

You shall eat matzos for a seven-day period. (23:6)

Every once in a while, I come across a story which is more *dvar Torah* than story. The episode is merely the medium for imparting an important Torah principle. The following story fits into this category. The surplus of *matzah*, which has become a way of life for us, is a modern-day wonder. One hundred years ago, when Europe was in midst of a world war, whole communities went without *matzah* for *Pesach*. Food was at a premium, and the Jewish community was always at the bottom of the totem pole for receiving aid. As a result, *ehrlliche Yidden*, observant Jews, often made do with alternative foods for *Pesach* to replace the precious *matzah*, which was unobtainable.

One year, the community leaders were able to obtain a small amount of *matzah shemurah*. What, today, would supply a small family for the *seder* night, was to provide an entire community with *matzah* for *Pesach*. The community leaders were in a quandary concerning how to divide the pieces. Who would be included, and who would be excluded? As in all venues, each individual had his “people.” Finally, after some discussion, they arrived at a consensus of opinion: those Jews who, sadly, had waned in their observance would be left out. The reasoning was simple: They were going to eat *chametz*, leavened products, regardless of the few morsels of *matzah* that they would receive. So, why bother? Why go to bat for someone who was not even playing?

Nonetheless, they decided to “share” their decision with the saintly **Chafetz Chaim, zl**. How shocked they were to discover that, after the venerable sage had listened to their question/decision, he totally blew away their resolution. He said that specifically those unfortunate Jews who were not yet observant – they should be given the precious morsels of *matzah*! It was expressly their lack of religious observance that made them prime candidates for the *matzah*. The reason he gave was quite practical: Every *kazayis*, olive measurement, of *matzah* which they ate would prevent them from eating a *kazayis* of *chametz*! Thus, the more *matzah* available to them meant that these Jews would eat less *chametz* on *Pesach*. The observant Jew, however, would never touch *chametz* – even if he did not have any *matzah*. So, they will not have *matzah*! – *nu!* *Chametz* for sure they would not eat.

A number of lessons can be derived from here. First, one does not go to the *gadol* last. If one has an issue, he should present it to the *rav/rosh yeshivah* first, so that he can hear what *daas Torah* has to say. The mere fact that the *Chafetz Chaim's* solution was totally diametrically opposed to theirs is indicative of their faulty approach to the issue.

Second, we see how a true *gadol*, Torah leader, thinks. His thoughts, and, thus, his decisions are always about *Klal Yisrael*, the entire nation – not just the Torah world. Every Jew, regardless of his affiliation – or rejection thereof – is precious. No one may be rejected. No one may be left out.