

Just One Less

"I'm a bit hungry dear. Can we stop to get something to eat?"
"Of course, my dear. There's a kosher restaurant on the next street."
"Are you hungry?"
"Not at all. I just ate a full meal about an hour ago."

The couple enters the restaurant, seat themselves, and begin to look over the menu.

"Yes, may I take your order, ma'am?"
"Thank you waiter. I'll have the dieter's delight salad and a diet soft drink."
"Thank you ma'am. And you sir?"
"I'll have the seven course steak dinner with all the trimmings."
"Thank you sir."

The wife is a bit surprised at her husband's sudden appetite.

"I thought you said that you weren't hungry dear?"
"I'm not, but I just can't resist food."

The waiter brings the food. The wife eats her dieter's salad while her husband relishes over his seven-course steak dinner.

"Mmmm. This is delicious."

The waiter returns to clear the dishes.

"Would you like some dessert ma'am?"
"I'll just have a cup of tea, thank you."
"And you sir?"
"What desserts do you serve?"
"I'll wheel out the dessert cart."

The waiter returns with a cart filled with cakes, pastries, pies, and cream puffs.

"Everything looks so delicious. It's hard to decide. What shall I do? I know. I'll have one of each dessert. I love food."

"You shall be holy, because I Hashem your G-d am Holy" (Vayikra 19:2). What is holiness? Hashem is holy. His ways are different from the ways of the world. The world runs on natural laws. He is above nature. The world is physical. He has no physical body. He is holy. How can we, physical flesh and blood beings, be holy?

The Ramban zt"l explains. The Torah permits certain foods. They are called kosher. All other foods are not kosher. We may eat kosher food. However, that is only half of the story. A person could gorge himself on

kosher food and become a "novol bi'rishus haTorah" (a loathsome person who is within the letter of the law). He has not sinned by eating non-kosher food. However, he is missing something. Holiness. One must abstain from excesses. Minimize his physical desires. Downplaying the physical strengthens the spiritual. That is holiness.

The Sefer HaChinuch elaborates on this point in Mitzvah 248 – *ben sorer u'moreh* (the rebellious son). The majority of a person's sins come from excessive eating and drinking, as the verse states, "Yeshurun became fat and kicked" (Devarim 32:15). The reason goes deep into the nature of a person. We are made of two parts, physical (body) and spiritual (soul). These are two opposites. When one is strengthened, the other is weakened. Mitzvos are tied to the soul. Excessive indulgence causes the physical to overpower the spiritual and leads to all sorts of sins. Therefore, the Torah commands us to be holy. Restrain yourself from those things which are permitted.

Kinderlach . . .

Do not overindulge in kosher food. Abba and Imma give us treats for a reason. For example, to enjoy Shabbos. If we eat too many treats, then we are overindulging. We do not have to eat up all of the cookies on the table. If we each leave one cookie, then we are already learning to control ourselves. That is the first step toward holiness.

The Love Book

"Where are you going Yossie?"
"Outside to play, Imma."
"Who are you going to play with?"
"Dovid."
"Yossie, do you ever play with Yankie?"
"Not really."
"He's a very nice boy."
"I know. We just never got started on the right foot. I don't really like him."
"Would you like to be his friend?"
"Sure, Imma."
"Would you like some advice on how to be his friend?"
"Yes, Imma."
"Tell me something good about Yankie."
"He's a good student."
"Okay. I'm writing this down. 'I like Yankie because he's a good student.' What other good things can you tell me about him?"

"He's very polite."

"I like Yankie because he is very polite."

And so, Yossie and his mother continue writing down Yankie's good points. Each one begins with, "I like Yankie because . . ."

"Okay Yossie. Everything is written down. Please read this list.

Yossie reads through the list. He begins to warm up towards Yankie. He feels better and better about him, as he mentions each of his good points.

"You know, Imma, Yankie is a pretty good guy."

"He has many good points, Yossie. If you want to befriend Yankie, read this list over once a day. You will focus on his good points, and like him."

"You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18). Sometimes this mitzvah is easy and sometimes it is hard. Some people are more difficult to love than others. Yet, we must make our best effort to love all of our countrymen. Spend time thinking about the other person's good points. Then write them down. Review the list daily. Watch you feelings of love grow.

Kinderlach . . .

The mitzvah of loving our fellow Jews is very important. It is the source of all good middos (character traits). It will stamp out loshon hora, jealousy, and hatred. It will increase peace and unity and ultimately bring moshiach. How do we learn to love someone? Write a book about him called the "Love Book". This book is a list of all of his good points. Each point begins with the words, I love him because he is _____. Read the Love Book every day. See how easy it is to love a Jew.

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