

ACTUAL ANGEL FOOD

by Rabbi Label Lam

And he took cream and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and he placed [them] before them, and he was standing over them under the tree, and they ate. (Breishis 18:8)

Okay, Avraham fed some guests and they ate. What's the big news? As it turns out, we are told, these were not regular men, rather they were angels. Their home address was 1 Heaven Avenue. They don't need to eat. How or why did they eat! The Talmud, Bava Metzia, is troubled by this question and it offers a few approaches.

We learn from the principle that a person should not deviate from the conduct of the place where he is staying. When Moshe went to Heaven he didn't eat bread during that 40 day period because that is not a place of eating, and when these angelic figures were visiting earth, by the house of Avraham and Sara, they were required to and they did eat.

The Talmud then goes on to describe that whatever Avraham did by himself resulted in a direct delivery of that good for the Jewish People in the desert, without agency. Avraham fetched and fed the angels bread and as a reward, the entire nation was supported by Lechem Min HaShemaim, Manna- Bread from Heaven for 40 years.

What is the connection between Avraham's deed, then, and the later generation meriting Manna? Surely Avraham and Sara were involved with continuous acts of kindness. Why is this one singled out? Why does he win the lottery for his children's sake by feeding angels? Was it that Avraham happened to feed angels and therefore because of this single event his children became beneficiaries?

I recently heard an amazing explanation of a well know piece of Talmud. The Gemorah in Brochos detects a seemingly irreconcilable contradiction between two verses, both statements made by King David in Tehillim.

One verse says, as we say in Hallel, "The Heavens are the Heavens of HASHEM, and the earth is given over to man..." In contradistinction, the other verse reads, "To HASHEM is the earth and its fullness..." What's the deal here? Does the earth belong to HASHEM or to man? The Talmud answers, "Here it is before the Brocho and here is after the Brocho!"

The classic explanation is that before a person makes a blessing, it belongs to HASHEM. After he makes a blessing it belongs to him. Just as a person is in a grocery store; the food belongs to the

proprietor until the shopper swipes his credit card, acknowledging the owner and then he can eat conscience free. Noshing in the store prior to that is stealing. Once we admit and recognize the source, that it is HASHEM's, with a blessing, then it's ours.

There is an alternative approach I recently heard that literally turned the world inside out for me. The Talmud is nonspecific about which is which for before and after. Therefore we can understand that before a person makes a Brocho, it is his, an earthy apple, but after he recites a Brocho it is a Heavenly apple. The entire world and its fullness are electrified with the knowledge of HASHEM because of that seemingly banal recital of a blessing. Wow!

I do believe that this notion is reflected in the interchange between the tent of Avraham and Sara and their angelic guests. After eating from Avraham and Sara's kitchen, it became Heavenly bread, lighting up the world, and revolutionizing the universe!

They realized that Heaven finally finds even a small place here on earth, a spiritual oasis in an otherwise lonely and arid wilderness. As a result Heaven was invited to reciprocate to host and feed the children of Avraham and Sara when they were stuck in a physical wasteland, serving us real heavenly bread, **actual angel food**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).