

# THE TWO LOAVES

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Beshalach

### The Two Loaves

The verse in our parashah (16:22), "It happened on the sixth day, they collected lechem mishneh," i.e., a double portion of mahn, is the source of the custom to recite Hamotzi on Shabbat over two loaves of bread. (Tur O.C. 274)

The Gemara (Shabbat 117b) records: "Rav Ashi said, 'I saw Rav Kahana hold two loaves in his hand, but slice only one.' Why did he do this? R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi z"l (the Ba'al Ha'Tanya; 1745-1813) explains that his behavior was based on the above verse, which does not say that Bnei Yisrael ate a double portion at one meal, only that they picked up a double portion. (Shulchan Aruch Harav 274:2)

R' Mendel of Rimanov writes that the two loaves of bread parallel two aspects of Shabbat, which commemorates both Creation and the Exodus. They also parallel the two kinds of enjoyment one can get from food--tangible (touch) and intangible (smell, sight, and taste). These two pairs are related--our connection with the Exodus is "intangible" in that we did not witness the Exodus; we know of it only through tradition. In contrast, Creation is "tangible" in that any thinking person who studies nature will immediately realize that it is too wonderful not to have been created by a Creator. (Menachem Zion)

Some say that lechem mishneh parallels the twin mitzvot of "Shamor" / "Keep the Shabbat" and "Zachor" / "Remember the Shabbat." (Zemirot Shirin Ve'rachshin p.142, quoting Tola'at Yaakov)

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"On that day, Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt, and Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." (14:30)

R' Yosef Yozpa Han Norlingen z"l (1570-1637; Frankfurt, Germany) writes: It is written in Sefer Chareidim that among the ten things that bring about atonement of a person's sins without any suffering is to recite this verse [during prayer] with joy and song, with the same immense joy that it

was recited at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf. Because of this, R' Yosef Yozpa concludes, I myself have the practice to recite the verse with the trop, like one reading the Torah. (Yosef Ometz no.281)

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"I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea. The might and vengeance of G-d was a salvation for me . . ." (15:1-2)

R' Baruch Zvi Moskowitz z"l (post-W/WII rabbi in Budapest, Hungary and Vienna, Austria) interprets: I shall sing to Hashem--although I know He is exalted and does need my praise. Nevertheless, because He was mighty and vengeful on my behalf, therefore I will sing to Him. As a reward for this, He will again be my salvation.

R' Moskowitz adds: The Gemara (Berachot 54b) states, "Four types of people need to give thanks." [This is the source of the blessing known as Birkat Ha'gomeil.] The Gemara does not say, "Four types of people are obligated to give thanks." Rather, R' Moskowitz writes, they need to, for it is the act of giving thanks which opens the "pipes" that carry additional beneficence from G-d to man. (Tenuvot Baruch: Tinyana, Vol. I, introduction, p.10)

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"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My Torah or not'." (16:4)

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: It is well-known that the entire Exodus was meant to repair the sin of Adam. If Adam had not eaten from the Etz Ha'da'at and contaminated his soul, he would have lived forever. Man is a combination of a spiritual, supernatural soul and a material, natural body; as long as man did not sin, his existence was not dependent on nature. The fruit of the Tree, though, was purely natural, with no spiritual content; accordingly, G-d directed Adam not to eat it. When Adam disregarded G-d's command, he subjected himself to the forces of nature, one of which is death.

"Achilah" / "eating" has several meanings in Tanach. Prophecy is called eating, as in the verse (Shmot 24:11), "They gazed at God; they ate and drank." In Mishlei (9:5), Torah study and mitzvah performance are referred to as "bread." This is because, just as physical food--bread, in particular--sustains the body, so Torah and mitzvot sustain the soul. The food Bnei Yisrael ate in the desert was called "mahn" (spelled "mem-nun"). "Mem" equals 40, the number of days Moshe was on Har Sinai, and "nun" equals 50, the number of days between the Exodus and Giving of the Torah. This hints that mahn nourished the soul, enabling it to receive the Torah, which was the purpose of the Exodus.

And, mahn had to be eaten fresh every day to teach that the Torah should be accepted anew, with freshness, every day. All of this was to repair Adam's sin of eating "natural" food. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim)

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"You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling-place that You, Hashem, have made--the Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established. Hashem shall reign for all eternity. Because Pharaoh's cavalry came with his chariots and horse-men into the sea, and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them . . ." (15:17-19)

Rashi z"l to Sukkah 41a derives from our verse ("the Sanctuary . . . that Your hands established") that the future Bet Hamikdash will come down from Heaven already built.

In this light, R' Moshe Alshich z"l (1508-1593; Tzefat, Israel) explains the causal relationship ("Because Pharaoh's cavalry . . .") between the above verses as follows: In the first verse above, Bnei Yisrael requested that the Temple descend from Heaven immediately. However, a prerequisite to that event is that G-d be known throughout the world. That condition has been met, Bnei Yisrael argued, "Because Pharaoh's cavalry came with his chariots and horsemen into the sea and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them." \*They\* all died in the Yam Suf, but Pharaoh himself survived to proclaim G-d's greatness throughout the world! (Torat Moshe) Based on this, writes R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia), we can understand the midrash Eichah Rabbah which states, "If you had merited, you would have read (our verse), 'You will bring them and implant them . . .' Now that you have not merited, you read (Eichah 1:22), 'Let all their wickedness come before You.'" What is the relationship between these verses?

He explains: As noted, the time right after the Exodus would have been a propitious time for the final Bet Hamikdash to descend from Heaven already complete. Why didn't it? Because, soon after, Bnei Yisrael made the Golden Calf.

As a result, based on the above explanation by R' Alshich, we have to await a new opportunity for G-d to be known throughout the world. How will this come about? Through the fulfillment of the verse from Eichah quoted by the midrash: "Let all their wickedness come before You." This is a plea that Hashem take all the hurt done to the Jewish People over the millennia as a personal affront so that, when He takes retribution from our oppressors, it will not be in our honor, but rather a proclamation of His Name. Then, again, we will be ready to see the fulfillment of our verse, "You will bring them [to] the Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established. (Dimat Ha'ashukim p.2)

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## Tu B'Shevat in Halachah and Custom

R' Yechiel Michel Tikochinski z"l (1871-1955; editor for 51 years of an annual calendar documenting the customs of Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim) writes: Tu B'Shevat begins the new year for trees for purposes of terumah and ma'asrot / tithes, and for orlah / the prohibition on eating the fruits of a tree in its first three years. This day is the dividing line for determining whether one separates ma'aser sheni (which is taken in the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the shemittah cycle and eaten in Yerushalayim) or ma'aser ani (which is taken in the third and sixth years of the shemittah cycle and given to the poor). If, before Tu B'Shevat, fruits reached the stage of development where tithing is required, they are considered produce of the old year. But, fruits that reach that stage after Tu B'Shevat are produce of the new year. For fruits, that defining stage is chanatah (approximately, when the blossom appears), except for the etrog, for which the defining stage is picking. One is forbidden to mix fruits of different years when tithing.

R' Tikochinski writes further: In Eretz Yisrael, where these laws apply, Tu B'Shevat is observed as a minor holiday. The Ashkenazim are content to observe the day by eating the fruits of the Land and distributing fruit packages to children. In contrast, R' Tikochinski writes, the Sephardim gather to eat fruit in groups, amidst joy and song. Over every fruit, they recite chapters of Tehilim, poems, and songs that praise the Land and its fruit. The wise men of the Sephardim remain awake on the night of Tu B'Shevat and recite "Tikkunim" which are composed of verses from Torah and Ketuvim, and from the words of our Sages, especially from the Zohar, which relate to the fruits of the Land. They also take pains to eat many types of fruits, both tree fruits and produce of the ground. For kabbalistic reasons, they eat 30 types of fruits. They also honor each other with reciting the blessings over the fruit. (R' Tikochinski adds that the reason for these rituals is that each species of fruit has a different "root" in Heaven and requires a separate "tikkun.") (Ir Ha'kodesh Ve'ha'mikdash, III ch.25)

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