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הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER SHEMOS - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

IN HONOR OF SHEA MOTT'L'S UPCOMING BAR MITZVAH

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Bread From the Heavens

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THE **PENSON FAMILY** EDITON

IN HONOR OF SHEA MOTTL'S UPCOMING BAR MITZVAH

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Address: 5014 16th Avenue, Suite 488, Brooklyn NY 11204

פרשת בשלח

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

Bread From the Heavens

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Part I. Mann From the Heavens

The Stupendous Spectacle

The *mann* is the most unusual story of antiquity; you can search but you won't find anything like it in the history of our people, or *l'havdil* in the annals of the nations. That a nation of millions should be fed every day with *lechem min hashamayim*, food that falls from the sky?! It was something to remember! The Rambam declares the falling of the *mann* to be the most unique miracle of our past. He says that "the greatest of the miracles described in the Torah is the stay of the *Am Yisroel* in the wilderness for forty years with a daily supply of *mann*" (Moreh Nevuchim 3:50).

The stupendous spectacle of a mysterious food falling from the sky and descending upon the camp for forty years was such an outstanding miracle that it never occurred to the falsifiers to even attempt such a claim. None of the prevaricators ever dreamed of concocting such a story – they wouldn't dare.

False Religions and Their Claims

You know, liars have to be very careful. They can't be reckless with their claims, because they want to build a system, a castle in the air, that will last for a little bit at least. And therefore they say things that you can't disprove. הַרְוֹצָה לְשֶׁקֶר יִרְחִיק עֲדוּתוֹ – It's a saying, "If you want to tell lies, make sure tell of far off things."

That's why when 'that man', the one they call the Nazarene, or J.C., when he was asked by the *chachomim*: "Show us miracles," he said, "I don't show miracles to wicked men!" "Wicked men," you know, means people who have *seichel*. This happened once and it happened again. They asked him to prove himself: "Look, your followers are claiming you did miracles." Two harlots and some people who couldn't read or write – those were his witnesses! And so the sages came and said, "Look, such witnesses are not reliable. We're here now – show it to us." So he said, "To wicked people, to a wicked generation, I will vouch safe, I will show no signs."

Because he knew to whom to show signs – to a few gullible people, to the lower element of society who will believe anything. And if you'll ask me about Mohammed?! Mohammed also "produced" many miracles – only that there was nobody around to see them. In his tent, all by himself with nobody to see, that's where he was a great miracle worker!

Miracles for illiterates, and miracles in tents – that's all that the falsifiers would dare claim. But nobody among the nations of the world even try to invent such a story like the *mann*; because the more witnesses you have, the more you have to be careful if you try to put something over on people.

Tasting the Magic

But not only is the *mann* unequaled in the annals of the nations; *l'havdil* it's unequaled in our own history. There never was anything remotely resembling it – the *mann* stands out as the miracle of our history. The *mann* was witnessed not just by a few people and not even *l'havdil* by the seventy *ziknei Yisroel*. It was witnessed by a few million people. And not only they witnessed it but everybody got a sample too. Every man and woman, every boy and girl, approached the *mann* and tasted it.

You know, there's an old Indian trick whereby a conjurer takes a rope and he throws it up and the rope remains stiff. And then he climbs up the rope and disappears at the top; and then he comes down again. It's a famous Indian trick. Only that the magician is very careful that nobody should approach that rope – no sampling allowed.

Sometimes you might go to a performance and they have a magician for an entertainer. So when he wants to show a trick he might take something out of a hat; let's say he takes an apple out of the hat. So it would be a good idea to taste the apple to see if it's a real apple. It could very well be some sleight of hand, or some optical illusion.

But the *mann* was something altogether different – it was a demonstration that was witnessed by millions and it was eaten by them too – they picked it up and put it in their mouths. And it didn't happen once. It happened every day for forty years. וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָכְלוּ אֶת הַמָּן – *For forty years, day after day, the people ate the mann* (Beshalach 16:35).

It Cannot Be Kept Secret

And therefore you can be sure that they became so excited over the *mann* – it was something never to forget. Let's say, suppose you got up tomorrow morning and you looked out into your backyard and you saw a white fluffy frost on the ground – in the summertime.

So you went out and you said, “*Mann?! What's this business?*” *Mann* means, “What is it?” Imagine you wanted to know, so you pick it up. You take it in your hands and it doesn't smell bad, so you decide to taste it. Of course you wouldn't do that, because it needs a *hechsher* on it – you don't know who left it there. But imagine you tasted it and it tastes pretty good: טַעְמוֹ כְּצַפִּיחֵת בְּדֶבֶשׁ – It tasted like a *tzapichis* in *devash*. Whatever a *tzapichis* is we don't know but *tzapichis b'dvash* – it's something dipped in honey. And if you take it inside to your kitchen and you make a *latkeh* out of it, so טַעְמוֹ כְּטַעַם לֶשֶׁךְ הַשְּׂמֹן – it tasted like a pleasant *latkeh*, a sweet pancake.

Now, when you discovered that, you wouldn't keep the secret to yourself. You'd rush into the *shtibel*, or into the *yeshiva*, and you'd tell everybody what happened. Even the janitor you'd tell. Of course they'd think you're crazy, but you'd continue shouting, “Come and see it yourself,” and you wouldn't stop until they followed you.

We Need Mann In Our Heads

Now, a tremendous experience like that, when it happens to a whole nation together, doesn't go away without leaving a lasting effect. The *mann* left an impression that was stamped on the character of our nation forever. You can't have a nation that eats *lechem min hashamayim* for forty years in such a manner and it should just pass by. Oh, no! The *neis* of the *mann* still reverberates among us to this day. And therefore,

we're going to study this subject just a little bit. We won't do justice to the subject at all but at least something we'll try to speak about it.

The first thing is to understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the *mann* not only for that generation. קח צנצנת ... והנח אתו לפני השם. למשמרת לריתכם. They were commanded to put away some of the *mann* in the *Mishkan* as a *mishmeres* for future generations (Beshalach 16:32-33). And not just anywhere in the *Mishkan* – it was placed in the holiest part of the *Mishkan*, right near the *aron* in the *kodesh hakodoshim*. So we see that the *mann* was given as a testimony for all generations so that they should remember this remarkable phenomenon that happened to our people – that food fell from the sky every day for forty years for a nation of millions.

Now, the fact that the *mann* was kept as a testimony demonstrates that Hashem wants us to think about that *neis* – we see that it's a system of the Torah to put the *mann* into our heads; that it's our duty to remember the *mann*. Hashem wants us to think about the *mann* and to talk about it.

Tell All Your Neighbors

Now that's a new idea to most people – to talk about the *mann*?! Yes! We're expected to be aware constantly of the *mann* that our fathers ate in the wilderness. Actually, one of the most important reasons the *mann* fell was so that we should talk about it!

Every day we say it: הודו להשם קראו בשמו הודיעו בעמים עלילותיו – Praise Hashem; proclaim in His name, and make His deeds known among the people. It means that Hashem's miracles are given to us primarily for the purpose so that we should constantly reiterate them in our minds. And not only to think about them, but קראו בשמו – we should speak about them as well. We're expected to speak about the wonders that Hakodosh Boruch Hu did. קראו בשמו means “Call out in His name.” To whom should you call out? Anybody who will listen!

Did you ever stop and speak to your neighbor about how Hashem sent us food every day for forty years? Almost fifteen thousand days of *Mann*! You're embarrassed to talk to your neighbor about it?! So speak about it with your wife! At least to your children you should speak about it! It's so important to speak about how Hakodosh Boruch Hu fed our forefathers for forty years with food from the sky, that you should search out people who are willing to listen.

Reminders of the Mann

Now, we have certain things that are intended as reminders, but it's a pity that we don't utilize them enough. Even those symbols of the *mann* that we do practice become meaningless when they are ignored – we go through the motions but we don't put our minds to think about what we're doing.

Let's say when you come home on Friday night and you see the two *challos* on a white tablecloth, and they're covered also by a white cloth on top. So you should stop and use this glorious opportunity. It's like that for a good reason – it's intended to be a symbol of the *mann*. The *mann* fell between two clean white tablecloths. That's how it fell every day. There was a **שְׁכַבֶּת הַטָּל**, a hoarfrost – it means a layer of frozen dew on the ground, and it was white, white as linen. And on top of the *mann* was another layer of white frost; and the *mann* was in between the two sanitary cloths, and it was preserved nice and fresh.

That's why we put a white cloth above the *challos* and a white table cloth underneath the *challos*. That's the significance but nobody thinks about it – or they rarely do. Why don't you try it next time? Don't just go into the table without thinking about this symbolism – when you come to the Shabbos table and you see the two *challos* that are covered with a cloth, why don't you stop for a few seconds and think about that. Better yet, tell your family about it too. Don't worry if your child laughs at you – say it anyhow. Say it anyhow!

And not only once – every Shabbos you can say it. Don't think that it doesn't go into their heads – even little children who seem to ignore what you're saying, they're human beings, so it goes in. I still remember what was said to me when I was two years old. You'll be surprised; it's not a waste of time at all. Those seeds of *emunah* that you plant in other people's minds are going to remain there and someday they might bear beautiful fruit.

Part II. Bread From the Heavens

Eating Sunshine

The truth is, even on Wednesday – you don't need to wait for Shabbos. When you sit down on a Wednesday morning to eat your breakfast, or your supper Wednesday night, and you see a piece of bread, you should have a picture of the *mann* in our head. Why not? Bread is no less a miracle than the *mann*, absolutely!

How does bread come out of the earth? It's a *neis*. I'll tell you what I think – I think it's *more* of a *neis* than the *mann* that fell in the *midbar*! At least the *mann* came out from the sky! Why *shouldn't* it fall from the sky?! But that wheat should come out of the earth?! Nobody can really explain it. That large stalks of wheat should grow out of dirt?! It's a *neis*!

Nissei nissim! From some earth and some air and a little bit of sunshine, bread is created. How does air become bread? It's a *neis*. Carbon dioxide in the air combines with the sunshine. Sunshine?! Yes, we're eating sunshine when we eat bread. That's what it is. Sunshine mixes with the carbon dioxide, and with some water and chlorophyll – the green part of the plant – and it combines to make starch. That starch is the wheat – that's the bread. That's the *cheilev chitah*, the fat of the wheat.

Eating Air

It comes out of thin air! That's what your bread is – it's carbon dioxide. Because if you take a piece of bread and burn it, it turns black; only the carbon remains. So bread is carbon. Where does carbon come from? The carbon was in the air in the form of carbon dioxide.

And how does it come out of the air? It's a miracle how the wheat plant is capable of extracting the carbon dioxide from the air and depositing the carbon in its cells. After all, carbon dioxide is only three parts in ten thousand in the air. And the plant is standing here sucking the carbon dioxide from the air around it. In a minute, it has exhausted all the carbon dioxide around it and so the plant should die. But no! Hakodosh Boruch Hu made the wind. *אֵי אֶפְשֶׁר לְעוֹלָם בְּלֹא רוּחוֹת* – *Without the winds the world couldn't exist* (Taanis 3b). The wind keeps the air moving. So as the plant exhausts the carbon dioxide from the air around it, the wind pushes some new air into place and now the plant has a new source of carbon dioxide. And the air keeps on moving – *nissei nissim*. It means that when you feel a breeze, that's a reminder that your bread is being made for you.

I don't want to take up the time and tell you how many actual *nissim* there are in the making of food. It's so exciting that you'll think it's exaggerated; you won't even believe me. "It's just a *guzmah*," you'll think. But the truth is that this great wonder of bread is a composite of so many complex miracles that we have to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu not for the one *neis* of bread – we have to thank Him for hundreds and hundreds of *nissim*. Now when we say hundreds, I'm underestimating. Actually you need millions of details cooperating one with the other in order to make the bread. And so, if you can take carbon dioxide from

the atmosphere and create from it bread, it's a miracle that is just as astonishing as when *mann* fell from the sky.

Big Words Explain Nothing

So now the *yetzer hora* will come and whisper in your ear, "Well, it's the process of photosynthesis; the sunlight is used to synthesize the food material from the carbon dioxide and the water. It's just the absorption of nutrients from the earth by the seminal roots and the nodal roots, and so on and so on."

So do you think that if you use big words from the science books to describe the processes, that it makes it any less of a miracle?! Not at all! Studying those processes only makes you even more aware of how many miracles are needed to make the wheat kernel grow. Only that we see bread every day, so our minds become dulled to the great *nissim*.

A Surprise in Canaan

If the *mann* had happened only once, ooh would that have been something! Only because it happened for forty years, so they became accustomed to it and it stopped being a *neis* – they became so habituated that I'm sure many of them forgot that it was a miracle.

Some people were born to the *mann* and they never knew any other food. Imagine a child born in the *midbar*; from the very beginning he saw it come down every day and as far as he was concerned that's how it has to be. You know when he'd be surprised? When he'd walk out of the camp and visit the land of *Midyan* or the land of *Moav* and he would see that the *mann* does not come down, that's when he'd be surprised. "What's wrong with this place? There's no *mann* coming down." You know, when they came to *Eretz Canaan* and they saw food coming out of the ground, to them, that was a big *neis*. Food coming out of the ground?! "Look! It's a *neis*! Food is coming out of the ground!" They thought food comes from the clouds.

Frequent Miracles

Because really it's *all* a *neis*; only that habit makes you not notice. Even the biggest *neis*, if it happens every day for years and years, you tend to ignore it. And the *mann* was even more commonplace than rain. It doesn't rain every day, but the *mann* came down every day. And even the biggest miracle, when it happens every day, becomes a miracle no longer.

However, in truth, the fact that it happens frequently doesn't mitigate the greatness. When *mann* falls from Heaven, it's a *neis* of the

first magnitude. And that's something that Hashem wants us to be thinking always.

Fill Your Mind

It's a pity we don't. Isn't it a good idea, when you are walking in the street, say like this: "From now until the first telephone pole that's in the middle of the block, I'm going to think about the *mann*. I'm going to imagine myself in the *midbar* with the *Am Yisroel* and when I get up in the morning I see *mann* on the floor outside." Then for the rest of the block, I'll think about how it must have been to taste the *mann*. Ooh wah! To eat *lechem min hashamayim*! What an experience it must have been – heavenly food! And then you cross the street and you start a new block. Is one block enough to think about the *Mann*?! You should walk at least two miles thinking about the *Mann*, but at least one block you should do. And if you want to become even greater try it for a second block too.

A wise person will fill his mind with these ideas; as much as he can he will remind himself of this greatest *neis* in the history of the world. You know, some people say the *parsha* of the *mann* every day after *davening* – excellent, very good – but it's not enough to say words. You have to keep the picture, the *tziyur* of the *mann*, in your mind as much as possible.

Part III. Snow From the Heavens

The White Blanket

Now, tonight, we have been especially privileged with a fall of snow. The snowflakes just "happened" to have come tonight in order to give us a *tziyur* of this great phenomenon of Hashem feeding the world. Now, as you gaze at the white blanket on the ground you can see a faint resemblance to the *mann* which fell in the days of our forefathers. And it's a good idea to make use of the sight of the beautiful snow blanket to think about that.

Now, if you begin thinking about snow, you'll see that as much as *mann* was a miracle, snow is also a *neis* of tremendous proportions. If you would put some thought into it you could see miracles in the snow just like our forefathers saw when the *mann* fell from the sky. It's only because we don't think about it, we don't study it, so the whole lesson is ignored. Maybe for the schoolchildren it's important – they want to

have a day off to play in the snow, but for everyone else, what of it? It's just snow.

But like I said earlier, you have to know that's how it was in the *midbar* too. At first they were excited, they were wild about it. And as the weeks went by they got used to it. It's like snow – snow is also *mann*, but you get used to it.

Purposefully Shaped

Every snowflake is a remarkable miracle in its own right. If you take one snowflake and look at it carefully you'll be amazed at the symmetry of its crystalline form – and there are a number of different forms. Now, today we are not yet capable of explaining the utilitarian purpose of every single twist in the snowflake's outline but we understand right away that one of the purposes of the forms taken by snow crystals is so that when they fall upon each other they should remain loosely packed and fluffy.

Instead of the the snow coming down in simple forms that would easily amalgamate, they have bays and inlets and that make them independent of each other to some extent. That's why when even a big mass of snow falls, each snowflake maintains its identity to some extent. And the result of this is that a lot of air is imprisoned in the snow blanket. Imprisoned air! That's one of the big *chasdei Hashem* we have to study.

Snow and Wool

Dovid HaMelech said, הַגִּתָּן שֶׁלֹּג בְּצֹמֶר – *Hashem gives snow like wool*. The question is, why compare snow to wool? Is it just because it looks like wool and Dovid is a “poet” so he's going to make some poetry? No; that's not the way of *Tehillim* – Dovid doesn't talk that way – every word is full of secrets. Now, in this world we will never understand all the secrets, but a little bit, superficially, we can understand.

What's so special about wool? You know when you walk in the street on a cold day, which material is it that keeps you warm? It's mostly wool. Wool is what keeps the world warm.

Now, why is wool so effective? It's not because it has any thermal qualities – wool is not any hotter than linen. If you stick a thermometer into the mass of wool it won't be any hotter than if you stick a thermometer into a mass of linen. It's *your own body* that supplies the heat – only that the wool doesn't allow that heat to escape from your body. That's what the kinky hairs of the wool accomplish; between all the hairs there is airspace that insulates. The wool creates an insulation

barrier that traps your body heat between your body and the woolen garment and it's that warm air that keeps you from freezing.

Free Advice

That's why it's better, by the way, to have two thin blankets than one thick blanket. Two thin blankets have a tiny airspace in between them which is very effective. If you suffer from chilblains on your feet in wintertime, so instead of wearing one pair of thick socks, wear two thin socks so that the air between them should keep you warm. It's good advice you're hearing now and it's free of charge tonight.

Somebody once gave me that advice and all the rest of my life I've been doing that. When the cold weather comes; two pairs of socks. I used to walk a lot in the wintertime and I suffered from frostbite on my feet. And then a man, an old *talmid chacham*, gave that advice. He said I should wear two pairs of socks. I don't know if he knew the principle that I'm telling you, but he understood that two pairs of socks are better than one.

And that's what wool does; the twisted hair traps the air and creates an insulation barrier. But linen threads on the other hand are straight and they don't imprison any air; so the air travels back and forth, and by convection the heat is carried away from your body and it's lost.

Warming the Earth

So when Dovid compares snow to wool it's an exact comparison. Snow has the same qualities of wool because the shape of the snowflakes makes the snow kinky so to speak. It doesn't fall in a compact mass like pieces of ice; instead it falls in fluffy flakes and a little bit of snow can make a very thick, air-filled, covering. It falls loosely and remains fluffy like wool, and the air trapped between the snowflakes is a wonderful insulator. That's why when the snow falls upon the earth it's like a woolen blanket that keeps the earth warm.

You know the earth has to be kept warm, don't you? The earth is full of important things that could die from frost. There are roots that have to remain till next summer. Where does the grass come from? Do people plant grass? The grass grows from its own roots. It has seeds too, but it's mostly from roots and these roots would perish in the frost. Not only grass – there are many perennials that have to send forth their roots again after the winter. All the strawberries, and many other plants too, they grow from roots that are right now in the earth. Also, all the seeds that fell into the earth in the last season – if not for

the snow blanket they would all perish. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu certainly had that in mind when He was **נָתַן שֶׁלֶג בְּצִמְרוֹ** – when He gave snow like wool.

News From Nevada and South Dakota

Actually the snow is much more than people give it credit for. I received a news item not long ago about a town in Nevada. A town with a population of ten thousand declared an emergency – they had no water! The government declared a state of emergency and they had to ship trucks with tanks of water to help the people.

What happened? Snow hadn't fallen sufficiently that season. But it wasn't because of the lack of snow that they didn't have water. Because anyway they got water from a reservoir upstream, a reservoir that was filled with water. But the local snow was vital because it acted as a blanket to prevent the underground pipes from freezing. Every year they depended on the snow blanket to keep their pipes insulated from the bitter cold. And because this year there was an inadequate snow covering, the pipes froze and burst.

There's another news item that one of our fans who listen to these tapes sent in to me – it said there that the farmers in South Dakota complained that this year they were wiped out. There was no snow-covering for the earth and the ground therefore became frozen four or five feet deep. And when the spring rains came, they couldn't penetrate the earth because the ground was so solidly frozen, and the wheat crop went lost. They were wiped out entirely.

Important Citizens of the Earth

But in addition to keeping the earth soft and warm, there are many important denizens residing in the soil who must be kept alive all winter because we need them for our existence. You know, the earthworms are what keep Mankind going; they are essential to our existence. People despise the humble earthworm but it is only thanks to his efforts that we are around – if not for the earthworm, we wouldn't be here.

We think that *we* plow but the truth is that the earthworms are doing most of the plowing right beneath the surface. All winter long, many months before a farmer decides to yoke up his oxen or to take out his tractor to do the plowing, the earthworms are hard at work turning over the earth! They suck it in through their mouths and as it passes through their gut, the earthworm extracts some nourishment from it – whatever small food organisms exist in the earth. And then,

when the earth is excreted by the earthworm, it's not only cleaned of certain unnecessary organisms but it's fertilized too – the earth is now turned over and aerated and ready for planting.

In addition there are other important citizens, **משפחות הארמה** – *families of the earth*, that the snow protects. There are the ants and the beetles and the centipedes and all of them together are important. And they're doing a great job – we have to applaud them because they're keeping us alive. The ants and the beetles are digging through the earth constantly; they're allowing the air to penetrate the soil which is very important for the growth of future vegetation.

Earthworm Eskimos

But how can these vital insects survive the frosted winter? The answer is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu sends down a snow blanket. In the city the Sanitation Department comes by with their trucks and they take it all away, but in the country Hakodosh Boruch Hu takes care of everything and there the snow blanket remains. And that blanket keeps them all alive!

If not for the blanket of snow the earthworms would freeze. Earthworms freeze too – they don't live that far down in the soil; they live near the surface and therefore they need that blanket – the snow blanket keeps the earth warm, actually warm. Under the snow, it's like a little house, a snow house. It's always warmer inside under the snow than outside – it's nice and warm down there, like an Eskimo in his ice igloo.

Blankets For Breakfast

Then, when the spring comes around, we don't need the snow anymore – now we need water. So the snow does us a big favor and it turns into water. This wonderful blanket that has been keeping the earth warm all winter long, in the springtime it turns into water and gives the earth a good drink; and that water turns into plants and food that feeds the world!

Suppose you had such a blanket. It keeps you warm all night and then in the morning when you get up and you don't need it anymore so you eat up the blanket. An edible blanket; a chocolate blanket! In the morning you got up and ate it for breakfast. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? That's still something missing to be invented – a disposable blanket that you can eat for breakfast. You may be laughing, but that's exactly what the snow is. It keeps the earth warm all winter

and in the spring it melts and goes into the soil and it comes forth in the form of vegetation.

Snow and Bread

And therefore when you see snow spread out on the soil, you're seeing a *neis* no less than the *mann* – you're seeing food! That's exactly what it is. Like it says **מִשְׁלֵיךְ קָרָחוּ כִּפְתִּימִים** – *He throws His ice pieces like pieces of bread*. Of course, if it was bread it would be uncomfortable; with pieces of bread on the street you'd have to watch your step not to trample on the bread. But actually that's what the snow is – it's bread, it's *mann*. And therefore you have to appreciate it when you see an icy street.

Of course, on the city streets it may seem like a nuisance. But it's not so – it's there for a very important reason; it's there to remind you of the miracle of the *mann* – the *lechem min hashamayim* that we eat every day. And so, when snow comes down on the ground, instead of snarling, instead of growling, “Oh, it's that nasty weather again,” let's understand that this is icing on the cake. Snow is icing. Suppose you got a big cake, a block long or miles long and there is icing on top of it – the more the better! And snow is the icing. Snow turns into all good things. Because when you eat bread and delicious fruit in the spring, you'll be doing so because of the snow that falls in the winter.

Now, we're not finished with snow. The truth is that we are just beginning with the great subject of snow, but it's late now and we must go back to the subject of the *mann*. But we understand that the snowflakes happened to come tonight to give us a reminder of the great phenomenon of the food we eat, and a reminder of the *mann* as well.

Part IV. Whiteness From the Heavens

What is Nature

Now, just like snow, the *mann* was white. The *gemara* (Yuma 75a) tells us a reason for that. The *mann* was white as a symbol **שְׁמַלְבֵּין אֶשְׁרָאֵל שְׁוֹנֵתֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל**, that the *mann* whitened the sins of the Am Yisroel. Now, that has to be explained – the fact that it was white caused their sins to become white?! How could the *mann* cleanse them of their *aveiros*?

So we'll explain it as follows: The fundamental sin of Mankind is to sink into the error that there's such a thing as nature. "Nature" is a Greek word that was made to conceal the fact of Hashem.

You know, in *gemara* language there's no such word 'nature'. It says there **בְּיָדֵי שָׁמַיִם** – *by the hands of Hashem*. Like **קָרִים בְּיָדֵי שָׁמַיִם** and **צְמוּקָה בְּיָדֵי שָׁמַיִם** – instead of saying 'a natural saris', it's a *saris bi'yedei shomayim*. Everything is *bi'yedei shomayim* – that's Torah language. There's no nature in the *gemara*!

Now, we understand of course that **אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת** – *Hashem created the world to do*, in a way that seems to operate by itself; it *seems* natural, it all seems like cause and effect. But it's not so. **אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא** – *Hashem made it!* **כִּי הוּא לְבַדּוֹ פּוֹעֵל גְּבוּרוֹת** – *He Himself does everything!*

A Prevalent Error

And therefore, the greatest of all errors, the sin of sins, is to fall into the great error of forgetting about Hashem in this world. It's atheism, a form of not believing in Hashem. You know, the Rambam says that atheism is worse than *avodah zarah*, and so, when people are observant, even if they keep the Torah, but if they forget that He is the one who does everything, they are missing out on their purpose in this world.

When people begin to look at the world as operating according to nature, independently of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that's already atheism. And it's the major sin of sins because from forgetting Hashem stem all misdeeds.

Hashem Echad means that He is *the One*, the only One; that everything is done by Him. Even when it looks like nature is doing it, it's only Hashem doing it. That's why we say **מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם** – *He makes the wind blow and He makes the rain fall*. The rain and the snow don't just fall. We don't look out of the window and say, "It's raining outside." "Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *making* the rain come down," that's what we say. That's how you look at "nature."

Marvels Upon Marvels

Everything around us is really miracles upon miracles. Only because it's so frequent so we attribute it to nature – we forget about the *Hashem Echad* who is doing everything. Actually, if we study everything around us we would see that it's all marvels upon marvels. We would see that snow and ice are actually miracles. We call it "natural," but if *mann* fell every day we'd also say it's natural and it wouldn't be cited as an example of *hashgacha* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Our purpose here is that we have to learn to divest ourselves of the hardened hearts of the materialists and we have to think about these things: Why is it that the water becomes white and fluffy when it has to fall on the soil? And why in such intricate forms? How does it trap air? How does it keep the earth warm? Why doesn't it melt right away? How is it that the earthworms survive the bitter cold winter? Why is it that snow is a white color? It could have been blue-green, but white retards the sunrays and keeps the snow from melting!

Of course, I'm only scratching the surface of the miracles – it's only the beginning. We didn't even begin to study the subject yet, and the more you study what Hashem is doing in this world, the more you'll see miracles – miracles just as big as our forefathers saw in the *midbar*.

The Ultimate Whitening

Why are all these miracles happening? And the answer is; they're for the purpose that we should see them and we should recognize that there is a Borei who made them. That's why the *mann* fell for forty years! To drill into our heads that it's all from the Borei, that everything is really *lechem min hashamayim*. And it is that knowledge of Hashem that whitens the sins of Yisroel.

And that's how we're supposed to remember the *mann*. It's a reminder that what we see in this world is nothing but Hashem. "And Hashem said to Moshe: 'Behold I will *mamtir*, I will rain down food to you from the heavens'. (Beshalach 16:4)". This expression *mamtir*, "I shall rain down to you," is significant because it's a reminder that Hashem is the One who is causing everything!

The *mann* came לְמַעַן הוֹדַעְךָ – In order to make known to you, כִּי לֹא עַל עֵל בָּל – that not by bread alone does a man live, כִּי עַל כָּל מוֹצֵא פִי הַשָּׁם יִהְיֶה הָאֱרֶם – but by that which proceeds from the mouth of Hashem does man live (Devarim 8:3). לְמַעַן הוֹדַעְךָ – To make known to you, means to give you *da'as*, to give you the true knowledge that is available from remembering the *mann*. And the greatest knowledge is summed up with these two words – that everything is Hashem Echad!

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

————— This week's booklet is based on tapes: —————

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

What is the benefit of snow, ice and sleet?

A:

Ice, snow, sleet. משליך קרחו כפיתים – “Hashem casts His ice on the world like pieces of bread” (Tehillim 147:17). Ice is bread. Snow is bread. How so? Snow lasts a long time. It melts slowly. It soaks into the earth. Not like the rain which runs down into the rivers and oceans. No, no. It melts slowly and it soaks into the earth. And it becomes bread. The melting water of the ice and snow is absorbed gradually into the earth instead of running off and that’s what the earth needs in order to produce. That’s why the Gemara says that one snow is as valuable as five rains (Ta’anis 3b).

Of course, on the city streets it may seem like a nuisance. But it’s there for a very important reason. On the city streets the snow is there to remind you of the miracle of ice and snow. It’s beautiful and it can be a nuisance as well. Either way, it’s meant to remind you of the miracle of bread. When you eat bread and delicious fruit in the spring, you’ll be doing so because of the snow that falls in the winter.

If you were a farmer on the field, you’d love the ice. It melts very gradually and gives the field a good drink of water. And in the spring you’ll have a good crop as a result. So, משליך קרחו – “He throws down His ice,” כפיתים – “like pieces of bread.” Don’t forget that. Ice is bread. No question about that.

And in the city streets the snow is da’as Hashem. It’s there to remind you of the chesed Hashem of snow and bread and food. It’s beautiful and yet it can be a nuisance. And that’s to remind you of the snow in the fields and mountains. Otherwise you’d forget all about it. When you see the snow, you are seeing the chesed Hashem of food. Yes, that’s a very important purpose of the snow in the city. So when you’re shoveling the snow or walking on the curb, don’t waste that opportunity. Look at the snow and remind yourself that Hashem is preparing the earth for the spring and summer. That’s what it’s there for. That’s what the snow in the city is for.

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