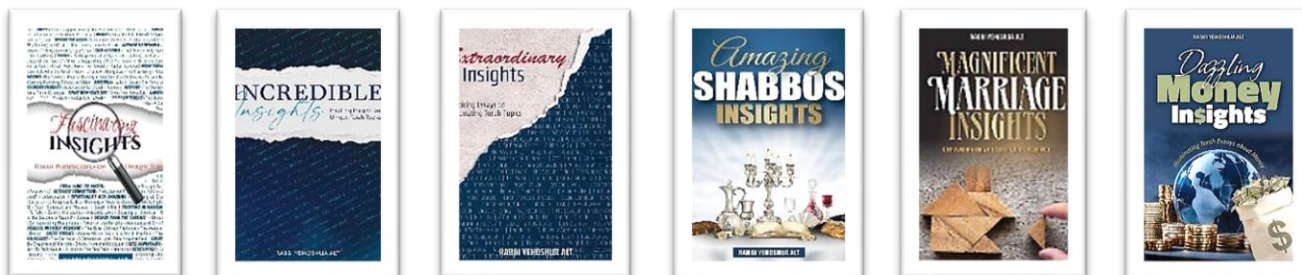


Fascinating INSIGHTS

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Gentle Jews

In July 1938, delegates from thirty-two countries met at the French resort of Evian to deal with the Jewish refugee problem. With the exception of the tiny Dominican Republic, no country was willing to accept more refugees. The countries that refused included the United States, Britain, France and Australia who offered excuses for not letting in refugees. Why did the Dominican Republic allow entry to Jews whereas the other countries refused? Rafael Trujillo who was the dictator of the Dominican Republic at that time had a daughter that went to school in France. When the events in Europe were turning against the Jews,¹ this girl would tell her father that there was only one girl who cared and was kind to her, and she was a Jew. We don't know the identity of this Jewish girl but it was because of her that thousands of Jews were saved!

After Israeli officials met with the leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin, in 2017, Putin invited them for a state dinner. At the dinner, Putin, in a casual conversation, related a childhood story. He mentioned that he was an only child and that although his parents worked extremely

hard, they were very poor. On his block there was a nice family he really liked who would constantly host him. He would play there on many afternoons, they would feed him at times and even help him with his homework. He noted that on Friday, the mother of this family would light candles followed by a festive meal soon after. When he grew older, he realized that this family was Jewish. Since then, he said that he always tried to treat Jews as well as he could.²

Eggs and Cholent

Even though the Yerushalmi³ tells us that it is prohibited to mourn on Shabbos, the mourning over Moshe is different like the gemara⁴ says that the mourning for Moshe was especially intense. This is showcased in certain foods we eat on Shabbos. The custom of eating eggs, which is a mourner's food, on Shabbos is because Moshe passed away on this holy day.⁵ This custom is also cited in Shyarei Knesses Hagedola⁶ who writes that it is even better to eat the eggs by the third meal of Shabbos, when Moshe passed away.

¹ When Moshiach comes, we will see in hindsight how every event fit in the right place, just like a puzzle where all the pieces fit perfectly. In this way, we can understand חסדו וחסדו יחדיו יחדיו (ה' אמת צדקו יחדיו יחדיו) the judgements of Hashem are true, altogether righteous (Tehillim 19:10). The word יחדיו indicates when we view them all together, as an inseparable unit.

² Heard from Rivka Ravitz, who heard the story from Putin at the dinner.

³ Brachos 2:7.

⁴ Moed Katan 21a.

⁵ Piskei Talmid Ha'Rashba, Minhagim 27.

⁶ Orach Chaim, 288.

R' Rafael Meizlish⁷ writes that the reason we eat *kitniyos*, beans (referring to the beans of cholent) on Shabbos (which is a mourner's food) is due to mourning for Moshe who passed away on Shabbos.

Tosafos⁸ cites Rav Sar Shalom Gaon that the reason we say *tzidkascha* ("Your righteousness") on Shabbos at Mincha is because that is when Moshe passed away. The Bach⁹ adds that the Zohar¹⁰ informs us that Yosef and Dovid Hamelech also passed away on Shabbos at Mincha time. As a result, we say [pesukim that begin with the word] *tzidkascha* three times.

Dissolving Dissonance

The natural tendency of people is that they become irritable as a result of hunger. There is even a word for this — "hangry." It is a contraction of the words "hungry" and "angry."

Couched in the words of the mishna, התקן עצמך בפרוודור, prepare yourself in the lobby,¹¹ is marriage advice. That is, before a spouse enters their home, they should prepare themselves. Included in this is not to enter the house hungry which can lead to being short-tempered. After being away all day, instead of entering the house hungry, eat something before you come home.¹²

Once when R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was being driven home, he asked the driver if could remain in the car for an extra few minutes. He then opened up his briefcase, took out a bag with a piece of cake and ate it. Then he exited the car and entered his house. The next day the driver asked him what that was all about. R' Shlomo Zalman explained, "I typically eat something in yeshiva before heading home. This is in order that I not come home on an empty stomach, which may cause me to be irritable. Yesterday, I was so busy that didn't have time to eat before heading home."

Avoiding hunger can prevent a person from becoming angry. This is clearly expressed in the pasuk ויהיה כי ירעב ויתקצף, when he will be hungry, he will be angry.¹³ It is also overtly voiced in ונשבע לחם ונהיה טובים, when we were sated with food we lived well,¹⁴ and in ויאכל בעו וישת וייטב לבו, Boaz ate and drank and his heart was merry.¹⁵ So let's follow the advice of the rhyme, "Eat some food so you'll be in a good mood."

After Yosef was thrown into the pit, it says about the brothers להם לאכל לאכול, they sat to eat food.¹⁶ The Agra D'kalla is bothered how the brothers could possibly sit down to eat when Yosef was in such a bitter state. Even when a Beis Din (of at least 23 judges) has a person put to death the judges are not allowed to eat that entire day.¹⁷ The explanation the Agra D'kalla gives is the following. The pasuk is telling us the righteousness of the brothers. They themselves had this question of how were they not concerned with Yosef's situation and Yaakov's pain as a result. The brothers thought that possibly they were angry as a

result of being hungry, since we know that when a person is hungry he is susceptible to anger and when he is satiated he is happier and in a better state. The brothers thought that maybe their cruelty and anger were because they were not in a good state due to hunger. Therefore they ate food in order to evaluate this. They reasoned that maybe after they eat, they will not have any anger.

Research shows that judges make very different decisions depending on whether they're hearing the case before or after they eat. More than 1,000 judicial rulings by eight Israeli judges who presided over parole hearings in criminal cases were examined. These judges were followed around for 10 months while they decided on applications to be released from prison on parole. They granted around two-thirds of parole applications at the start of the day, but that proportion fell to near zero before the twice-daily food breaks. After eating, the proportion of prisoners released rebounded to two-thirds again.



The Sefas Emes Hakadmon¹⁸ that the eating on Erev Yom Kippur is to put people in a good mood, so they will be willing to forgive their fellow man. He writes that atonement is more contingent on the ninth day of Tishrei than on the tenth (i.e., Yom Kippur) because on the ninth day, the Jewish people make peace with one another, as chazal say, for a sin between man and his fellow, one is not forgiven before he receives his forgiveness. This is why Hashem gave the mitzvah to eat and drink on the ninth so that he will be in a happy mood because before a person eats, he can get irritated more easily.

A gabbai of a large shul in New York related that during a period of time there were a number of cases of discord and contention transpiring in shul. He noticed that all these conflicts began after 10:30 (shacharis there began at 9). And so he figured that food was the missing ingredient. Indeed it is written, הן לריב, not eating can lead to grievance and strife. With the Rav acquiescing, a 15-minute kidush would take place prior to Krias Hatorah. It turns out that the kidush is what did the trick as there were no disputes anymore.²⁰



Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander zt"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of six books including the recently released Dazzling Money Insights. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2] where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

⁷ in his sefer Tosefes Shabbos, 290:1. He was a grandson of the Chelkas Mechohak and was a dayan in the Bes Din of R' Itzik of Hamburg.

⁸ Menachos 30a, s.v. *mi'kan*.

⁹ Orach Chaim, 292.

¹⁰ Teruma, p. 156a.

¹¹ Avos 4:21. Simply this is referring to this world and the next. This world is like a lobby before the world to come.

¹² In the words of R' Menachem Mendel of Riminov (cited in the Agra D'kalla to Breishis 37:25): When a person comes from the outside into his house, he shouldn't enter his house hungry. This is so that he shouldn't get angry at his family members.

¹³ Yeshaya 8:21. A Jewish poet once wrote:

When you are hungry for bread you will kill, but when you are hungry for G-d, you give life.

When you are hungry for bread you will steal, but when you are hungry for G-d you give.

When you are hungry for bread you will lie, but when you are hungry for G-d you will tell the truth.

When you are hungry for bread you are so empty, but when you are hungry for G-d you are so full.

When you are focused on the physical the outcome is negative, but when you are focused on the spiritual the outcome is positive.

¹⁴ Yirmiya 44:17.

¹⁵ Rus 3:7.

¹⁶ Breishis 37:25.

¹⁷ Sanhedrin 63a.

¹⁸ Quoted in Ein Yaakov, Yoma, 81b, Anaf Yosef, s.v. *ela*.

¹⁹ Yeshaya 58:4. Simply this means, "Because you fast for grievance and strife."

²⁰ A speaker once suggested that if you are in a bad mood, ask yourself, "Am I tired or hungry?"