Al Cheyt and Boredom

A midst this "angst of uncertainty," I cry out for answers. With each prayer, I try to unlock the secrets, ancient and modern. I read the commentaries and seek the wisdom. My heart is open. Yet on Yom Kippur, I must admit, I sometimes find myself fatigued from the marathon-long search. By seeking meaning in every prayer, I come up short, and more often hungry. It is *musaf*, and my mind wanders. I am bored.

Al cheyt shechetanu lifanecha, for the sin I have committed against You by finding myself bored in shul.

I used to fight the boredom. Then I realized that maybe this prayer was placed in front of me simply to bore me. In prayer, I reclaim boredom.

Boredom is not "tuned out"; it is "tuned in." Stripped of outside stimuli, my mind opens. Recent research uncovers that a "numbed trance" allows the brain to see the world in new ways, productive and creative. I am told that the creator of the Post-it note came up with the idea in church. He was bored.

Now, I no longer search for the secret of every ancient prayer, continually pursuing the hidden key. Yes, I read the commentaries and *kavanot*. But most importantly, I listen. I am with my community in synagogue. I am in prayer. —Joel Sisenwine

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production of kosher food takes into account wages and benefits; employee health, safety, and training; corporate integrity; product development (including animal welfare concerns); and environmental impact.

Creating such standards is a win-win for the kosher food industry. As a result of our work, more people will buy more kosher food products — some simply because the product is kosher, others because it has been produced in an ethically appropriate fashion, and many more because it is both ritually and ethically kosher.

In the Shulchan Arukh, the laws of kashrut are found in the section called *Yore Deah*. The laws detailing economic responsibility in the

marketplace are found in *Choshen Mishpat*. For far too long these sections of the Code have lived in splendid isolation — one from the other — as if they were independent silos holding up our tradition.

Moral blindness is no less a problem than physical blindness. Imagine what the Jewish community will look like when we take the lead in demonstrating that good corporate citizenship can be rewarded. Imagine what it will mean to restore a "culture of kashrut" within our Jewish world, whereby eating becomes a sacred act of Jews — either as fulfillment of ritual or ethical demands or both. Imagine a Jewish world where sustainability becomes a byword of Jewish life.



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Address all **editorial correspondence** to *Sh'ma*, E-mail: sberrin@JFLmedia.com.

Send all **subscription queries** and address changes to *Sh'ma*, P.O. Box 439, Congers, NY 10920-0439. Telephone: 877-568-SHMA. E-mail: shma@cambevwest.com.

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