

# DO YOU NEED IT OR JUST WANT IT?

## CASE STUDY

Leah is doing well in school but feels that she would benefit from a new iPad. She tells her parents that it will greatly enhance her academic and social life and she is even willing to contribute to some of the cost. Her parents feel that she doesn't need one.

**How should they resolve the issue? How do we balance wants and needs?**

## THE SOURCE

וְהָאֶסְפָּסָף אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הִתְאוּוּ תְאוּוֹתַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יֵאֱכַלְנוּ בָּשָׂה וְזָכְרָנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֵן אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבֹטְחָיִם וְאֶת הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת הַשּׁוּמִים. וְעַתָּה נַפְשֵׁנוּ יִבֶּשֶׂה אֵין כֹּל בְּלִתִּי אֶל הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ.

במדבר יא:ד-ו

The multitudes among them craved a craving and the Jewish people also cried and they said, "Who will feed us meat?" We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge; the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

Now our life is parched, there is nothing except the manna to look at.

Bamidbar 11:4-6

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1) The complainers were subsequently punished for their desires. What was wrong with asking for meat?

2) If the Jewish people had cattle when they left Egypt and entered the Land of Israel with cattle, why did they complain that they had no meat to eat?

3) What do you think is meant by התאוות תאוות, they craved a craving? Why doesn't it simply say "they craved"?

### Insight #1

Cravings and desires have the ability to take over one's thoughts and cause one to make irrational decisions.

R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Michtav Me'Eliyahu Vol IV* pg. 305-306

### Insight #2

When the Jews were in the desert, the only permissible means of eating meat was by offering a sacrifice. Those who complained wanted to eat meat without having any religious activity associated with it.

R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshech Chochma*, Bamidbar 11:4

### Insight #3

As the Jewish people were fed manna on a daily basis, they didn't need or even crave meat. Rather, what they missed was the feeling of craving for meat—they craved a craving.

R. Yisrael Meir Kagan, *Chafetz Chaim Al HaTorah* pg. 195

**Digging Deeper:** How can you determine if someone's desires are rational or not?

**Digging Deeper:** Ideally, they should have embraced the religious aspects of eating meat elevating it to a holy activity. How would you relate this idea to the case study?

**Digging Deeper:** What questions should a person ask to determine whether a want or a craving is appropriate? What questions would you ask Leah in the case study?

# Additional Texts for Further Exploration

R. Ami and R. Asi had the following dispute: One said that the manna could taste like anything except the five species (the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic) and one said that the manna could taste and feel like any food, but regarding these [five species] the manna can only taste like them, but not feel like them.

Yoma 75a

רבי אמי ורבי אסי חד אמר טעם כל המינין טעמו במן טעם חמשת המינין הללו לא טעמו בו וחד אמר טעם כל המינין טעמו טעמן וממשן והללו טעמן ולא ממשן יומא עה.

**If the people had so many different tastes to choose from, why do you think they had such a strong desire for these five species?**

R. Elazar HaKappar son of Rebbi says, [The verse states regarding a nazir] "And he must atone for sinning against the soul." Which soul did he sin against? Rather it is because he abstained from wine. One can draw an inference, if one who only abstained from wine is called a sinner, one who abstains from everything should certainly [be considered a sinner]. From here we see that one who fasts [when not mandated] is considered a sinner.

Nedarim 10a

ר' אלעזר הקפר ברבי אומר וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש וכי באיזו נפש חטא זה אלא שציער עצמו מן היין והלא דברים ק"ו ומה זה שלא ציער עצמו אלא מן היין נקרא חוטא המצער עצמו מכל דבר על אחת כמה וכמה מכאן כל היושב בתענית נקרא חוטא.  
נדרים י.

**When the nazir abstains from wine, he is also abstaining from certain religious activities such as Kiddush. Do you think we should equally criticize someone who only abstains from wants, not needs?**

A person should make sure that all of his/her actions are focused on knowing God... How is this? When one does business, it should not be for the sole purpose of accumulating wealth. Rather these activities should be performed so that one has the means of taking care of physical needs such as eating, drinking, paying for one's home and getting married. Similarly, when one eats and drinks ... one should not perform these activities simply for the purpose of enjoyment ... Rather, one should make sure that one's body is healthy and strong in order that one can properly know God. For it is impossible to understand and contemplate matters of wisdom when one is starving, ill or in pain ... Even when one sleeps, if one sleeps in order to give rest to one's body ... sleeping can also be a form of service of God. On these matters, the rabbis stated "All of one's actions should be for the sake of heaven."

Rambam, Hilchot Dei'ot 3:2-3

צריך האדם שיכוון לבו וכל מעשיו כולם לידע את השם ברוך הוא בלבד... כיצד כשישא ויתן או יעשה מלאכה ליטול שכר. לא יהיה בלבו לקבוע ממון בלבד אלא יעשה דברים האלו כדי שימצא דברים שהגוף צריך להם מאכילה ושתיה וישיבת בית ונשיאת אשה וכן כשיאכל וישתה ... לא ישים בלבו לעשות דברים האלו כדי ליהנות בלבד ... אלא ישים על לבו שיהא גופו שלם וחזק כדי שתהיה נפשו ישרה לדעת את ה'. שאי אפשר שיבין וישתכלל בחכמות והוא רעב וחולה או אחד מאיבריו כואב ... ואפילו בשעה שהוא ישן אם ישן לדעת כדי שתנוח דעתו עליו וינחה גופו כדי שלא יחלה ולא יוכל לעבוד את ה' והוא חולה, נמצאת שינה שלו עבודה למקום ברוך הוא. ועל ענין זה צו חכמים ואמרו וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים.

רמב"ם הל' דעות ג:ב-ג

**In what ways can we make leisure activities part of our service of God?**

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