, leaving the rest of the food clean.

"I saw you eating your food in this fashion - cutting off a piece and eating it. I surmised that you must have learned this practice as a child in your home, as your parents likely followed this halacha."

The man, shocked, confirmed that, indeed, he had learned this practice in his parents' home, and, while he had abandoned Torah observance to the point that he was eating blatantly non-kosher food, he maintained this

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE IN A NEWS PUBLICATION AT JUNE 3 T4T ON ZOOM

How does a journalist balance the duty to present important news with the need for privacy, appearance of sensationalism and readership sensitivities? Join Rabbi Hillel Goldberg, PhD, Editor and Publisher of Intermountain Jewish News, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they press forward in mediating this subject at the June 3 T4T. Visit www.denverkollel.org for further details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

A wide variety of Kollel classes and short, inspiring Torah thoughts are now available on many podcast platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music. You can also access the latest podcasts at the Kollel's website, www.denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: How can the need to make a *bracha* change based on whether one is a guest?

Answer: If one is eating a meal and mentally decides he is finished eating, but did not actually do anything (such as washing *mayim acharonim* or declaring "let us recite *Birkas Hamazon*") to show this, there is significant discussion whether a new *bracha* is required if he decides to continue eating (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 179:1). For drinks, all agree that a new *bracha* must be made (*ibid.*); non-meal foods, such as dessert, also require a new blessing (see Bi'ur Halacha 179:1 s.v. *im*).

However, if one is a guest, a regular

mental decision not to eat anymore, or even a declaration of "Let us recite *Birkas Hamazon*" would not necessitate a new blessing should he decide to eat, as he is dependent upon the host (*ibid.*:2). (A firm decision to not eat any more, would necessitate a new *bracha* even for a guest. [Mishna Berura 179:10]). Similarly, once the host declared the meal over, the guest may no longer eat without reciting a new *bracha*. However, if the guest mentally decided, upon hearing the host's declaration, that he still wants to eat, no new blessing is necessary (Mishna Berura *ibid.*:11).

This week's question: How would the amount of food being eaten affect the need for a new *bracha*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part I

One of the more unique personalities among the great Torah leaders to emerge in the last 100-plus years is Rabbi Meir Shapiro. In his short life of 46 years, this dynamic and brilliant

Torah personality accomplished an enormous amount, and the effects of his efforts, particularly the Daf Yomi program, have had a huge impact on Jewish life until this day.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

be absent from the *mon*. It now makes perfect sense why the Jewish People chose this seemingly trivial detail to harp on. It was not the food itself they wanted; they were expressing their unhappiness with their absolute dependence upon Hashem that the lack of these foods manifested!

In truth, there is a constant tension between the two poles of our absolute dependence upon Hashem and the need for a person to have independence, make decisions, and achieve great things through his own efforts. Both aspects are necessary and vital, and the apparent paradox they create

within life goes to the core of existence. Today, we do not merit that *mon* fall from the Heavens, and most people must invest great effort to earn a living, to build relationships, to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, and a myriad of other things that occur throughout life. We should certainly recognize the great things we achieve in life and have a healthy level of self-worth, but we must simultaneously maintain an awareness that without Hashem giving us life and the many tools we require to achieve anything, we are completely helpless.

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

fashion of eating.

In this week's parsha, the Jewish People are taken to task for their demands for meat

and other foods. While eating is certainly an integral part of Jewish life, learning to eat properly is of great importance.

To sponsor Torah Weekly, delivered weekly in print and via email to thousands of Jews worldwide, email info@denverkollel.org
Denver Community Kollel | 1395 Wolff Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855

info@denverkollel.org | www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to info@denverkollel.org