

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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In our Parsha, Moshe mentions that Hashem, "feeds you Manna... in order to afflict you and test you, to do good for you in your end" (D'varim 8:16). How strange that the Manna, which "tasted like cake fried in honey" - and, following Chazal, could taste like any food and had no waste - should come to test the people! On the contrary, we might expect Bnei Yisrael to have blessed Hashem every day for such bounty.

However, the people complained and, our rabbis tell us, they felt hungry after partaking of the Manna. The people preferred regular food, something tangible whose taste was familiar, not the Manna whose source was ethereal. They yearned for the material, not the immaterial.

For the Lubavitcher Rebbe, bread and food are metaphors for the wisdom and intellect that nurture the body; knowledge feeds the intellect. But there is "Bread from the Earth": empirical data that is limited - if not sometimes flawed ['waste product'] - that leads to self-importance. And there is "Bread from Heaven", the Torah, the wisdom of Hashem, that is unlimited and that embraces all levels of knowledge, ethics, life's lessons, etc.

This heavenly bread is all encompassing, consisting of truth alone; it has no residue. Because of its endless potential, it leaves us hungry. We should be left not satiated, but in awe; not proud and self-concerned, but poignantly aware of what we still have to learn. Yet here, too, there is an earthly aspect - the revealed Torah. And there is also an exalted dimension - the hidden Torah, the inner, deeper levels to be revealed. Thus, may we have the merit of absorbing both these sources of heavenly sustenance and also of achieving that ultimate "good in our end".