

WE PAY FOR EVERYTHING

by Rabbi Label Lam

And the Children of Israel called its name "manna". It was (round) like coriander seed, it was white and it tasted like cake fried in honey. (Shemos 16:31)

What was the nature of this magical food manna? The Meor Eynaim writes that all life giving provisions are "Tzimtzumim" contractions of the "Schinah" the Divine Presence and what looks like simple bread to our eyes is really the most profound spiritual stuff clothed in a material veil. The "manna" was in fact angel food with a cover more refined than our bread. Therefore the verse states, "He afflicted you and let you hunger and then He fed you manna that you did not know in order to make you know that not by bread alone man lives, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of HASHEM does man live." (Devarim 8:3)

How can we understand simply this mystical concept of "tzimtzum" contraction which is at the heart of our food? If I were to tell you that I have sunshine on my feet you might think that I am in a poetic mood and I wish to kick up my heels and dance. You might think that I'm being silly. I'm serious! I have sunshine on my feet! How so? 93 million miles away the sun is releasing energy resulting from the residue of hydrogen atoms constantly fusing. A thin slice of that light and heat rushing off the edge of the sun at 186,000 miles per second makes it in minutes to the earth's surface. In an open field someplace are tiny solar panels that harness that energy in a unique and marvelous way. These little pieces of grass through the process of photosynthesis produce chlorophyll. Along comes Elsie the cow and she munches on acres of this grass which is processed within her system to later become the milk which ends up on the Honey-Nut Cheerios our kids love to eat for breakfast. Eventually she is sent to the slaughter house to provide meat for other happy occasions but for efficiency sake her leathery skin is shipped to Florsheim Shoes and therefore, lo and behold I have sunshine on my feet.

And so the child is nourished in the mother's womb through the placenta. The nursing baby has its meal plan. The caring mother serves bite sizes designed to meet the child's capacity to process. This is what King David declared, "You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing!" (Tehillim 145:16) All is ultimately the word of HASHEM, packaged in an attractive and digestible format.

It is told that Rabbi Yisrael Salanter ztl., the father of the Mussar Movement, was sitting in a hotel lobby in France. He was served a glass of water. Afterward the waiter presented him with a bill for an enormous sum, let's say 50 francs. Reb Yisrael asked the waiter if perhaps he had made a mistake

because all he had was a glass of water and not an entire meal. The waiter went on to explain that it was no mistake, "Rabinner, you are not paying for the glass of water alone. No! You are paying also for the magnificent scenery, the beautiful decorations, and the musicians in the background. You are paying for the ambiance!"

Reb Yisrael paid the bill and left a tip and when he went back to his room he wrote to his students in Russia that he now understands why when we drink a glass of water we say, "Shehokol N'hiyah B'dvaro" "That all comes about though His speech!" "We are not blessing for the water alone but rather the world is an expensive hotel and we pay for everything!" DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.