

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Culinary Capitulation



RABBI  
EZRA  
STETTIN

Cheesecake... ahh cheesecake. It might not be dead but it's not bad for *milchigs* (dairy). The question is why? No, not why cheesecake; that's because it's the only *milchigs* close to being worthy of serving on a Yom Tov. The question is why focus on culinary delicacies to celebrate a holiday that commemorates our receiving of the Torah.

The answer is because the Gemara in *Maseches Pesachim* 68b states "All opinions agree, on Shavuos one must celebrate with magnificent cuisine and exquisite beverage (loosely translated)."

The age-old question is why? What's so special about this Yom Tov that warrants a unanimous decision to feast?

The *Ramchal* in *Derech Hashem* describes the war between the intellect and the physical, the soul and the body, the Holy and the mundane, as the sole facilitator of the purpose of our existence. Free choice. We must have the freedom to choose between perfection and imperfection. This provides us the opportunity to acquire that perfection, thus inculcating it into the very fiber of our being. This in turn allows us to cleave to the True Perfection, G-d, in addition to inherently integrating some form of Godliness into ourselves. These concepts are deep and require further elaboration, but suffice it to say that free choice is at the very foundation of our existence, and certainly without it there would be nearly no value in our existence.

On this point, Rav Chaim Freedlander, ז"ל, brings down an incredible insight

from his *rebbe*, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, ז"ל. No matter how great you become, even Moshe *Rabeinu*, who's physical actions were conducted with complete holiness and purity of thought, completely for the sake of Heaven, as long as you live, you are still connected to the physical. Living in this world means by definition that the choice has not been removed. That is why we live—to choose correctly. He cites, our Gemara in *Pesachim* as evidence. Our sages agree, on Shavuos we must enjoy the physical aspects of this world. If this law is decided by all sages and applicable to everyone no matter how great, it illustrates our souls' connection to the physical, so long as we live.

Based on this, I would like to suggest that Shavuos is the Yom Tov that at its very core demands we connect with the physical. It is the day of the year on which we celebrate our understanding of our existence here in the physical world. The Torah, and the Torah alone, is what empowers us to undertake to elevate the mundane. To choose right from wrong. To guide us in this chaotic world. On this day all the sages agree we must focus on our mission to choose greatness.

(Note: There is a *chiyuv* to have *simchas* Yom Tov with real meat; the cheesecake was just for literary purposes.) 🍷

### A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which *mitzvah* is it impossible to have an intention to fulfill? 🍷

See reverse side for the answer

### THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

In a certain *yeshiva*, one student had a condition where his fingers would freeze and swell when some wind or cold air would contact them, which caused him much suffering. He had two ways of dealing with the issue: Closing the windows of the study hall, or wearing gloves. Since wearing gloves would impede his ability to write and take notes and turn pages, he would close the windows. His friends, however, complained about the lack of air circulation, which caused them a lack of concentration, and wanted the window open.

**Q** Who is correct?

**A** Rav Yisroel Salanter is reported to have said that if during the summertime everyone but one wants the windows closed to the fresh air, we listen to the one that wanted it open, and the opposite would be true in the winter.

If the weather would be cold, even if the rest of the class doesn't mind it, we would listen to this student and close the window, even though he wants it closed just because of his condition.

If, however, it isn't cold outside, but due to his condition, even mild weather affects him, he cannot force the rest of his class to close the window. It would be a great *mitzvah* of performing *chesed*, however, for the class to shut the windows, but one cannot be

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —➔

Sponsorship & feedback:  
parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored by the  
**Toporowitz Family**  
in appreciation for all the Harbatzos Hatorah that the Kollel does.

Cincinnati Torah  
is distributed weekly  
to local shuls  
and the community  
e-mail list.



## A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

coerced to perform a *chessed*.

There is also room for discussion that the mitzvah of *hashavas aveida* (returning one's lost object), which also applies to helping return one's health (*Sanhedrin* 73a), applies here. Also, there are different opinions regarding the mitzvah of not standing idly by the blood of one's friend; some say this applies even if the friend is not subject to life-threatening danger.

One should be stringent here, then, because we are dealing with potential Biblical matters. At least the class should be willing to experience some minor discomfort to fulfill these mitzvos as well as the *chessed* that is involved. Although this student can wear gloves, we should reckon with him if this will cause him greater discomfort than his friends' discomfort from warmth. See also Meiri (*Sanhedrin* 32b).

When I presented my opinion to my father-in-law, Rav Elyashiv, he disagreed with me. He said that a *yeshiva* is a place intended for the students to learn Torah in depth and closing the window would be depriving the healthy students of their goals which were intended for them. If the student who suffers from freezing hands cannot participate in the classes, he should learn at home. 🙏

## GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL



### A LESSON LEARNED

David had returned to the heritage of his ancestors many years before, but had only looked with longing at others who were able to connect with Hashem through the learning of the Torah. A friend heard out David when he complained that he felt he was missing out, and suggested that they begin learning. David's life was revitalized as he grew more and more in his Torah scholarship. One year on Simchas Torah David, who was not a man of means, began bidding on the honor of the final *Aliyah* in the Torah, called *Chassan Torah*, literally the Bridegroom of the Torah. The general populace of the synagogue assumed that David was bidding on the honor because receiving that honor is known

as a merit for finding one's soulmate and David had not yet found his. There is a custom that the one who receives this honor sponsors a *kiddush*, and as David did indeed receive it, he sponsored the requisite *kiddush*. His fellow members listened in amazement as David got up to speak, shared a Torah thought and began to cry. He cried and cried. Through his tears, he shared that he recently merited to complete the six orders of the *Mishnah* and that he bought the honor of *Chassan Torah* to thank Hashem for finding him a partner that he loves so much, while he continues to look for his physical partner in life – Hashem's holy Torah! 🙏

### RIDDLE ANSWER

The mitzvah of shiklova (the forgotten sheave that is taken by the poor). 🙏

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

When the second Lord Baltimore, Cecil Calvert, was given a charter by King Charles of England in 1632 for the land that would become known as Maryland, he hoped that he could create a haven for fellow Catholics in the New World because of their ill treatment in predominantly Protestant England. In order to allay criticism, Calvert sent Protestants together with Catholics to colonize the area. Fighting between the two sides ended with an attempt at peace in 1649 when the General Assembly of Maryland passed "An Act Concerning Religion" which stated that "no person... shall henceforth be in any ways troubled, molested, or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion," as long as that religion was Christianity. In fact, others, such as Jews, could be executed for denying the validity of Christian precepts. In 1723, the death penalty was pushed off until the third offense of such a nature. A first-time offender would have his tongue bored, and a repeat offender would get a B branded to his forehead for blasphemy. Even in 1776, when Maryland adopted a new constitution, its Declaration of Rights read, "all persons professing the Christian religion are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty." This would stand until a member of Maryland's House of Delegates named Thomas Kennedy, who had never even met a Jew, would fight to extend freedom of religion to all. The introduction of the "Jew Bill" led to vicious verbal attacks on Kennedy and nearly wrecked his political career. The bill to constitutionally guarantee Jews freedom of conscience took eight years to finally pass in 1826. 🙏

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. "Jews and the Maryland Toleration Act." Jewish Press. 2011. Msa.maryland.gov. "Two Acts of Toleration: 1649 and 1826."

## Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

Please remember the Kollel with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

