

Tani Talks Life: "To Live to Eat or To Eat to Live?"

TTL, TTOT, TTPA, TTP on different podcast forums

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For the yeshuah and refuah of anyone who wants or needs one

How often does our mouth water when we think of a yummy and delicious food? How often do we count down the hours until we can eat a nice hot home-cooked meal? Do you ever catch yourself thinking of where the next place you can order takeout is or when the next time you'll get food delivered?

Chances are if you're anything like me, the answer to those questions is... quite often. The question becomes though, why is that? Why are we so geared toward the gastrointestinal? Doesn't it all end up the same way in our stomach? Isn't it just fuel for the body at the end of the day?

The other question is can it be fuel for the soul as well? Can we elevate our physical eating and drinking to a higher level? The answer, I believe, is, yes we can. Judaism teaches us to take the physical to lift it to the spiritual such as to make a blessing on our food before and after eating it.

I'm all for good food, good snack, and a good meal. But is that the main point of my day? Of my life? Of my existence?

The main real question therefore becomes is it that food is for us a fuel or a reason? Do we live to eat or eat to live?

As Elul is now upon us and a few of our holidays, very food-centric, are coming, it behooves us to think about how we view food and think about food. How many gatherings revolve around food? Holidays and shabbat revolve around food. Reunions, birthday parties, weddings, bris's, engagement parties, and so much more all revolve around food. Food is a central aspect to our life and existence, but is it THE central aspect?

Aish.com points out with author emuna braverman

Rabbi Weinberg used to frequently ask "Are you living to eat or eating to live?"

Whatever the reality of our lives, we all knew the right answer. We are eating to live.

Food is a means, not an ends.

That doesn't mean it shouldn't taste good. That doesn't mean it shouldn't be presented attractively. The Almighty has given us a rich world and we should enjoy it. But with focus. With discipline. With perspective.

For Shabbos and holidays, the meals should be extra special. We do want our bodies to sigh with pleasure. But only because the goal is to deepen our appreciation of the day and our gratitude to the Creator. It is never about the food alone.

We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that food is meant to sustain us so that we will have the strength to engage in meaningful pursuits and develop our relationship with the Almighty.

Our forefather, Abraham, used to love to invite guests into his home and serve them a meal. He would use the opportunity to teach them to recognize the source of this nourishment through the saying of blessings. It was never about the food.

-->Realize the food should be used as a means to accomplish, a fuel, a means to get things done in this world once we have the gas in our tanks.

Rabbi Belovski explains on aish.com

If we investigate closely, we will be able to detect two distinct elements involved in the act of eating. The first, and most obvious, is that the food enters our bodies and is digested. This gives us the nutrients we need to live healthy lives. But there is a second, less apparent purpose. All of our food comes from plants and animals, both of which are lower forms of life than we. By ingesting them and allowing them to become part of us, we raise them to a higher form of existence. That is, we take their very limited spiritual potential and attach it to our more sophisticated and valuable mode of life. In Kabbalistic terms, we take the worlds of the *tzamei'ach* (plant life) and *chai* (animal life) and raise them to the level of *medaber* (human life).

Think about our weekly Shabbos meals. Shabbos is imbued with sufficient *kedushah* that we could imbibe it throughout the day and have no need for food or clothing to sustain us. However, Shabbos is not just an opportunity to develop our own *kedushah*, but also a chance to raise the level of the *kedushah* of our environment. Thus, by eating fine foods and wearing our best clothes on Shabbos, we enable those things to attach themselves to their spiritual roots and to become elevated with us.

--Take the food and make sure to elevate it and uplift it--don't just use it to stuff your face or stomach.

Rabbi Winston point out on aish.com

Jewish law instructs us to make a blessing over food that we are about to enjoy. If you are hungry, and you want to eat a nice, red, delicious apple, then you will have to make the special blessing for fruit of the trees. If it is bread that you are about to sink your canines into, then you'll make the blessing for eating bread. Fish, eggs, orange juice – you name it, they all require a blessing before being enjoyed.

So the next time you chance upon a person who seems to be talking to his food before eating, you might ask him, "What are you doing? Why are you talking to your food?"

He, of course, would answer (hopefully), "I am not talking to my food, I am talking to God. I am hungry, so I am making a blessing so that I can eat this sandwich with His permission."

Is he right? On a simplistic level, yes. He is making a blessing so that he can eat.

However, on a more Kabbalistic level, the true answer would be, "I am about to eat this apple so that I can make a blessing."

"What? You're eating so that you can make a blessing?"

"Yes, correct again. When one makes a blessing over food, it elevates sparks that are contained in the food and the person himself. And after all, elevating sparks is what life in this world is all about. Right?"

Food, in fact, is just physical clothing to hide the spiritual sparks within it. It is not apples or vitamins that keep us alive – otherwise they'd be able to revive dead people as well (which of course, they cannot). It is the sparks they hide inside that feed the soul, which in turns provides life for the body.

--Gather up the sparks around you on the world, especially in the food and recognize where those sparks really come from.

Aish.com points out with author gitta bixespanner

Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, lean meats and fish, olive and flaxseed oils as the main components of our diet. Without effort, we will be consuming a rich variety of essential nutrients that will promote optimal health and energy.

Use monounsaturated fats like pure extra virgin olive oil that does not increase the risk for cardiovascular disease, rather than hydrogenated fats also called trans-fatty acids or trans-fats.

Use foods rich in heart-healthy, anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, walnuts, and flax seeds.

Favor only lean meats that afford us more protein with less saturated fat.

Think about ingesting skim milk, especially my personal favorite brand, that of "Skim Plus" which is skim milk with the taste of real full milk.

Avoid white sugar, "white" wheat, white pasta and white refined rice. Use whole grain, such as whole wheat and brown rice and noodles. By avoiding these highly refined foods, which have had the majority of their key nutrients removed and remain good sources only of simple sugars and refined carbohydrates, we will lower our risk of high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, obesity, Type II diabetes and other things.

In addition, the author points out,

1. Eat only whole grain foods. Fresh produce is best.
2. Keep meals simple. They are quicker and easier to prepare.
3. Eat slower. Helps you enjoy the meal longer without overeating.
4. Eat on a regular schedule. That will keep your metabolism and hunger in check.
5 pm for us, every day bli neder--
5. Avoid processed food thus nothing out of a box.
6. Limit eating out as much as possible.

7. Be sure to include the three body building basics in your meal planning: protein, carbs and fat
8. Don't drink your calories. Soft drinks (even diet) coffees and fruit juices can add a lot of empty calories to your daily intake.
9. Watch out for too much salt, sugar and fat. Moderation is key.
10. Get moving- make a conscious effort to exercise at least 30 minutes a day (weekdays and beyond), or a total of 150 minutes a week.-

--some shitos explain to get 180 minutes a week, or 30 minutes every 6 days.
G-d willing we may talk about this idea more in a future TTL, g-d willing.

Eating and living well maximizes your energy and optimizes your health, making it more than just a diet. It's a lifestyle, with built-in flexibility, meaning it can be adapted to fit most any kind of routine.

Try to balance your day and balance your meals, especially for little kids. I try to offer vegetables at most dinners I make for the family, including cauliflower, broccoli, or spinach on different nights.

Aish.com points out with author Emal Esmailzadeh

The average person spends at least one hour a day eating. So by the age of 30, you've spent the equivalent of two years just putting food in your mouth. How can we make this a more pleasurable, productive and meaningful experience?

1. Eat hungry.

When was the last time you pulled over at a gas station to fill up your tank that was already full? Probably never. But when was the last time you ate something when you weren't hungry?

Checking your hunger gauge before popping in that random bite will allow you to keep your weight in check as well as build your self-control. ...King Solomon also advises against the unnecessary consumption of food, saying "The righteous eat to satisfy their souls" ([Proverbs 13:25](#)).

2. Sit down.

Late to work? Running after the kids? Doing errands? No problem – it's just not the best time to be chomping down your meal. Although it may save time, it's a bad idea. The Rambam, in his magnum opus [Mishneh Torah](#) , says that one should *never* stand or walk while eating.

Modern research suggests that we consume fewer calories when we eat sitting down versus while standing up or walking. We are also more likely to digest food better when we sit down and chew our food properly.

3. Acknowledge.

You're hungry and sitting down to your meal, now recognize where the food comes from. Taking three seconds to acknowledge basic details of the culinary dish placed before you can set the tone for rest of the meal. Something as simple as verbally

acknowledging the work of the cook, especially if it is a parent or spouse, can have a profound effect on your mood. Paying attention to all of the individual ingredients can make the experience even more tasty.

In Judaism, every time food is consumed, one should recite a blessing of recognition prior to taking the first bite. A common misconception is that the blessing or *bracha* that is said before eating is a form of thanksgiving. This is not accurate; while the after-blessing of *Birkat Hamazon* mentions the act of thanksgiving, the initial blessing makes no mention of thanks. It is a statement acknowledging that God is the Creator of the food and we are essentially seeking permission to take His food.

4. Remove Distractions

One cannot fully enjoy a meal while answering emails or scrolling through a Facebook feed. Enjoying food is so important in Judaism that it incorporates the pleasure of eating in every one of its holidays. But we rob ourselves of this enjoyment every time we mindlessly eat.

Don't care about enjoyment? Distracted eating [causes](#) your digestion to be less [Research shows](#) that the more you distract yourself during a meal, the more pounds you add. Doing simple acts of mindfulness, such as paying attention to the smell, taste, appearance and texture of the food, can keep the focus on your meal.

5. Chew, Swallow, Wait... Repeat.

Ever mindlessly wolf down a meal in one minute? Scarfing down an entire meal can leave you feeling disheartened but it can also leave you with unwanted [extra fat](#) pounds.

Taking your body off of auto-pilot mode while eating has great spiritual benefits as well. In describing ways of going against animalistic eating habits, the great 19th century Iraqi sage Rabbi Yosef Hayim in his famous book, *Ben Ish Hai*, gives a recommendation that is sure to slow eating down. He writes that one should not reach for the next bite until the previous bite has been completely swallowed.

6. Appreciate.

Now that you're satiated and your spirit is recharged, it's time for some real thanksgiving (without the turkey). Saying thanks is much harder when you have somewhere else you want to go. Maybe that's why the only biblically ordained blessing is the Grace After Meals and not before the meal.

Being appreciative is a core Jewish value. In fact, Jews are called *Yehudim* from the word *L'hodot*, or *to thank*. Gratitude permeates the entire Jewish experience, from the [first words that are uttered by our lips](#) when we wake up in the morning, to mentioning our thanks three times a day in our prayers.

Appreciate the meals and where the food comes from. Take time to focus on the family present before you as well as the food in front of you. Eat slowly. Digest. Take it in bite by bite and understand where the food really comes from and who put it there.

I often think of the nathan's hot dog eating contest and I think to myself what's the point? That's the sport? Too eat as many hot dogs as possible in a short amount of time? Isn't it such a waste? Isn't it utterly disgusting and disgraceful? Guzzling and gorging down as many hot dogs as you can in a minute? Or any other food for that matter, that is not how food was intended. I find it downright degrading in a way.

Let's appreciate food and not gorge it.

When I cook food for our family or when I bake throughout the week and for shabbos or yom tov or the like, I try to make things they like, and try to put my effort into it. People can feel the love of the food you make, if you make it with your being invested in it.

Rebbetzin Twerski points out on aish.com

The great commentator Maimonides, himself a physician, devoted much time and space to teach about healthful eating and ways of conducting one's physical existence as part of mandated Jewish practice. In the Mishna Torah, Maimonides emphasizes the critical role of a balanced diet and lifestyle. An ascetic stance or denying healthful nutrition is not recommended. On the other hand he clearly eschews excesses. A middle of the road approach, somewhere between denial and excess, is the ideal standard. Don't fill your bellies to the maximum. Excessive indulgences in unhealthy food, he warns, are the source of all illnesses. Balance is the key word. He also advises those who are hooked on excesses to go to the other extreme and totally give up their addiction cold turkey in order to eventually arrive at the desirable middle of the road position. The key then in food, and really in all of life itself (except anger, arrogance, etc) is a middle of the road approach. Don't starve, but don't eat too much, go to the middle of the road.

Rabbi Forst points out on aish.com

The act of eating, which grants life to the human being, is itself the point of fusion between the spiritual and physical. It is the place where the combatants engage, where the ongoing struggle to forge a productive relationship between the physical and the spiritual is at its fiercest. Since eating, more than any other Jewish law, brings about the integration of these two opposing forces, it stands forever at the crossroads of life.

The issue of keeping kosher, in light of the above, is at the core of the struggle. The food one eats has a profound impact upon one's nature. Modern medicine has only recently discovered that the DNA present in every cell controls the nature of that organism. Similarly, every cell possesses a spiritual nature which is carried through the food chain. One who eats any particular animal ingests its nature and characteristics as well. The fact that this is not recognized by current medical knowledge is of no moment. Hence the famous term--"You are what you eat."

Hence, food is central to the struggle between the animal instincts in man and his soul. Certain foods strengthen the animal traits. Vegetative matter has no character and cannot affect man in any way. Animal matter, however, carries the nature of the animal and may be harmful to the spirit of man by influencing and strengthening his own animal traits or imparting to him a harmful nature. Ingestion of animal matter may affect a Jew adversely through absorption of debasing and defiling elements which will corrupt his soul. Absorption of these carriers of corruption will make it most difficult to grow in sanctity and closeness to God through the ascendancy of soul and the transformation of the body.

It is no wonder that all vegetative species are permitted by Torah law. These have no soul or character that can be absorbed by one who eats them. Indeed, the animals permitted by the Torah are all ruminators that subsist on vegetative matter alone. Thus the food chain is one of simple foods that cannot affect man in a significant manner. Species of animal and fowl that are carnivorous are those forbidden by the Torah, since one who eats of their meat will be influenced by their cruel nature. While we cannot expect to understand why each of the forbidden species is prohibited, we can understand and accept that God, who created all these species, understands their nature and prohibited those that may impact negatively in a spiritual sense.

The phrase really then can ring true--you are what you eat. Careful with what you put in your body, be mindful of what you are ingesting, think about what you stuff in your mouth...It really can affect you.

Listen to this story From aish.com with Nesanel Yoel Safran

"Hey, catch!" Jon shouted as he frisbee-flung his half-eaten mini-pizza across the long table to his friend, Alan. Well, Alan missed, but the pizza did manage to hit Chuck right on the sleeve of his new, white pullover; which of course led him to retaliate by fork-flinging a gooey piece of chocolate cake Jon's way, thus beginning a full-fledged food-fight.

The battle was just getting going when Mr. Isaacs, the school custodian, walked in, caught sight of it and began moving fast the boys' way. The kids knew that even though the custodian was old he was tough, so they called an immediate cease-fire and quickly retreated toward the safe territory of the schoolyard, leaving a giant-sized mess behind.

As Jon was about to duck out, something made him turn back and take one last peek. He'd expected to see the man either angrily shaking his fist at them, or maybe just quietly starting to clean up, but he saw neither. Instead he saw Mr. Isaacs holding his head between his two hands and crying!

Wow - we must have really gone too far this time, Jon thought. It must be just too big a mess for the older man to handle and he broke down over the thought of all that work. Jon liked to play around, but he didn't like to hurt people. Even though he'd get yelled at, he decided he was going to go back and help the custodian clean up the mess.

He sidled closer to the man, who was still weeping with his eyes closed. "Ahem," he cleared his throat. "I'm, um really sorry about this mess ... I know it's a huge clean-up job and I'm going to help, just ... um ... please don't cry because of the mess, um ... we made."

Mr. Isaacs turned to him and gave Jon a look that felt like it was going right through him. Not angry - just intense and very sad.

"Well," he said. "I see you're a good, honest boy who's not afraid to own up to what he's done. So I'll tell you the truth. I wasn't crying because I have to clean up your mess."

"You're not?" Jon asked, surprised. The man shook his head.

"No, I realize kids will be kids and besides, in my life I've done work so hard, that it would make this seem like a picnic in the park."

"So, then, um, why..."

"Why was I crying? I was crying to see such a terrible disrespect for food. You may not understand this - and maybe it's good that you don't - but when I was a boy your age...", he paused and sighed, "...I was in a terrible place. A place where people had barely enough food to survive ... sometimes not even that."

Jon felt goose bumps as the man, who had begun silently weeping again, went on. "But thanks to the good Lord, I somehow made it out of there, and now, just like you, I have all the food I could ever eat. But...", he looked Jon straight in the eye, "...unlike you, because of what I went through, I realize every bit of food is a precious gift from God - a precious gift of life. So when I saw you boys treating food like a toy, or like worthless garbage, it just sort of made me remember all those old feelings of hunger and fright from way back when, and that's when the tears started to come."

"I'm really sorry, Mr. Isaacs," Jon said with his head low. "I didn't mean to..."

"Of course you didn't," the man said, now with a clear, forgiving smile. "You go out and play now - I'll take care of this. Just promise me that the next time you feel like acting disrespectfully to a piece of food, you'll try to think of the boy who didn't have any - and what a precious gift it is, that you do."

Jon had lots to think about as he walked out of the cafeteria that day, but one thing he knew already - that he had just been part of the last food-fight of his life.

---We all should try to think about what food really is and where it comes from, and not to waste it. Be aware of the aviera of "Bal tashchis", wasting ans to avoid it as best we can. Food is a terrible thing to waste or to take for granted.

When we think about how precious food is, and how many in the world don't have it or have access to it, we should realize its a special gift. Some parts of the world live in a "food desert" or a "supermarket desert" without access to food or markets of any kind. There's a famous phrase, which the red cross organization of Canada mentions as well: --"If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep... ... then you are richer than 75 per cent of this world"

We have to appreciate these things we take for granted, especially food, and not make it as a main epitome activity of the day, but something we do along the way of our journey of the day.

Think about wonderful organizations that give food to those who need it--such as tomchei shabbos, masbia, food banks, and the like. Masbia does it in a beautiful way, making it like a restaurant. Tomchei shabbos gives food in respectful private manners, our local food bank has a beautifully stocked area people can come to, and even the food pickup recently has been helpful for so many--a real helpful idea and such a mitzvah!

Masbia.org explains on their website about their three locations:

Flatbush, Queens, Boro Park

Masbia is a nonprofit soup kitchen network and food pantry, everyday providing hot, nutritious meals for hundreds of New Yorkers in desperate need of food. Alongside our hot-meal program, we also give out bags of much-needed groceries every week to those with not enough at home, through our weekend take-home package program. Masbia works to not only feed the hungry, but to provide free, wholesome, and delicious meals for people in a restaurant-style environment, with volunteer waiters serving each person with respect and dignity.

Masbia Soup Kitchen Network's emergency food programs serve over 2 million meals a year in two main categories. We serve roughly 100,000 hot, sit down dinners to clients at our restaurant like soup kitchens, and the rest in emergency care packages with the equivalent of 9 meals worth of groceries for every member of the family.

Masbia goes to great lengths to provide nutritious food to their clients, including as much fresh produce as possible. The meal, which is served by volunteer waiters, includes a starter salad, beverage, soup, a protein (like chicken or fish), two hot side dishes and dessert. We place great emphasis on serving our clients with dignity and respect, seen both in the food we serve and in the restaurant-like setting in which it is served. Providing these meals requires immense resources including a full time kitchen and chef, hundreds of weekly volunteers to prepare food, greet the guests and serve the clients. Our hot dinner service caters to the old and frail, the homeless and people who are in a crises situation with no means to cook for themselves. We serve roughly 2,000 hot dinners each week out of our three locations.

The gold standard of an emergency food package is to include enough food for three meals for three days for every member in the family. We model our packages on the MyPlate meal size recommendations, which includes grains, fruits and vegetables and protein. The package size varies relative to family size (they have a guide for how they create the packages). The packages cater more to women and children who have a home to cook in but have no means to buy raw ingredients.

Isn't that just amazing? To be able to serve food in a beautiful manner in a restaurant fashion really give people the respect and love and care that they need that they may feel sorely lacking due to a variety of reasons.

& think of tomchei Shabbos, especially queens
Many branches

Our Mission

To serve as "middlemen" between the hungry & those willing to share.

To do so on an all-volunteer basis.

To spend at least 90 cents of each donated dollar on food for distribution.

What do we do?

For more than thirty years, TSQ has provided food packages on a weekly basis to needy families & individuals throughout Queens, NY. Services have expanded into parts of Long Island which are underserved. Presently, approximately 400 packages are delivered weekly.

Who are the recipients?

The scope of recipients varies widely. She might be a woman with children whose husband has left...or an elderly couple on a very limited pension...a family whose breadwinner has suddenly lost his or her job...families where illness saps the resources...and other cases of despair. The common denominator is need.

Who refers our recipients?

*Local clergy who come in close contact with problem cases.
School principals and teachers who see children come to school having skipped breakfast.
Social workers who deal with human needs on a daily basis.*

Who are we?

We are all volunteers, encompassing the spectrum of ages and professions and backgrounds. Our shared goal-the care of our extended family-those among us who are in need.

How is this funded?

Over ninety five percent of our funding is through the generosity of individuals and firms who wish to see direct positive results for their contributions within their community.

No salaries are paid-----minimal operating overhead-----we purchase over 95% of the food products distributed.

Also a wonderful idea, to get people the groceries, the food they need so as to be as self sufficient as possible. Truly mi keamcha yisrael? Who is like the jewish people?

Think of also places in israel--

YadEliezer in Israel—food baskets

yad Leah clothing

When Was I Israel—food packing Thursday, RBS A, Yad Yosef hamashbir

Yad Eliezer

Wikipedia

Yad Eliezer is a Jewish poverty-relief organization in Israel. It is best known for its monthly distribution of thousands of family food packages, baby formula and baby food packages.

NOTICE HOW ALL THE NAMES HAVE YAD IN THEM, HAND!

The hands can give, especially food, to those who need it around us.

Listen to this amazing organization that works in Israel to stop the wasting of food. Leket Israel works to do just that.

From leket.org

Leket Israel, the National Food Bank, is the leading food rescue organization in Israel. Unique among all other organizations that serve the poor in Israel and food banks worldwide, Leket Israel's sole focus is rescuing healthy, surplus food and delivering it to those in need through partner nonprofit organizations.

The Vision

An Israel where all surplus, nutritious food is rescued and directed to those who need it.

The Mission

To lead the safe, effective and efficient collection and distribution of surplus nutritious food in Israel, to those who need it.

Why was the organization established?

Joseph Gitler immigrated to Israel from New York in 2000 and soon became acquainted with the statistics of poverty in the State of Israel. These statistics included the understanding that poverty referred to even those who work for a living yet struggle to survive on a daily basis and still remain below the poverty line.

In 2003, Table to Table, the precursor to Leket Israel, was established with the goal of **rescuing nutritious surplus food**, preventing food waste and helping to eliminate the problem of food insecurity. The organization soon became Israel's largest food and food distribution network.

What does Leket Israel do?

Leket Israel deals with harvesting surplus agricultural produce and collecting cooked meals then sorting and distributing them to the needy throughout the country. In addition, the Nutrition and Food Safety department ensures that the the collection and distribution of the food is held to the highest food safety regulations. Additionally, Leket Israel only donates 100% nutritious food.

Leket Israel works with a staff of professional dieticians who conduct nutrition workshops for targeted populations geared toward raising awareness of proper nutrition.

Leket Israel in Numbers

As of 2020:

- 105 employees

- 15,000 volunteers
- Logistics Center:
 - Storage area of about 6,000 square meters
 - Cooling capacity of about 10,000 cubic meters
- 27 dedicated vehicles
- 19,916 tons of food
- 100% healthy food
- 330 nonprofit organizations that receive food from Leket Israel and deliver it to 246,000 needy Israelis per week

In 2019, Leket Israel rescued:

- 40,758,000 lbs. of fruits and vegetables from farmers' fields and packing houses.
- 2,400,000 cooked meals from catering halls, hotels, hi-tech company cafeterias, events, and Israel Defense Forces & Israel Police bases.
- Food waste has severe consequences for society, the environment, and the economy. Food rescue addresses these problems by productively using surplus food instead of destroying it.

Food rescue is the distribution of quality, edible food that would otherwise have been discarded, to populations suffering from nutritional insecurity.

The food rescued by Leket Israel is distributed to 330 nonprofit organizations, including homeless shelters, soup kitchens, elderly centers, battered women's centers, community help organizations, and schools for at-risk youth. These nonprofit partners serve the food to approximately 246,000 Israelis in need every week, regardless of age, gender, religion, or ethnic background.

Now isn't that an amazing and innovative idea?

Further about Leket From author Adam Ross from aish.com

In 2018, Leket, the food rescue charity founded by New York lawyer Joseph Gitler, redistributed 20,000 tons of excess food to the poor, from wedding halls, restaurants and farms all over the country making it one of Israel's most important welfare institutions.

Gitler grew up in Washington Heights, NJ in a middle class Jewish family who moved to Teaneck when he was 15. Gitler became a lawyer and a comfortable life awaited him.

But after getting married and working in Manhattan for three years, he decided it was time to pull the rug on his life in America and move to Israel.

“I wanted to live in Israel ever since I was around 16,” he explains, tracing his decision back to years of learning about the country at Jewish day school and summer camps. “Israel was a central part of how I saw Judaism and I wanted to be a part of it.” His wife Leelah, originally from Toronto, felt the same way and they realized that it would be best to make the move when they were young.

“Leaving the material comforts of Teaneck behind was difficult,” Joseph says, “but telling my parents was harder.” The oldest of four children, his new baby daughter was the first grandchild in the family.

At age 25, he and his wife moved to Raanana, a leafy town, 20 kilometers north of Tel Aviv where Joseph worked for a successful software company.

Three years later, with two children and enjoying the hi-tech boom, Gitler read a news item that changed his life. Israel’s National Insurance Agency announced that despite an upturn in the economy, tens of thousands of Israelis were living below the poverty line. Joseph and his family were living a comfortable life but the harsh reality of the report stuck in his Joseph’s mind.

“We would go to weddings and celebrations of friends and see how much food was being thrown away,” he recalls. “It was something people always spoke about at events and restaurants. ‘They are wasting so much food!’ people would say. The waste really bothered me and I started thinking about connecting the dots.”

Gitler didn’t just settle on buying an extra recycling garbage can; he quit his well-paying job to schlep excess food from wedding halls and restaurants to the homeless shelters of Raanana.

“I had the luxury of having a few months savings, my wife and I worked out we could give it a go for three months and see what would happen.”

Joseph’s first hit was a local wedding hall called Eden on the Water. Armed with some plastic tupperware, he headed to the event around midnight as they were packing up. He tiptoed around caterers reassuring them that he wouldn’t get under their feet, but to his surprise he found the caterer couldn’t be happier to help. “They were just delighted not to be throwing so much away. In fact, everyone we approached was happy to help, both those giving the food, and those receiving it even if it meant opening up in the early hours or giving us keys to their premises. Everyone just said yes.”

Soon enough Gitler was delivering to homeless centers, shelters for battered women and homes for disabled children. The budget the charities were saving on food costs enabled them to allocate more funds to their other core activities.

As the quantities outgrew the capacity of his garage, Joseph found premises, received dozens of calls from volunteers answering his call asking for help and the organization Leket was born.

The name belongs to a mitzvah in the Torah originally intended for farmers stipulating that when ears of corn fell to the ground during reaping, they were not to be picked up, but rather left for the poor. It was one of a set of Torah laws relating to farmers, the gatekeepers of the economy, to look after the hungry.

“We work with many farms,” Joseph says, “but we’ve extended the mitzvah to wedding halls, restaurants and refrigerated trucks.”

One of the schools that receives hot meals daily from Leket recently told them, “Most of the students are not able to receive an adequate lunch from home. Bringing them together to eat a filling and nutritious meals changes the whole atmosphere at the school, it brings a calm and a feeling of equality.”

With the support of private donors and some government support, Leket now works in every major city in Israel with tens of thousands of volunteers and 15 refrigerated trucks its operations are increasing at pace. Much of its work is on farms, with Leket teams picking and collecting leftover fruits and vegetables that would have gone to waste. They recently picked up 500 tons of excess potatoes a farmer was struggling to sell. At every major junction Joseph says he has felt many miracles at hand. “We had a voice message from a Mr. Cohen who said he had been supporting us to the tune of \$20,000 for the last few years and wanted to increase his support. We looked through our records and saw there was no record of such a supporter. When we called him and politely let him know he had confused us with another charity he asked about our work, and a month later we received a check for \$500,000.”

“I think most people look at problems that have been around for a long time, and say, ‘if no-one’s done anything about it by now, it probably can’t be solved.’ That didn’t stop me from trying. And there is still so much more to do.”

Think about what you can do especially in the world, especially related to food. Pirkei Avot tells us, BiMakom shein anashim, hishtadel lihiyot ish. Where there are no men, you strive to be that man, you step up. Do we live to eat or eat to live? Do we have our priorities right? Do we realize food is just a fuel stop along the way of our day, making sure it tasted and looks good but doesn’t consume our being? Maybe we can learn to change our outlook on it, and uplift it, to use food to bring us closer to Hashem and make the world a better place.

Let’s look at some more sources.

Deuteronomy 8:10

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ.
When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

Genesis 1

God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food.

Genesis 9

Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it.

Leviticus 11

These you may eat of all that live in water: anything in water, whether in the seas or in the streams, that has fins and scales—these you may eat.

Devarim 12

When the LORD enlarges your territory, as He has promised you, and you say, “I shall eat some meat,” for you have the urge to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you wish.

Genesis 9:3

Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these.

PTC. Hashem gave us food to fill ourselves up with, not to waste away and not to gouge ourselves needlessly. Hashem wants us to eat of the kosher of the world, but in a proper way.

Beitzah 16a:1

כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים חוץ מהוצאת שבתות והוצאת
יום טוב והוצאת בניו לתלמוד תורה שאם פחת פחתו לו ואם הוסיף מוסיפו לו
A person's entire livelihood is allocated to him during the period from Rosh HaShana to Yom Kippur. During that time, as each individual is judged, it is decreed exactly how much money he will earn for all his expenditures of the coming year, except for expenditures for Shabbatot, and expenditures for Festivals, and expenditures for the school fees of his sons' Torah study. In these areas, no exact amount is determined at the beginning of the year

PTC. Hashem decides at the beginning of the year how much we will have in terms of food, money and more. IF you use it for a mitzvah, its not even calculated in the original amount and Hashem will get it back to you.

Berakhot 21a:3

אמר רב יהודה: מנין לברכת המזון לאחריה מן התורה – שנאמר: “ואכלת ושבעת
וגברכת”. **Rav Yehuda said: From where is the mitzva by Torah law to recite Grace after Meals, derived? As it is stated: “And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord your God”** (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Mishneh Torah, Blessings 1:1

מצות עשה מן התורה לברך אחר אכילת מזון שנאמר (דברים ח י) “ואכלת ושבעת וגברכת את יי' אלהיך”. ואינו חייב מן התורה אלא אם כן שבע שנאמר ואכלת ושבעת וגברכת. ומדברי סופרים אכל אפלו כזית מברך אחריו: It is an affirmative precept of the Torah to say Grace after a meal, as it is said, "And thou shalt eat and be satisfied and shalt bless the Lord, thy God" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The Torah only imposes the obligation on a person when he is satisfied; for it is said, "When thou hast eaten and art satisfied, thou shalt bless etc." According to the ordinances of the sages, however, even if one has eaten only as much food as the size of an olive, he recites Grace after the meal.

Eruvin 18b:15

ואמר רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר, מאי דכתיב: "והנה עלה זית טרף בפיה" – אמרה יונה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבנו של עולם, יהיו מזונותי מרורין כזית ומסורין בידך, ואל יהיו מתוקין **And Rabbi Yirmeya ben Elazar also said: What is the meaning of that which is written:** "And the dove came in to him in the evening, **and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf, plucked off [taraf];** so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth" (Genesis 8:11)? **The dove said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, let my food be bitter as an olive but given into Your hand, and let it not be sweet as honey but dependent upon flesh and blood.** He adds this explanation: **Here it is written: Taraf**

PTC> We hold be grateful and thank Hashem for all food we get, even if it doesnt tap our palette and even if we don't like it, Anything we eat we should praise Hashem for and use it for the right ways and reasons.

Moed Katan 28a

Rava said: Length of life, children, and sustenance do not depend on one's merit, but rather they depend upon fate. As, Rabba and Rav Hisda were both pious Sages; one Sage would pray during a drought and rain would fall, and the other Sage would pray and rain would fall.

Gittan 7a

If a person sees that his sustenance is limited he should use it for charity...

Berachot 55a

As for the virtue of prolonging one's mealtime at the table, which Rav Yehuda mentioned, the Gemara explains: Perhaps a poor person will come during the meal and the host will be in a position to give him food immediately, without forcing the poor person to wait. The Sages elsewhere praised a person who acts appropriately at a meal, as it is written: "The altar, three cubits high and the length thereof, two cubits, was of wood, and so the corners thereof; the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were also of wood" (Ezekiel 41:22)...

PTC. We should use our tables and our meals for mitzvot such as torah, singing, and eating for mitzvot and to help out those around us, who may need a warm place to eat with warm home cooked meals. Like the idea in the seder "whoever is hungry come join us..."

Bava Batra 10a

Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shalom taught: Just as a person's entire livelihood is allocated to him from Rosh HaShana, when God issues His judgments for the entire year, so too are a person's monetary losses allocated to him from Rosh HaShana. If one merits, the following verse is applied to him: "You shall share your bread with the hungry," i.e., he will spend the sum allocated to him on gifts of charity; and if he does not merit, the following verse is applied to him: "You shall bring the poor that are cast out to your house, i.e...

Akiedat Yirzchak 41

Since the nourishment provided for the various species of the universe is commensurate with their respective needs, it is axiomatic that the most advanced species are provided with the most advanced form of nourishment available. Normally, the type of food provided for a species is on a level that is one degree lower in the order of life than the species to be fed by it.

PTC. Make sure to use the food in the right ways and that it is nourishing and healthy, with choices of what experts recommend in terms of health, such as mepate with having dairy, fruits, vegetable, carbs, and poultry/fish.

Berachot 58a

Explaining his custom, he would say: How much effort did Adam the first man exert before he found bread to eat: He plowed, sowed, reaped, sheaved, threshed, winnowed in the wind, separated the grain from the chaff, ground the grain into flour, sifted, kneaded, and baked and only thereafter he ate. And I, on the other hand, wake up and find all of these prepared for me. Human society employs a division of labor, and each individual benefits from the service of the entire world...

Berachot 17a

Rav was wont to say:

The World-to-Come is not like this world.

In the World-to-Come there is no eating, no drinking, no relationships, no business negotiations, no jealousy, no hatred, and no competition.

Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns upon their heads, enjoying the splendor of the Divine Presence, as it is stated:

“And they beheld God, and they ate and drank” (Exodus 24:11), meaning that beholding God’s countenance is tantamount to eating and drinking...

PTC. Do we ever really stop to pause, think, listen to where food comes from? Who plant, who sewed, who baked, who set it up? We should be appreciative of every aspect from where it comes to the store to the table, or to the door if you delivery like we do

Tractate Sofrim 3

Foodstuffs may not be treated with disrespect, nor may they be thrown about. One may not sit on a basket containing dates or dried figs; but he may sit on a basket which contains pulse or on a cake of pressed figs, because it is customary to do so. Foodstuffs may not be used as a support or as a covering, nor may foodstuffs be eaten with the aid of foodstuffs, unless [the latter] are fit to be eaten. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says: Any fruit which has a stem or stalk may be used as a covering. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says: Any foodstuff which requires processing may be used as a covering

PTC. Be careful with the food. Respect it. Dont trash it, dont waste it.

Chullin 84a

The Torah taught that it is a desired mode of behavior that a person should consume meat due only to appetite. That is, one should consume meat only when he feels a need to eat it.

Gittin 62a

Rav Huna and Rav Hisda said to Geneiva: Does the Master wish to taste something? Geneiva said to them: So says Rav Yehuda that Rav says: It is prohibited for a person to taste anything until he gives food to his animal, as it is stated in the verse: "And I will give grass in the field for your animals" (Deuteronomy 11:15), and only afterward is it written in that verse: "And you shall eat and be satisfied." I have yet to feed my animal, so I may not eat.

PTC. Eat when you are hungry and eat to satiation, not just to eat for the sake of eating. Make sure to feed those around you first such as your spouse then your kids and any pets, and then yourself.

Pirkei Avot 3:3

Rabbi Shimon said: if three have eaten at one table and have not spoken there words of Torah, [it is] as if they had eaten sacrifices [offered] to the dead, as it is said, "for all tables are full of filthy vomit, when the All-Present is absent" (Isaiah 28:8). But, if three have eaten at one table, and have spoken there words of Torah, [it is] as if they had eaten at the table of the All-Present, blessed be He, as it is said, "And He said unto me, 'this is the table before the Lord'" (Ezekiel 41:22).

PTC> Use your food table for torah, for mitzvot, for chessed, for good.

Devarim 14

You shall not eat anything abhorrent.

PTC. This to me is the source against ideas such as the nathans gouging contest. Dont be abhorrent, dont eat anything gross, disgusting, or in a disgusting manner.

Mishneh Torah, Human Dispositions 5

A disciple of the wise adjusts his affairs judiciously: he eats, drinks and supports his family within his capital and material success; but he should not overburden himself more than necessary. The wise men command a worldly custom that a man should not eat meat save when craving it, even as it is said: "Because thy soul desireth to eat flesh" (Deut. 12.20). It is enough for a healthy person to eat meat from Friday night to Friday night. If, however, he be rich enough to eat meat daily he may eat...

Mishna Torah, Human Dispositions 4

Man shall not eat his stomach-full, but should reduce about one fourth of the quantity which would sate him; nor shall he drink water during the meal, save a little mixed with wine; but when the food will commence to be digested in his bowels, he may drink whatever quantity he needs, nevertheless, he should not drink over-much water even after the food was digested. He shall not eat before a thorough examination of self whether there is a need for elimination. Man shall not eat without warming his body either by walking before mealtime, by some manual labor...

Ever after a man eats, he should remain for a time sitting in his place, or leaning on his left side; he shall not walk, ride horseback, tire himself, exercise his body, or ramble about ere the food in his stomach is digested; and he who does ramble about or tires himself after eating invites upon himself bad and serious ailments.

Shnei Luchot Habrit, Torah Shebichtav, Eikev, Derech Chayim

We have an allusion here to the advice of our sages not to eat like a glutton, but to eat in order to stay alive. We learned this first when the Torah describes the amount that Joseph sold to the brothers. The amount is described as שבר רעבון, i.e. enough grain to still the hunger (Genesis 42,19). This is the meaning of the words לא במסכנות. On the one hand one must be careful not to suffer from under-nourishment; on the other hand one must not eat as a matter of indulgence...

PTC. Make sure to live and eat within your means, and eat to a proper extent. Eat to live and do not live to eat.

Bava Batra 12b

Having already cited one statement of Rabbi Avdimi from Haifa, the Gemara cites another statement in his name: Rabbi Avdimi from Haifa says: Before a person eats and drinks he has two hearts, meaning his heart is unsettled because he is distracted by hunger. But after he eats and drinks he has only one heart,

Pirkei Avot 6:4

Such is the way [of a life] of Torah: you shall eat bread with salt, and rationed water shall you drink; you shall sleep on the ground, your life will be one of privation, and in Torah shall you labor. If you do this, “Happy shall you be and it shall be good for you” (Psalms 128:2): “Happy shall you be” in this world, “and it shall be good for you” in the world to come.

Yoma 83b

he Sages taught in a baraita: In the case of one who is seized with bulmos, one feeds him honey and all types of sweet foods, as the honey and all types of sweet foods restore the sight of his eyes. And although there is no clear proof for the matter, there is an allusion to the matter. Jonathan said: “See, I pray you, how my eyes are brightened because I tasted a little of this honey” (I Samuel 14:29). T

PTC. Remember that his world is just a corridor, just a transition, a platform to the next world. Why ingest so much so often? To be more flesh for the maggots in the grave after 120 years? Take care of yourself and those around you. Eat well, be physically active, and make sure to eat it a proper way, with a proper mindset, with a proper amount of nice looking and nice tasting food.

PTC.

PTC. Hashem gave us food to fill ourselves up with, not to waste away and not to gouge ourselves needlessly. Hashem wants us to eat of the kosher of the world, but in a proper way.

PTC. Hashem decides at the beginning of the year how much we will have in terms of food, money and more. IF you use it for a mitzvah, its not even calculated in the original amount and Hashem will get it back to you.

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Wrap up

The question about food ends up being, do we live to eat or do we eat to live? I hope we all will answer in the latter. It doesn't mean we should have good food. IT doesn't mean it shouldn't look nice. But it does mean that it shoulnt be the center, focus, and goal of our lives every day. Make yummy and pretty food, and get the kids to help make food-- my kids love to help and they're very little! But make it in a moderation, and eat it in a moderation in a proper way, with making blessings and talking with those around you, eating slowly, to your filling ,but no overstuffing yourself.

Think about what you can do especially in the world, especially related to food.

Remember that the food is just a fuel stop along the way of our day. Hopefully we can train ourselves to learn to fix our outlook on it, and uplift it, to use food to bring us closer to Hashem and make the world a much better place.