

# מאמרי תורה - Torah Talk



*The Parasha Post of Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital*

**Parashat Miketz**  
**December 8, 2018**

**פרשת מקץ**  
**ל' בכסלו תשע"ט**

Torah Reading: *Bereshit* (Genesis) 41:1-44:17  
Reading for *Chanukah: Bemidbar* (Numbers) 7:42-47  
Reading for *Rosh Chodesh: Bemidbar* (Numbers) 28:9-15

*Note: The very uncommon phenomenon of taking out three Torot will occur this Shabbat. One Torah is for the regular parasha, one Torah is for Rosh Chodesh Tevet, and the third Torah is for Chanukah.*

In this *parasha*, Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is appointed to implement Egypt's anti-famine plan. This brings him into contact with his brothers again, as they come to Egypt to buy food.

It is remarkable how much of the Torah and how much of our lives revolve around food. The first human sin, that of eating the forbidden fruit, is food-related. Avraham offers his angelic guests food. There are numerous famines through *Sefer Bereshit*, necessitating relocation and/or visits to other empires in order to buy food.

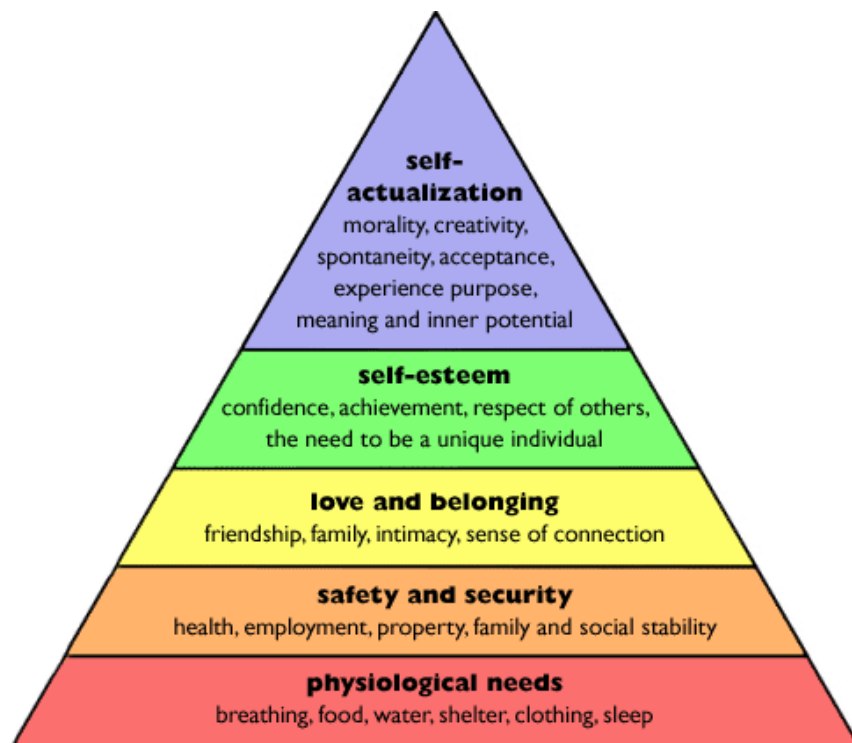
Jews' lives revolve around food (or the absence of food, as on Yom Kippur) – Shabbat food, apples and honey on Rosh Hashana, latkes on Chanukah, hamantaschen on Purim, Pesach food, dairy food on Shavuot, and other examples too numerous to mention.

Most of the Biblical and immediate post-Biblical wars had to do with food or with the land on which to grow food. As a matter of fact, the *shoresh* (root word) of the Hebrew word for war, מלחמה – *milchama*, is לחם – *l-ch-m*, meaning “bread.” It is only later that religion and other philosophical concerns began to take precedence as a cause for international and internal strife.

This makes sense psychologically, at least according to Abraham Maslow, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist. He theorized that each person has a hierarchy of needs in a predetermined order of importance. These needs are often depicted as a pyramid consisting of five levels (see below): the lower levels are associated with physiological needs, while the top levels are termed “growth needs” and are associated with psychological needs.

Deficiency needs, which are the lowest levels, must be met first. Once these are met, seeking to satisfy growth needs drives personal growth. The higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus when the lower needs in the pyramid have already been met. Once an individual has moved upward to the next level, needs in the lower level will no longer be prioritized. If a lower set of needs is no longer being met, the individual will temporarily re-prioritize those needs by focusing attention on the unfulfilled needs, but will not permanently regress to the lower level. In other words, if someone is worried about where their next meal is coming from, they cannot concern themselves with self-esteem issues.

For visual learners, a schematic representation appears below.



So it was with the world. Until a large portion of the population met their major food needs, no one worried about other things. We see love and connection appear in

the Torah only after Noah, when the forefathers and foremothers own land and crops and flocks and herds. And as soon as food is scarce, it becomes the thing on which everyone focuses, almost to the exclusion of all else.

At this time of the year, people are very good at opening their hearts and their pocketbooks to provide food for those in need. This is a truly wonderful thing to do. But as we go through Chanukah and the winter holidays and into 2019 with relatively full bellies, let us remember that everyone's needs for food, shelter, and clothing continue into February, March, April, and beyond.

It would be wonderful if 2019 were the year when there would be no more hunger, no more poverty, and no more war. But realistically, these things will continue as long as there are human beings on earth. Let us all try to the best of our ability to help as many people as possible rise through their own pyramid of needs and maximize their experiences as they make their way through their lives.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Chanukah.

For Discussion:

- If you had to prioritize food, clothing, and shelter, what order would you put them in? Why?
- Which of Maslowe's needs can you fulfill at school? Which of the needs do you fulfill at home?