

# The Path To Follow

Eikeiv

504

A Hevrat Pinto Publication

Under the Direction of Rabbi David H. Pinto Shlita

[www.hevratpinto.org](http://www.hevratpinto.org) | [hevratpinto@aol.com](mailto:hevratpinto@aol.com)

Editor-in-Chief: Hanania Soussan

32 rue du Plateau 75019 Paris, France • Tel: +331 48 03 53 89 • Fax: +331 42 06 00 33

Av 20<sup>th</sup>, 5773

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

## The Manna Awakens Faith in Divine Providence

**W**hen the Torah describes the manna that descended for the Children of Israel, it states: "He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the manna that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, but from the mouth of Hashem does man live" (Devarim 8:3).

We need to think about this. The Children of Israel journeyed in the desert for 40 years, and during all that time – every day, morning after morning – Hashem sent them the manna, food described as "the bread of the mighty" (Tehillim 78:25). The manna descended at the entrance of their tents, meaning that all they had to do was to go out and gather what they needed to eat. The manna possessed extraordinary qualities: It was digested entirely by the body, and a person eating it could perceive any flavor that he desired in it, as the Gemara tells us: "Rabbi Abahu said: Just as the infant finds very many flavors in the breast, likewise Israel found many flavors in the manna as long as they were eating it" (Yoma 75a). It was truly spiritual nourishment.

As a result of this spiritual nourishment, the Children of Israel merited, as the Sages say, for "the Torah [to] only [be] given to those who eat the manna." The Ba'al HaTurim points out an allusion in the verse: "He made them eat the manna to make them understand – this teaches us that when they ate the manna, it gave them discernment. It is said in Ezra, 'You gave them the manna to teach them.' This signifies the concept that the Torah was only given to those who eat the manna." In fact the manna, since it was spiritual food, rendered the Children of Israel fit to receive the Torah. Only after eating it did they become worthy of receiving the Torah.

This means that spiritual abundance descended from heaven and took the form of the manna. Spirituality donned physicality, all so that men could be capable of eating it in this world. The Torah was only given to those who ate the manna, for by the constant spiritual abundance that it provided, the manna rendered them fit to receive the Torah.

In that case, why does the verse state that the manna was given "in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, but from the mouth of Hashem does man live"? Was there no other objective in sending them the manna, such as to prepare them for receiving the Torah, and to give them discernment, as the Ba'al HaTurim says? Furthermore, what is the significance of the Torah being given only to those who eat the manna? Have we, who do not eat manna, not received the Torah? Therefore what does it mean that "the Torah was only given to those who eat the manna"?

It seems that everything results from the same thing. When they left Egypt, the Children of Israel were in a difficult spiritual situation, having breached the 49 gates of impurity. Just a little more, and they would have breached the 50th gate. In fact their spiritual situation was so bad that the ministering angels asked the Creator of the universe how the Children of Israel differed from the Egyptians, since "these are idolaters, and those are idolaters." However the Holy One, blessed be He, was aware of and understood their virtues. They were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which is why He chose them from

among all the peoples and wanted to give them the Torah. Since in their present condition – despite having witnessed the ten plagues in Egypt, and despite the fact that they saw the sea split, experienced prophesy, and sang the song by the sea – they were still not worthy of receiving the Torah. He therefore led them for 40 days, and on each of these days they proceeded from a gate of impurity to a gate of purity. Hence they worked to strengthen the principles of Judaism within themselves, the principles of Torah. It was only after 49 days, on Sivan 6, that they became worthy of receiving the Torah. During that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent them an additional gift that would make them fit to receive the Torah, namely the manna. The manna prepared the Children of Israel by infusing them with faith in the Creator of the universe. By eating the manna day after day, the Children of Israel filled themselves with the knowledge that "not by bread alone does man live." That is, we are not our own masters in this world, definitely not, for there exists a Creator, One Who directs all there is. Everyone benefits from individual providence – "from the mouth of Hashem does man live" – and no one lifts a finger on earth without cause. Everything results from the extraordinary providence of the Creator of the universe. This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, infused into the Children of Israel by means of the manna, the bread of heaven, the bread of the mighty, which by its very nature contradicts all the laws of nature. That is, how could something physical be completely absorbed by the human body, being here one minute and gone the next? How could it change taste according to a person's thoughts? If it were physical, it had to be limited to a single taste, and if it were spiritual, how could it possess size and shape?

This occurred solely because the physical is also spiritual by nature, solely because the Holy One, blessed be He, directs the world and is the One Who gives life to all His creatures. He is the One Who, in His goodness, renews each day, continuously, the work of Creation.

The Creator of the universe infused this understanding into the Children of Israel, which is precisely why the Torah was given to those who recognized this truth. This was the special understanding that was given to them by having eaten the manna, for if a person realizes that his entire life depends on G-d's will – if he believes with complete faith that the Creator watches over all of His creations, and that everything happens according to His will – he will then realize that if G-d so desires, he will live, and otherwise.... With that understanding, a person will certainly do the Creator's will as he should, so that He may grant him life. Hence this understanding preceded the giving of the Torah, taking place in a way that was conducive to complete obedience to the Creator of the universe. Furthermore, the point is not that the Torah does not belong to us – to us and to our descendants – just because we did not merit eating the manna. Rather, it is that the giving of the Torah must only come after this incredible realization, a realization that was the privilege of those who ate the manna, namely that "from the mouth of Hashem does man live." In fact man's task is to carry out the Creator's will, for He is the One Who governs the world. Thus a person who acknowledges everything that we have said will stand at the same level as those who ate the manna, and as a result he is worthy of receiving the Torah and studying it. As the Sages have said, a person must acquire the fear of G-d before learning Torah, for "the fear of Hashem is the beginning of wisdom" (Mishlei 1:7).

### For the Land and for the Sustenance

It is written, “You will eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given to you” (Devarim 8:10).

In the Gemara the Sages say, “Where is Birkat Hamazon intimated in the Torah? In the verse: You will eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless – this signifies birkat hazan; Hashem your G-d – this signifies birkat hazimun; for the land – this signifies birkat ha’aretz; the good – this signifies the blessing boneh Yerushalayim; that He has given to you – this signifies hatov vehameitiv” (Berachot 48b). Birkat Hamazon is structured as follows: The first blessing is birkat hazan. The second is birkat ha’aretz. The third is boneh Yerushalayim. The fourth is hatov vehameitiv.

Suppose, for example, that at the end of a large meal which Reuven has given to his guest Shimon, the latter gets up to express his gratitude by saying: “I would like to thank my host for having provided me with a place in his home, and for having given me furniture – a chair and table – as well as clean dishes filled with all sorts of delicacies, with various kinds of food and drink in abundance.” There is no doubt, says the gaon Rabbi Eliezer Bentzion Bruk Zatzal in his book *Hegyonei Mussar*, that his guest will appear to be mocking his host. Why? Because his host did not give him his house, furniture, and cutlery. Everything was there beforehand, meaning that all he received from his host was a meal. Why should this guest be grateful to his host for his house, cutlery, and furniture?

Likewise, we have reason to be surprised at the command that we received in the Torah to thank the Creator in Birkat Hamazon not only for the food that we eat, but also for the good land that Hashem has given to us, as it is written: “You will eat and be satisfied, and you will bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given to you.” Why is the order to thank the Creator for the good land located precisely in the place where we thank Him for the food that we eat? What connection is there between the land and the food?

To answer this surprising question, let us imagine that a man has become lost on a journey, and now finds himself in a desert far from all inhabited places, and with no provisions. Hunger and thirst will cause him great suffering, and the oppressive desert heat and wind will also contribute to his pain. Furthermore, he will not find any shelter or shade to protect him in the desert. Suddenly, an airplane arrives from somewhere and lands nearby, and out of this airplane emerges a house-load of good things: A table, a chair, all kinds of sweets, delicious meals, and fresh drinks. He is told, “Look at everything we’ve brought you. Get up and eat as much as you want. Sit comfortably, relax from your exhausting journey, and enjoy!”

In such a case, will it be sufficient for him, at the end of the meal, to thank his unexpected hosts for the food and drinks which they suddenly placed before him? Or perhaps he should thank them for every single thing which they provided him with: A virtual house on one hand, which he entered for protection from the burning heat and wind, a chair which he sat upon, a table upon which dishes were

placed, as well as the food which they contained, and so on. He will offer thanks for all these things because they were all new to him, having been brought solely for him.

In His goodness, the Holy One, blessed be He, renews each day, continuously, the work of Creation. Each day, all of Creation is new – not ancient, as man is used to conceiving of it. As the author of *Chovot HaLevavot* states, “The fact that you constantly see them [the works of Creation], having grown accustomed to them, should not prevent you from being astonished. The fact that you were aware of them beforehand should not cause you to neglect them simply because you are accustomed to.” A person should perceive the renewal of Creation each day, the laws of nature that G-d infused in it, His servants who carry out His will, and in which the magnitude of His wisdom is reflected, as it is said: “How great are Your works, Hashem! You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is filled with Your possessions” (Tehillim 104:24).

### He Will Never Lack Bread

Every meal that a person has – each time that he introduces food or drink into his body, entirely filled with the wisdom of Hashem and His great kindness and mercy – represents, as we have said, a new creation of the world and everything that it contains, beginning with the earth upon which he lives, continuing with the nourishment that he enjoys, and followed by the Torah and mitzvot that he was ordered to fulfill. He is obligated to give thanks for all these things when he recites Birkat Hamazon. We not only give thanks for the food that enters our bodies, but we must also include all the kindnesses that the Creator has done for us from the day that He brought us out of Egypt to the present time. Hence we must express our gratitude for everything – “for the land and for the sustenance” – according to the formula established by our Sages: “We give thanks to You, Hashem our G-d, for granting as a heritage to our fathers a desirable, good, and spacious land, a covenant and Torah, life and food; for Your taking us out of the land of Egypt and redeeming us from the house of slaves; for Your covenant that You sealed in our flesh; and for Your Torah that You taught us; and for the statutes of Your will, which You made known to us; and for the life and food with which You feed and sustain us.”

Happy is the one who focuses his full attention on reciting Birkat Hamazon, with great concentration and clarity of mind. He merits many things, as our Sages have mentioned in detail. The Zohar affirms that reciting Birkat Hamazon with concentration leads a person to abundance and blessing, adding that “he may be certain that he will never lack bread.”

## Guard Your Tongue

### It's Still Rechilut, Even If...

A rachil (“talebearer”) is one who spreads tales among people, saying: “This is what So-and-so said about you,” “this is what So-and-so did to you” or “this is what I heard So-and-so did or wants to do to you.” Even if this information is not derogatory, even if the person being spoken about would volunteer the information himself, even if the information is true, or even if the intention of the speaker was something completely different, it is still Rechilut.

– Chafetz Chaim

### It is written, “Your garments did not wear out on you” (Devarim 8:4).

In the Midrash, the question is raised as to where the Children of Israel obtained garments in the desert (Shir HaShirim Rabba 4:24). The answer is that the ministering angels clothed them at Mount Sinai. We may then ask if these garments had to be washed, and the answer is that they used to roll themselves in the grass that grew around the well.

In his book *Ir David*, Rabbi David of Lyda Zatzal expresses his astonishment at this, since it has already been said: “Your garments did not wear out upon you,” implying that they did not require washing!

In reality, if a person became impure from a dead body in the desert, his garments did not become impure because they originated from the “ministering angels who clothed them on Mount Sinai.” They were not rendered impure through contact, for they did not originate from the earth, as the Sages say in regards to something that does not grow in the earth or the water.

However if a person became impure due to his own bodily impurities, then his garments had to be washed. Yet how could he wash them, since one who is impure had to dwell outside the camp of Israel and did not have the right to wash, and since the Children of Israel – during the 40 years which they spent in the desert – had a law of excommunication?

This is what prompted the Midrash to say that they rolled themselves in the grass that grew around the well. In fact the Ba’alei HaTosafot say in tractate Moed Katan that although those in mourning do not have the right to wash, they are permitted to clean themselves through a moist intermediary.

### A Different Reason for Thirst

It is written, “Who led you through the great and terrible desert, with serpents and scorpions, and thirst, where there was no water” (Devarim 8:15).

Since “thirst” and “no water” signify the same thing, why does the verse use both terms?

In his book *Torat HaParasha*, Rabbi Aharon Zakai Shlita explains that when a person is thirsty and there is water nearby, he can rest easy, and his thirst will slightly diminish. Yet when he is thirsty and there is no water nearby, his thirst will increase and he will suffer even more.

When the Children of Israel were in the desert, they thirsted for water. However they were also thirsty because they realized that “there no water.” Hence the verse stresses the fact that they also thirsted because “there was no water.”

### How Much More!

It is written, “Remember, do not forget, how you provoked Hashem your G-d in the desert” (Devarim 9:7).

In his *Sefer Charedim*, Rabbi Elazar Azkari Zatzal explains this verse as follows:

If the holy Torah commands us to remember and not forget that our fathers provoked G-d in the desert, then how much more is every Jew obligated to remember and not forget how he himself has provoked G-d since he has been able to understand!

### Showing Compassion

It is written, “You shall love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt” (Devarim 10:19).

From this beautiful mitzvah, we learn to show compassion to one who

finds himself in a city that is completely foreign to him. We must not continue on our way when we find him alone and without help. The Torah commands us to show compassion to anyone who needs help. In doing so, Hashem will have compassion on us and the blessings of Heaven will rest upon our heads.

The verse alludes to the reason for this command by stating, “for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.” It reminds us that we have already experienced this great pain, which all men experience as foreigners in another land. By carefully reminding ourselves of the suffering which this causes – suffering that we have already experienced, and which Hashem in His kindness delivered us from – we will show compassion to all men.

– Sefer HaChinuch

## In the Light of the Parsha

### Distancing Yourself from the “Dust” of Idolatry

It is written, “The carved images of their gods, you shall burn in the fire” (Devarim 7:25).

The Torah goes into great detail on all the prohibitions concerning idolatry and its images. We must not say, “Good, I’ll go and burn their idols, but I’ll take their gold and silver!” The Torah enjoins us: “You shall not desire the silver or gold that is upon them, to take it for yourself, lest you be ensnared by it” (ibid.). This teaches us that if we take it, we will eventually be harmed by it. We must also not say, “I’ll take the silver and gold, but I’ll distribute it to the poor,” or “I’ll distribute it to a yeshiva.” One who does this will eventually go off the track, having begun by desecrating Hashem’s name, for the nations will say: “These Jews didn’t eliminate idols. They simply transformed them to their original state [i.e., silver and gold], which they worship as we worship our idols.”

When we seek excessive money, which is like an idol (see *Iggeret HaKodesh* at the end of Noam Elimelech), and we earn money at a time when we should be learning Torah, Scripture considers it as if we had taken the silver and gold of an idol. How so? For example, if someone has a fixed time for learning Torah every day in the Beit HaMidrash, and a business opportunity presents it – one that he may completely miss if he fails to take immediate action – the Torah tells him: “Do not bring an abomination into your house” (Devarim 7:26). Let this business opportunity pass and do not profit from it, rather than squander a time devoted to learning Torah. Better to lose the life of this world than to lose the life of the World to Come.

We must not say, “I’ll put the money aside for tzeddakah, and I’ll be canceling my Torah learning for the sake of tzeddakah.” Even if this is true, we will have left the Beit HaMidrash for business, not to give tzeddakah. In that case, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: “I have no desire for such money. Since you earned money at a time that you should have been learning Torah, this money stems from theft. It is therefore an abomination, for I consider it as money that stems from idolatry.”

If you ask why this is so serious, the reason is that you have forsaken eternal life. Furthermore, you have forsaken a place that waited for your Torah all day long, all so you could busy yourself with this fleeting life. Because you have done this, it is clear that you serve money, not your Creator.

What will happen to such a person? He will not experience any blessing from this money, just as we do not experience any blessing from something that is an abomination. Even if he thinks of giving this money to the poor, he has no right to change anything from Hashem’s word or from His Torah.

## Observing the Bein Hazemanim

Vacations are in full swing, after the summertime in which bnei Torah were fully immersed in their learning. Everyone left during the Bein Hazemanim to get some air and recharge their batteries, and they return to the benches of the Beit HaMidrash with even more energy and renewed strength.

In the course of our history, it has become the norm for people to leave on vacation. In the past, the zemanim (yeshiva semesters) were slightly different, the atmosphere not being the same as today, and the duration of this time differed. What follows is a description from Rabbi Nathan Neta Hanover (who died during the pogroms of 5408-5409) in his journal Yiven Metzula: This is how learning was organized in Poland. The zeman [semester], during which time youngsters would learn with the Rosh Yeshiva, began with Rosh Chodesh Iyar and lasted until Av 15, and in winter it began with Rosh Chodesh Elul and lasted until Shevat 15. Youngsters were allowed to study wherever they wanted.

Then, after Av 15 or Shevat 15, the Rosh Yeshiva would go with all of his yeshiva students to a large fair – in summer going all the way to the fairs of Zaslow and Yaroslav, and in winter to the fairs of Lvov and Lublin – and there the boys were given permission to study at the yeshiva of their choice.

Since we have mentioned the Lublin fair, one who reads the commentaries of the Maharsha at the end of perek klal gadol will find the following lines:

“From here until the end of the passage, I did not find it useful to write down any new halachic explanations, for at that time I was not learning in yeshiva, finding myself at the Lublin fair.”

In Worms, on the other hand, students relaxed within the walls of the Beit HaMidrash. In-depth learning, with intensity and through pilpul, gave way to the study of other works that were less conceptual, such as the books of Nach and the Midrashim.

What follows is an account from Rabbi Yosefa Shamash, who describes the customs in the city of Worms and recounts a particularly widespread custom in the city: “During the Bein Hazemanim, we learn the halachah of Masechet Bein Hazemanim, the 24 books [of Nach], and other works that students wish to learn.” This is what the Bein Hazemanim were like in the streets of Worms.

There was a great fear that youngsters would neglect the study of Torah during this time, whether it was long or short. The leaders of the community and the spiritual heads of the generation, who carried the responsibility of the people upon their shoulders, wholeheartedly opposed this threat in every possible way. We find an account of this subject in the book Leket Yosher, written by a student of the author of Terumah HaDeshen. He writes the following:

In the yeshiva of Rabbi Meir Fulda in Vienna, there were a few boys who wanted to go to the local synagogue to attend a circumcision that was scheduled to take place there. When the Rosh Yeshiva heard of it, he admonished them by saying: “What do you want to do at a circumcision? If it’s to say ‘Amen’ to the blessing, go to a shochet, listen to a few of his blessings, and say ‘Amen.’”

In the famous Ashkenaz community of Altona, Hamburg, and Vedsbeck, the following edict was enacted from the directors of the Talmud Torah: “Given that the sin of those who divert young boys from learning cannot be tolerated, and given that several teachers allow their students to be idle – which makes them forget their Torah and leads to other dangers – we must seriously warn them to keep their students occupied throughout the week between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, all day long, and between Yom Kippur and Sukkot for at least half the day. If any teacher, regard-

less of who he is, transgresses this edict, he will face consequences from which he will suffer!”

## The Decree Was Cancelled

About 100 years ago, an inspector from the ministry of education in the province of Warsaw attempted to institute a month of “summer vacation” in Talmudei Torah, just as they do in non-Jewish schools. It was a decree against which the leading men of Torah in Poland waged war. Those who feared Hashem regarded it as a terrible assault upon the very souls of children, for during vacation time they were liable to be drawn by their friends and to the street, and all the spiritual gains which they had made in the Talmud Torah over the past year were liable to be completely lost.

A public fight to annul this decree was not easy, since the maskilim (followers of the “Enlightenment Movement”) held a great deal of power at the time. In fact they were the ones who had advised the authorities to force religious Jews to observe these “vacations,” under the pretext of wanting to ensure the health of Jewish children.

As mentioned in the book Rosh Golat Ariel, the old Rebbe of Ger Zatzal, along with other Torah giants of Poland, courageously attempted to annul this decree. They had to work in the greatest of secrecy, lest news of their work reached the ears of the maskilim, who would have foiled their efforts. Things reached such a point that in a gathering of Rebbes and Rabbis that was held in the winter of 5671, participants treated this decree with the greatest of urgency and tried to annul it by every possible means. At the end of this gathering, they published a declaration in newspapers which seemed to imply that the issue of vacations in Talmudei Torah had not been on their agenda.

In the end, efforts to annul this decree bore fruit. The gaon Rabbi Tzvi Yechezkel Michelson made great progress in dealing with the director general of the minister of education, the government’s representative, so that he would “turn away the sword that was aimed at the heart of the Beit HaMidrash.” In a letter dated Sivan 13, 5671, Rav Michelson was told that he had succeeded in his mission, and that an order had been issued by the director general not to impose, for the present time, a compulsory vacation period within the chederim.

## Your Torah Protected the Country

During the “War of Attrition” (Milchemet Hahatasha) that began in 5728 along the Suez Canal, around the month of Nissan, during the Bein Hazemanim, every day more dead and wounded were added to the battlefield. As a result of the difficult conditions that existed at the time, a certain number of yeshivot recommenced a few days earlier than usual. The gaon Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky Zatzal arrived to give an “opening class” for the summer zeman. After this class, he said: “You don’t know the terror I experienced over the last month...I was trembling for an entire month. Soldiers are stationed at the Suez, and bombs are falling on them. Their lives are in danger, while yeshiva students, whose Torah protects soldiers, left for the Bein Hazemanim! You should know that this fear also prevented me from experiencing the joy of the holiday! I was there, counting the days until the yeshivot returned to their regular learning. My joy was indescribable on the day that learning began once again in some yeshivot.”

Rav Abramsky added, “I know that not all students stopped learning. It’s true that we must return home and help our families prepare for the holidays. It’s a ‘bodily mitzvah’ whose reward is infinite. Many yeshiva students have used every spare moment they had to learn. To them, I would like to repeat the words of the Yerushalmi in Berachot [89:5]: ‘If you see those who have forsaken the study of Torah, but you have strengthened yourself in it, you will merit the reward of them all.’ The boys who studied during Bein Hazemanim, it is their Torah which protected the country, and which continues to protect it. They earn a reward as great as that of everyone who studies put together!”