

Fascinating INSIGHTS

ג' אדר תש"פ

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COMING SOON Bez"H

Fascinating Insights—The Sefer (in English)

[Excessive Eating](#)

The Ramban tells us that included in הקדושים תהיו¹ is רבוי האכילה הגסה, excessive eating, as that is sanctifying ourselves with that which is permitted to us.²

Excessive eating has Halachic ramifications. In explaining why one should leave room in his stomach for the third meal of Shabbos, the Mishna Brura³ writes that if he doesn't leave room for it and still eats this meal, it may be אכילת גסה which is not considered eating. Indeed, the Avudraham⁴ tells us that we have three meals on Shabbos because if we know there are three meals, we won't eat אכילת גסה, since one will eat at each meal what he needs then.

What about reciting a Bracha when one is satiated? One who is satiated before he eats and yet eats (אכילת גסה), if he is disgusted by it and doesn't get pleasure, shouldn't recite a Bracha before or after since it is not considered eating.⁵

In addition to this we know that overeating is physically dangerous. The Rambam writes אכילת גסה is a poison and is the cause of sickness.⁶ Likewise, Rabbeinu Yonah⁷ (1200-1263) warns us against אכילת גסה as it can

¹ Vayikra, 19:2, Ramban, s.v. לפיכך.

² There was a study done in which formerly heavy men and women were asked by researchers from the University of Florida if they would choose to be obese again or be afflicted with another malady. Each one of them chose another malady with 91 percent saying they would rather have a leg amputated and 89 percent saying they would rather be blind. What is the reason for such responses? The shame and lack of empathy heavy people endure as a result of their appearance. As someone said, "When you're blind, people want to help you. No one wants to help you when you're fat."

³ 29:4.

⁴ כתב. s.v. ענין של סעודת של שבת. The Sefas Emes writes in a letter that Kidush shouldn't be lavish in order that you should have an appetite for Seudas Shabbos (Nitei Gavriel, 3, Heara 15).

⁵ Mishna Brura 197:28. See Mishna Brura 476:6, 612:15.

⁶ Hilchos Daos 4:15. When one is sick he can't serve Hashem properly. This is one reason one should be careful to avoid overeating (See Hilchos Daos 4:1).

⁷ R' Yonah, Avos 2:12, s.v. וכל. He was a first cousin to the Ramban and was the Rebbe of the Rashba and the Ra'ah. In his youth he traveled to France to learn under one of the Baalei Tosafos, R' Shlomo Min Hahar. R' Yonah was a fierce opponent of the Rambam's philosophical views

cause great damage.⁸ The Rambam⁹ also states the secret of continual good health is to avoid overeating which causes great damage to the digestive system.¹⁰

What if one is unsure if he is satiated?¹¹ To see if one is full, he should wait 20 minutes because that is when the food is partially digested.¹²

and is considered to have been instrumental in having the Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim burned by the non-Jewish authorities in Paris in 1233. The tragic burning of 24 wagon loads of Gemaras that were burned in the same square by the Church in 1242, sparked R' Yonah to regret his past views and publicly admit his terrible mistake regarding the Rambam. While he strongly desired to go to the Rambam's grave in Eretz Yisroel to ask forgiveness, he never made it. Along the way he was in Barcelona for 3 years as he was detained. There he gave a shiur quoting the Rambam with awe. He then continued his journey and was detained in Toledo. There, he died suddenly. He was considered from the greatest of his generation and his death was mourned throughout the world. The Ramban wrote a moving קינה, lamentation about his greatness upon his death. His Sefer Shaarei Teshuva is considered one of the greatest Mussar works. R' Chaim Volozhin once commented that each Mussar Sefer is not appropriate for all people. While some may benefit from one, someone else may only benefit from another. However, he said Shaarei Teshuva is appropriate for every Jewish soul for all eras in all situations.

⁸ Of course one should enjoy the food (There were however Tzadikim who would eat with minimizing their pleasure in food, if not altogether avoiding the pleasure). It has been recommended to be present when eating. Look at the food, touch it and taste it with presence. See the colors of the food that make it appetizing. Feel the texture. Realize the ambiance. Recognize the nuances of the eating experience. Notice the people you are eating with. What is the conversation at the meal? Absorb the nutrients of your meal. If you are thinking about the past or future, let it go. If you are about to eat under stress or your mind is in high gear, it has been suggested to sit in a comfortable position with your spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor. Then deeply inhale to 2/3 capacity of your lungs. Hold your breath for several seconds and exhale fully. Repeat this 10 times.

⁹ In his medical writings, 1. The Pele Yoatz (אכילה ושתייה), s.v. (וכן) writes some of the evils caused by overeating: it is בל תשחית since it is a waste of food. Excess eating is a waste of time since it is unnecessary. That is not even including the time he spends in the bathroom because of it. Additionally, one may become ill due to overeating (see also Sefer Charedim 66,94).

¹⁰ Besides that being overweight makes such a person more susceptible to diabetes, heart disease and a host of other serious medical problems it also can make him unhireable when he is looking for a job. Also, many times, one earns more if he weighs less [There are diets named after places where rich people live—for example, *The Scarsdale Diet* (1978), *The Beverly Hills Diet* (1981) or *The South Beach Diet* (2003)— since such people are considered to be slimmer than poor people.]. Various studies have shown that overweight people are seen as less conscientious, less agreeable, less emotionally stable, less productive, lazy, lacking in self-discipline, and even dishonest, sloppy, ugly, socially unattractive and the list goes on. The stereotypes run so deep that even obese people hold these same discriminatory beliefs about other obese people.

¹¹ The Rambam (Hilchos Daos 4:14) writes that undereating is one of the three ways that one avoids illness. He also (Hilchos Daos 4:2) writes that you shouldn't eat until your stomach is full (see Shemos 16:8, Rashi) rather eat until you are about three-quarters full.

¹² To protect one from overeating one should be aware of the following. When eating, we should be seated since when we walk around grabbing food, we eat more. This can be from tasting food as we prepare meals, eating food out of packages and containers, taking bites of food from another's plate as we clear the table or nibbling on food when we open the fridge or pantry. Usually the food we eat while standing was not food we planned on eating as it is an impulsive eating. Always put the food on a plate and don't eat from a package or container. For example, if you are eating nuts from a package you may eat a lot more than if you, for instance, took out 14 nuts to eat.

We were told that the Shulchan in the Mishkan was to have a **זר הזהב**, gold crown.¹³ This hints to our desire for eating as this is what the Shulchan represents. Explains the Kli Yakar,¹⁴ if we have control over our desire for food then it is a **זר**, crown as we are free and like a king with a crown. If our desire controls us then it is **זר**, stranger, outsider.¹⁵ The Gra writes if one merits he consumes his food. If not, the food consumes him as he has great loss from it.¹⁶

The Malbim¹⁷ (1809-1879) remarks that a Tzadik eats what he needs for **רוחניות**, spirituality, just that which he needs to sustain himself. This is what is meant in the Pasuk **צדיק אוכל לשובע נפשו**, a Tzadik eats to satisfy his soul meaning that which he needs for spirituality. The wicked on the other hand eat to fill their stomachs. The saying goes “some people eat to live whereas others live to eat.” The Pri Tzadik notes Esav exclaims **הלעיטני**, pour into me some of that red stuff... as it stemmed from his tremendous desire for food.¹⁸

Some people may eat a food item because it is starting to spoil. However, this is not a reason to eat the food if you are not hungry. The son of the Divrei Chaim (1793-1876) once ate the half of an apple his father left over because it was beginning to rot. His father said ‘was the apple created to serve you or you to serve the apple? If you need to eat an apple now then eat it. If you don’t need to, then don’t. What difference does it make if the apple is about to rot?’¹⁹ We must keep in mind **בל תשחית** with respect to my body is more important meaning one’s health comes first.

Destructively Diminished

The Gemara says **מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקב"ה**²¹ since the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem has nothing in His world but the four Amos of Halacha. Why specifically four Amos?

The Gra²² explains as follows: We are taught²³ that the Torah was written on a scroll of 20 by 20 Amos,

¹³ Shemos 25:24.

¹⁴ Shemos 25:25.

¹⁵ The word **זר** means a crown as well as stranger.

¹⁶ Aderes Eliyahu. Incidentally, **לא תאכל הגפש עם הבשר**, (Devarim 12:23) can be interpreted to mean don’t eat your Neshama while you are eating. That is, eat like one who is a civilized person.

¹⁷ Mishlei 13:25.

¹⁸ Pri Tzadik, Chelek 2, Rosh Chodesh Shevat, p. 53a. Breishis 25:30. Tzadikim eat their food and enjoy it for the sake of Hashem. This is in contrast to the wicked who eat and enjoy the food only for its own sake. This is shown to us by Esav where Targum Onkolos states on **אטעמני**, **הלעיטני**, taste.

¹⁹ R’ Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg was once asked if it is considered **בל תשחית** to leave over some food (and not eat everything just because it is on one’s plate) to control one’s desire. He answered that just as it is permitted to make a potato into a doll and it is not **בל תשחית** since you are using it for a constructive purpose, likewise the same applies here since what can be better than working on your Middos and controlling your desire for food.

²⁰ Shabbos 129a.

²¹ Brachos 8a, Rashi s.v. **דלויי**.

²² Hamaor Hagadol, p. 546-7.

²³ Eruvin 21a with Rashi.

which is 400 Amos. Sefarim²⁴ tell us that prior to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash in the days of Hillel and Shamai there were 600 orders of Mishnayos. The elders of Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel saw the people’s hearts diminished due to the destruction and therefore only six orders of Mishnayos (**ששה סדרי משנה**) were arranged, leaving the rest behind (594). That is 1/100 of what it originally was. So there were 600 orders of Mishnayos when it was 400 Amos. Just as the Mishnayos is 1/100 what it was—from 600 to 6—so too 1/100 of 400 is 4 (Amos). This is the meaning in since the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem has nothing in His world but the **four Amos** of Halacha.

In the name of the Baal Shem Tov a different explanation is given: The symptom of the Beis Hamikdash being destroyed is that we believe Hashem can only be found in the four Amos of Halacha (Torah). However, the truth is **אין עוד מלבדו**, there is none other than Hashem and that in everything we can find godliness.

Meritorious Adar

Did we ever think of this time of year as a time for Teshuva? Well, the Chidushai Harim²⁵ informs us that **אדר** is a time of Teshuva before Nissan just as **אלול** is before **תשרי**. In fact, the well-known Pasuk²⁶ **איש לרעהו** contains the initials **אדר**. Indeed, **אדר** is related to strength as in **אדיר במרום ה'**,²⁷ since we need to strengthen ourselves with Teshuva.

So what is the difference between **אדר** and **אלול**? **אדר** is תשובה מאהבה whereas **אלול** is תשובה מיראה. The Tikunai Zohar compares Purim to Yom Kippur.²⁸ On Yom Kippur, which is in Tishrei, we received the second Luchos. That is **מיראה** as it was a continuation from Shavuos in which we were coerced. Purim on the other hand is תשובה מאהבה as we reaccepted the Torah—this time willingly.²⁹

The Gemara teaches that from **מאהבה**, Teshuva motivated by love, the **זדונות**, willful sins become merits.³⁰ This is what Adar is as it is **חודש אשר נהפך**! It can reverse one’s sins into merits.³¹ With this we can appreciate the depth in **לולא התמהמהנו...שבנו זה פעמים**³² If one didn’t do Teshuva in Elul as **לולא** consist of the same letters as **אלול**, then **זה שבנו**—do Teshuva now in the 12th month (Adar as it says **אדר...עשר חדש**³³) as **זה** has a Gematria of 12.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tzt"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

²⁴ Sefer Krisus of the **מקינות** ר"ש and the Sefer Hakaneh Hakadosh.

²⁵ Likutai Harim, Chodesh Adar, s.v. **כמו**.

²⁶ Esther 9:22.

²⁷ Tehillim 93.

²⁸ Purim and Yom Kippur each have a **גרל** (lottery) as well as both being a Kabbalas Hatorah.

²⁹ Shabbos 88a.

³⁰ Yoma 86b.

³¹ Esther 9:22.

³² Breishis 43:10.

³³ Esther 9:1.