

Adapted from

THE MONN HOAX

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This piece appeared originally in “*Light — the Jewish Family Magazine*”

Volume Two, Number 3 [16] (5 Addar 5731)

Published by Light Magazine Co., P.O.B. 15004, Yerushola'im.

Mosheh brought the Israelites away from the Reed Sea, and they proceeded to the Wilderness of Shure, and they travelled for three days in the wilderness without finding any water. They came to Morroh, but they could not drink of the waters of Morroh for they were bitter (that is why the name of that place was called Morroh) and the people murmured against Mosheh, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to HaShem and HaShem showed him a certain tree, which he threw into the waters and the waters were made sweet. It was there that HaShem taught them statutes and ordinances, and there He tested them. And He said, “If you will hearken diligently to the voice of HaShem your G-d, to do that which is right in His sight, and will listen carefully to His commandments and you will keep all His statutes, then I will put none of the sicknesses upon you which I brought upon Egypt, for I am HaShem Who heals you.” Then they came to Aylim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees and they encamped there by the water. And they moved on from Aylim, and the entire congregation of the Israelites came to the wilderness of Sinn, which is between Aylim and Sinnai: this was on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt. And the whole congregation of the Israelites murmured against Mosheh and Aharon in the wilderness. And they said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of HaShem in the land of Egypt! There, at least we could sit by the flesh-pots, and eat our fill of bread! But you have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole congregation by starvation!”

Then HaShem said to Mosheh, “See! I am going to make bread rain down for you from heaven and the people are to go out and gather enough for each day: with this bread I will test them, whether they will follow my Torah, or not. For it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they are to prepare (for the Shabbos) what they bring in, and that day’s portion shall therefore be twice as much as they gather every other day.” And Mosheh and Aharon told all the Israelites: “This evening, you shall know that it is HaShem Who has brought you out from the land of Egypt, and in the morning, you shall see the glory of HaShem, and that He hears your murmurings — which are against HaShem, for what are we, that you complain against us?” And Mosheh said further: “HaShem will give you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning He will give enough bread to satisfy you, for HaShem hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. But what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against HaShem!” And Mosheh told Aharon to tell the entire congregation of the Israelites, “Come closer, here in the Presence of HaShem, for He has heard your murmurings.” And as Aharon spoke to the whole congregation of the

Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and, see! the glory of HaShem was visible in the clouds.

Then HaShem spoke to Mosheh, as follows: "I have heard the murmurings of the Israelites, so, speak to them, saying, "At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall eat your fill with bread — and you shall know that I am HaShem your G-d!" And that evening, a flock of quails came and covered the camp: and in the morning, the dew lay round about the camp. And when the layer of dew evaporated, see! upon the face of the wilderness there lay a fine, grainy substance, as fine as hoarfrost which lies on the ground. And when the Israelites saw it, they said one to another, "Monn hu?" (meaning, "What is it?") for they knew not what it was, and Mosheh said to them, "This is the bread which HaShem has given you to eat. Now, this is the instruction which HaShem has commanded: Every man shall gather of it according to his needs, an Omer measure for every person; that is, take as much as each one needs, according to the number of people who are in his tent." (Later, the Israelites did so and gathered it up, some more, some less. And when they measured it with an Omer measure, they found that he that had gathered much had nothing more than his needs and he that had gathered less did not have too little — each man had gathered exactly enough for each one of his family to eat.) And Mosheh continued: "Let no man leave of it till the morning." (But some of the people did not listen to Mosheh, and they left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and it stank: and Mosheh was angry with them.) And so they gathered it every morning, every man according to his family's requirements: and when the sun grew hot, the Monn that was left uncollected melted. And then on the sixth day they gathered what transpired to be a double provision, that is, two Omer measures for each person: and all the leaders of the congregation came and reported this to Mosheh. And he said to them, "This is indeed what HaShem has spoken about: Tomorrow is a day of rest, it is HaShem's holy Shabbos. Therefore, that which you intend to bake tomorrow, bake today, and that which you intend to cook tomorrow, cook today; and whatever is left over, put aside and keep it for yourselves until the morning." And they put it aside until that Shabbos morning, as Mosheh commanded, and it did not stink, neither was there any worm in it. And Mosheh said: "Eat that today; for today is Shabbos to HaShem: today you will not find it outdoors. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Shabbos, there shall be none." Nevertheless, it came to pass, that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none.

Then HaShem said to Mosheh: "How long will you all refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? See, HaShem has given you the Shabbos, and that is why He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days. On Shabbos every person is to remain in his place; nobody may go out of his locality on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. And the House of Israel called this food 'Monn' ('manna'): it looked like coriander seed, except that it was pearly white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Mosheh said, "This is what HaShem commands: Fill an Omer-sized vessel with Monn as a keepsake for your generations; that they may see the bread which HaShem fed you in the wilderness when He brought you out from Egypt." Mosheh said to Aharon: "Take a jar, fill it with an Omer of Monn and later you shall place it in the Mishkan, in the Presence of HaShem, to be kept for your generations." As HaShem commanded Mosheh, so did Aharon later place it before the Ark of the Testimony, as a keepsake. The Israelites were to eat the Monn for forty years, until they came to inhabited territory; they ate the Mon until they came to the borders of the land of Kenaan. And an Omer is the tenth part of an Ayfoh.

(Shemos, 15 : 22 — 16 : 36)

“What’s eating you, Dosson?” asked Avirrom as they headed homeward with their baskets of Mon. “Even we got a double portion today and it smells great!”

“Oh, I just can’t stop thinking of the shame and disgrace — all because of ben-Amrom!”

“Sulking over it won’t get you anywhere!”

“But think of it! For a month or so our only food is the leftover Matzoh we took from Mitzrayyim — a whole month of slave’s bread and dried fruit! Then, when that’s finished and ben-Amrom finally gets us some new form of food, His Lordship dictates that we are forbidden to gather more than a single day’s provision! I ask you: does he think this miracle will happen every day! So then, when we, using plain simple logic, don’t rely on miracles and try our level best to gather up more than a day’s supply, what does he do? He makes our leftover Monn so wormy and stinky that the whole camp smells us out. I was never so embarrassed in my life!”

“Nor I,” agreed Avirrom. “But instead of talking so much maybe we can think of a way to get even.”

“And if that were not enough,” went on Dosson as if he had not heard, “each day since then, we get the Monn in its poorest form, Monn-flour, and the furthest away from the whole camp!”

“All right, all right,” said Avirrom impatiently as they reached Dosson’s tent, “relax a while, and after breakfast I’ll rejoin you. Meanwhile, I want to find out why today’s Monn is so special and why today there’s a double portion for everyone.”

“Probably another trick up ben-Amrom’s sleeve,” began Dosson bitterly. Avirrom, tired of his brother’s ranting, walked briskly away.

Later, over a soothing jug of Miriam’s Well water, Avirrom informed Dosson of his findings.

“It seems the smell and amount aren’t accidental. And here’s another switch: Today’s Monn is meant to last over Shabbos! On Shabbos no Monn will fall. The quails will also arrive early today so that all cooking and baking can be done long before sunset. We are advised to eat little or nothing till nightfall, in honour of Shabbos, so that we’ll have better appetites; the taste and smell are supposed to be even better then. Oh, yes, one more thing. His Lordship has ordered that everybody is to assemble this afternoon, and tomorrow, too, for special Shiurim in the Laws of Shabbos to be given by Elitzur the Nossi.”

“What, more Dinnim?” Dosson knocked his tankard, spilling some water on his brother’s feet. “Wasn’t what we got in Morroh enough?”

“Fathead! Practice using your head instead of losing it! Don’t you see? This is the best thing that could have happened!”

“Why? What are you getting at? I guess I’m just not a genius like you.”

“Don’t get sore. Listen, if this extra Monn is supposed to keep, it won’t get wormy, right?”

“So?”

“Now, our portion falls out of everybody’s sight, right?”

“Yeah ... I think I’m beginning to see ... ”

Later that evening, just before sunset, while almost everybody was at their Shiurim or busy preparing for Shabbos, the two lonely figures could be seen carrying baskets, stealthily making their way towards the outskirts of the camp and even beyond the protective Clouds of Glory as well. Once they were clear of the camp, Dosson spoke up. “Don’t you think we should have baked the Monn into Challos?”

“No, stupid — we might be accused of stealing someone’s food. Remember, *we* never get it in that form.”

They finally reached the desolate spot where they usually found their Monn. Silently, they spread handful after handful of Monn on the ground, finally turning their baskets over and patting them empty.

“Done,” said Avirrom, as he inspected the results with a professional eye. “It’s getting dark. Now let’s get back for some Shabbos sleep.”

Dawn of Shabbos morning saw both of them, Dosson and Avirrom, behind the latter’s tent for a last-minute briefing.

“We’ll assemble the weakest elements, as usual,” whispered Avirrom, “some of the mixed-multitude moaners, Micha of Don, maybe cousin Ohn — ”

“Okay. Let’s get started, and remember we’ve got precious little to eat till we’ve got it over.”

Mosheh and Aharon got the first report right after Kiddush. Although deeply disturbed by this breach of Shabbos holiness, they preferred not to provoke Dosson and Avirrom with their presence. So they sent Hoshay’a bin Nune and Elozzor ben Aharon to look into the matter.

They found that a sizeable crowd had gathered. Many came simply out of curiosity; a few were doubters who thought to themselves that after their exposure six days ago, Dosson and Avirrom can’t just be bluffing and that they must be on to something real. Dosson and Avirrom were disappointed that Mosheh and Aharon had not come themselves, but they tried to make the best of the situation. They began leading the crowd toward the scene of their “proof.”

“You see,” said Dosson, “he said that no Monn would fall today. Well, it just goes to show how Mosheh doesn’t know everything.” He made a great show of looking round as if to find someone in the crowd. “And it seems he’s even afraid to show his face!”

“But no one else’s portion of Monn fell today Dosson, did it? — or haven’t you noticed?” pointed out one of the mob.

“Perhaps Mosheh was right as far as great and good people like yourselves or ordinary people who don’t mind being bossed around by Mosheh and his brother,” retorted Avirrom in his usual caustic style, “but simple people like us seem to have been overlooked!”

“And you say it fell as powder as always,” asked someone else, “not even as bread or cake?”

“No,” replied Avirrom, “it’s the same as every day. We always find our Monn in powder form and that’s what’s fallen today, too.”

Hoshay’a and Elozzor followed behind in pained silence. As they approached what Avirrom grandly called “the scene of the evidence,” one of the crowd called out, “Well? Come on! Where is the Monn, Dosson? All I see is ordinary sand. Are you sure you haven’t been seeing a mirage?”

Goaded by the taunt, the brothers shouted back, “We’ll see who’s seeing things! It’s right over there, to the left!”

“Over where?” asked Micha, irritated. No one in the crowd could see anything but more sand.

“Is this some sort of joke, you sons of Eliov?” asked one of the restless crowd. “I wasn’t exactly keen to go hiking this morning!”

Dosson and Avirrom looked at each other desperately.

“Oh, here it is after all,” mocked another one, pointing to a mound of sand. “Why don’t you eat some, Avirrom?”

“He doesn’t know what Brochoh to say on it,” chided a third.

After some more of such teasing, Dosson couldn’t take it any longer. “I can’t understand it! We ourselves ... ”

“Shut up, you fool!” screeched Avirrom with venom in his voice.

Hoshay’a and Elozzor smiled at each other. In their hurry to bring back the news to Mosheh and Aharon, they did not notice the unusual behaviour of a small flock of quails flying high overhead.

The birds had formed a circle in the sky and were joyously chirping their praise to HaShem for the delectable Shabbos meal they had just eaten.

*There is a custom to put out breadcrumbs for the birds on Shabbos Parshas Beshallah in remembrance of the part they played in the Kiddush HaShem that day.
See Sefer “Taamay HaMinhoggim” page .531, paragraph 98*