

## Some Jewish Sources about Sustenance/Parnassah

*for discussion and exploration*

(Please note: **Boldface** is added for focus and emphasis; not in original texts.)

2. Remember the long way that Ado-nai your God has made you travel  
in the wilderness these forty years,  
that God might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts:  
whether you would keep God's commandments or not.
3. God subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you Manna to eat,  
which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known,  
in order to teach you that **a person does not live on bread alone**,  
but that people live on that which comes out of Ado-nai's mouth.
4. The clothes upon your did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years.
5. Bear in mind that Ado-nai your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son.
6. Therefore keep the commandments of Ado-nai your God;  
Walk in God's ways and revere God.

*Deuteronomy 8:2-6*

What did the Manna teach people – or what might it teach us? What were the people supposed to learn by the experience of hardship followed by Manna?

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*From Psalm 145, which is known as the Ashrei prayer, recited thrice daily:*

15. The eyes of all look hopefully to You, and You give them their food in due season.
- 16. You open Your hand; Your favor sustains every living thing.\***
17. Adonai is righteous/just in all ways, Loving-kind in all His/Her deeds.
18. Adonai is near to all who call, to all who call out in truth/sincerity.
19. S/He fulfills the desire of those who revere Him/Her,  
hears their cry and delivers them.

*Psalm 145:15-19*

Interestingly, a custom developed among Jews to open their palms upward when saying this verse. Since the verse speaks of God's opening God's hands, what might be learned from this 'mutual hand-opening'?

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Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah said:

Where there is no Torah, there is no *derekh erez*/decent, cultured behavior;  
where there is no *derekh erez*, there is no Torah.  
Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear/reverence of God;  
where there is no fear/reverence of God, there is no wisdom.  
Where there is no understanding, there is no knowledge;  
where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding.  
**Where there is no kemah/meal/flour, there is no Torah\*;  
where there is no Torah, there is no kemah/meal/flour.\*\***

*Pirke Avot 3:17*

\*Lack of food impairs one's mental powers..

\*\*As in Deuteronomy 8:3: "...in order to teach you that **a person does not live on bread alone**,  
but that people live on that which comes out of Ado-nai's mouth."

How would you summarize the teaching of this quote from Pirke Avot?

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Our Rabbis taught: Seven things are hidden from men:  
the day of death,  
and the day of comfort,\*  
the depth [extent] of judgment,\*\*  
and a man does not know what is in his neighbor's heart;  
**and a man does not know by what he will earn his living;**  
and when the Davidic dynasty will return;\*\*\*  
and when the wicked kingdom\*\*\*\* will come to an end.  
*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54b*

\* No man knows precisely when he will be relieved of his anxieties.

\*\* The great commentator, Rashi (1040-1104), explained that this refers to Divine Judgment.

\*\*\* This was probably said in order to discourage those who tried to calculate the advent of the Messiah on the basis of Scripture; see Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a.

\*\*\*\* Rashi sees this as a covert allusion to the Roman Empire.

*This statement is many hundreds of years old. How might the bold phrase be understood by us today?*

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*Read the following two texts and then consider this question: What do these texts have to offer us when we wonder how we will pay our bills or feed our family in the coming weeks?*

Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedat said: "Scripture places provision for man's needs in the same category with deliverance; even as provision comes each day, so man's deliverance."

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman said: "It is greater than deliverance, for deliverance comes by the hand of an angel – "the angel who delivers me from every evil" (*Genesis 48:16*) – but provision for man's needs comes from the Hand of God Godself, who opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every being" (*Psalms 145:16*).

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi declared: "**This constant provision was no less a wonder than the cleaving of the Red Sea.**"

*Midrash B'reishit/Genesis Rabbah 20:9*

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*Note: In Psalm 136, God is praised and thanked for the wonders which God has wrought for Israel and especially for cleaving the Red Sea in the Exodus (vv. 13-14). But the same refrain, "for God's lovingkindness endures for ever," is applied also to the words "who gives bread to all flesh" (v. 25) motivating this teaching:*

So Hillel said that this juxtaposition showed that the two deeds of God were equal in greatness, and that **the giving to man of his daily bread was as wonderful a marvel as the cleaving of the Red Sea.** And...it is said that the same equivalence is shown by Isaiah 51:14-15, where after the words, "his bread fails not," come the words, "I am Ado-nai who divides the Red Sea."

*Pesikta Rabbati, 152a*

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He who created the day has also created sustenance for it. *Mekhilta, B'shallah, Va-yisu, 2*

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In every hour the *Shekhinah*\* provides sustenance for all the inhabitants of the world according to their need, and satisfies every living thing; and not only the pious and the righteous but also the wicked and the idolaters. \*The *Shekhinah* is the nurturing, Presence of God

*Mekhilta, Amalek, Yitro, 1*

*How do you understand that last statement?!*