

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

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Chapter XVI: Beshalach (Ex. 13:17–17:16)

Essay 19. Forty full years of manna

ובפסוק "הוא הלחם אשר נתן ה' לאכלה", יש לדקדק למה אמר "אשר נתן" בלשון עבר, דמשמע שפבר נתן, הנה לו לומר אשר נתן, בלשון הווה. וירמוז למה שפירש רש"י על פסוק "אכלו את-המן ארבעים שנה", שאף העוגות שהוציאו ישראל ממצרים טעמו בהם טעם מן. ומשום הכי קאמר "הוא הלחם אשר נתן", זה המן יש בו טעם הלחם אשר פבר טעמם בעוגות.

In regard to the verse introducing the manna, **“That is the bread which the L-rd has given you to eat”** (Ex. 16:15), one can scrutinize why it says, **“has given”** in the past tense, with the meaning that He already gave it. [Moses] could have said, **“which He is giving to you,”** in the present tense. This hints at what Rashi explained on the verse, **“they ate manna for forty years”** (Ex. 16:35), that even the cakes that Israel brought out of Egypt had the taste of manna.¹ Thus, [Moses] said, **“the bread which He has given,”** meaning, **this manna has within it the taste of bread that you already ate in the unleavened cakes** that you brought out of Egypt.

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¹ Rashi asks: “But was not this period thirty days short [of forty years], since it was on the sixteenth of Iyar that the Manna fell for them for the first time, and it was on the fifteenth of Nisan that it ceased, as it is said, ‘And the manna ceased on the morrow’? (Joshua 5:12). This tells us that in the cakes that Israel had brought out of Egypt [and which they ate from the 15th of Nisan to the 16th of Iyar] had the taste of manna [so that there were indeed forty years during which they ate manna].” Rashi’s comment is derived from Kiddushin 38a: “It is taught in another Baraita [with regard to the verse]: ‘And the children of Israel ate the manna forty years’ (Ex. 16:35). But did they [really] eat [it for] forty years? But didn’t they eat [it for] forty years less thirty days? [The manna began to fall on the sixteenth of Iyar in the first year in the wilderness, and they stopped eating it on the sixteenth of Nisan in the fortieth year.] Rather, this [verse comes] to tell you that they tasted the taste of manna [in the unleavened] cakes that they took out from Egypt [on the fifteenth of Nisan in their first year, and this sustained them until the manna fell].”