

Good Shabbos Everyone. Despite his isolation from mainstream Orthodox communities, Sam Goldish was committed to keeping a Torah way of life in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Sam did all he could to pass his commitment on to his children. One of the most important mitzvahs for Sam and his family was Shabbos. Sam realized that the only way his children and his children's children would remain loyal to Judaism, was through keeping Shabbos. Keeping Shabbos would help ensure that Sam's children would marry Jewish, because Shabbos precluded his children's participation in Church socials, etc., which often took place on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons.

There was one particular incident which typified Sam's strictness with Shabbos observance. Once, Sam needed to sell a boat. He put an ad in the local paper, describing the excellent condition of the vehicle and asking \$7500. The advertisement did not provoke very much interest. Only a small handful of people bothered calling to find out more information. Of those who did show interest, just one, a man named Stan, made him an offer. But the amount he offered was much less than the amount Sam had wanted to sell it for. Sam was in a quandary. Should he take the offer? He really needed the money. But there didn't seem to be much interest in his boat. Perhaps it would be best to take what he could get. Reluctantly, Sam agreed to Stan's price. *"But I have one stipulation,"* Sam told him. *"I want you to give me a certified check from the bank."*

Stan looked a bit uneasy. *"Uh, okay. Look, I'll get back to you on it."* But the week went by with no further word from him. It was Shabbos afternoon and Sam was savoring the Cholent when there was a knock on the door. Sam found the prospective buyer Stan standing on the doorstep with a big smile on his face. *"Look, I brought you your bank check!"*

"Oh, I'm sorry," Sam said, *"but today is my Sabbath, and I can't do business now."*

"Oh, come on. I don't need you to do anything. Here, I'll just put the check down. I'll take care of removing the boat myself. How's that?" But Sam Goldish stood firm. *"I'm sorry, but I can't take care of it right now. [you'll have to] come back tonight..."*

Stan grew angry. *"What's the matter with you? I have your check, and you're not willing to accommodate me! Well, forget it then. I won't come back at all!"* With that, he left. Sam refused to let the incident ruin his Shabbos; he enjoyed his Cholent and the rest of the holy day. Motzei Shabbos (Saturday night), the phone rang.

"Hi, I'm calling about the ad for the boat. Is it still available?"

"It sure is. You're welcome to come over and see it." Said Sam

A short time later, two men had arrived to look at the boat. After circling the vehicle a few times, they decided they were interested in buying it for the full amount that Sam had wanted. They gave Sam the money, took the boat and left.

"Stan," a family member later said, *"spells Satan, if you use Hebrew letters to write the name. The Satan wanted to test you, to see if you were willing to compromise the holiness of Shabbos."* This incident strengthened the family's belief in holiness of Shabbos. And although Sam Goldish has left this world, his legacy lives on in his children and children's children. (Visions of Greatness, Rabbi Yosef Weiss, Volume 3 p.64)

It was through Sam's dedication to Shabbos that he ensured that his family would remain committed Jews. Sam recognized the importance of Shabbos, as the Sages tell us: *"Observing Shabbos is equal to fulfilling all the mitzvahs of the Torah."* (The 39 Avoth Melacha of Shabbath, Rabbi Baruch Chait citing Pesikta) And, *"Whoever takes pleasure in the enjoyment of the Shabbos will be granted all his heart's desires."* (Ibid., citing Shabbos 118b) This week we will focus on one way to maximize our enjoyment of Shabbos: Cholent. By Shabbos morning, the sumptuous aroma of Cholent fills the Jewish household. Cholent (*Chamin* to Sephardim) is a stew containing some or all of the following ingredients: meat, beans, potatoes, barley, spices and kishke. Cholent is cooked almost to completion by Friday and is then left to simmer over night on a heating element or in a crock-pot, later to be enjoyed on Shabbos morning.

Besides tasting good, we will learn this week that eating Cholent symbolizes some of the most basic beliefs of our religion. **In fact, according to Jewish law, one who refuses to eat warm food such as Cholent on Shabbos, needs to be checked out to make sure he is not a heretic!!!** (Baal Hamaor, Shabbos, cited by Reb Hershel Rosenfeld, Shulchan HaShabbos p. 83, see also Rama on Shulchan Aruch 257:8) Whoever thought that eating Cholent was such an integral part of being Jewish? In the

discussion which follows, we will show how important the mitzvah of eating Cholent really is.

Before we enjoy the Cholent, we must review some important concepts in Judaism. First of all, we must mention once again that Moshe received two Torahs on Mt. Sinai, the written and the Oral Torah. The written Torah consists of the text we find in a Torah scroll, while the Oral Torah is discussed in the Talmud. The Oral Torah consists of the oral explanation of the mitzvahs, as well as an explanation of the methods the Sages use to analyze the written Torah.

Belief in the Oral Torah is crucial to being Jewish. Without the Oral Torah, we really have no idea what the Torah means. For example, opening up a Torah scroll, we see that there are no vowels. Thus, how do we know that it is forbidden to eat milk and meat together? We look at the verse: *"Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk."* (Shemos – Exodus 23:19) The words for "milk" (Chalev) and "fat" (Chelev) are spelled the same – *ches, lamed, beis*. (Compare these two words in verses Shemos- Exodus 23:18 and 23:19) Since there are no vowels in the Torah, how do we know that the verse is talking about not cooking a kid in its mother's milk; maybe it is a mitzvah to eat a steak with a tall glass of chocolate milk, while a violation to eat a burger with fat?!? Only with the Oral Torah do we know how to read the Torah. Only with the Oral Torah can we be Jews.

Throughout history, there have been groups which have denied the validity of the Oral Torah. Once such group was the Karaites. Once, there was a dispute in a kingdom as to whether the traditional Jews or the Karaites should be the true representatives of the Jewish people. The king called a representative from the Karaites and a representative from the Jews. Before going in to speak with the king, the Jew took off his shoes and carried them into the king. The king was bewildered and asked the Jew why he exhibited such strange behavior of carrying his shoes. The Jew answered: *"When Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) went up to receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai, he left his shoes at the base of the mountain. When Moshe returned, his shoes were gone; for they had been stolen by a Karaite!"* (As heard from Eliezer Zuckerbraun)

At that moment, the Karaite spoke up and said: *"That's impossible, there were no Karaites at Mt. Sinai."* Needless to say, the discussion was over and the king chose the traditional Jew as the representative of the Jews. We received a recipe on Mt. Sinai: one part Oral Torah and one part written Torah; this is a recipe, which cannot be altered. Any group among the Jewish people which has denied the validity of the Oral Torah has virtually, if not totally, disappeared. In fact, when was the last time anyone was invited to join a Sadducean (another group which denied the Oral Torah) or a Karaite minyan? We see therefore, that the Oral Torah is an inseparable part of the Jewish recipe for belief.

Speaking of recipes, let us now return to Cholent. We will see that eating Cholent on Shabbos is very much related to our belief in the Oral Torah. We find the source of the mitzvah of Cholent in this week's double parsha Vayakel-Pekudei, as the verse states: *"You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbos day."* (Shemos -Exodus 34:3) We know from the Oral Torah that this verse forbids the creation or the increasing of a fire on Shabbos. (See the discussion of this part of the Oral Torah in the Tractate Shabbos.) However, there are generally no prohibitions against enjoying the benefits of a fire started before Shabbos. In other words, one may light a fire before Shabbos and enjoy its benefits on Shabbos, but one may not make or increase a fire on Shabbos itself. One of the benefits of fire is to keep food warm.

Those who sought to deny the Oral Torah, read literally the above verse: *"You shall not kindle...etc."* concluding that it was forbidden to enjoy a fire Shabbos, even if the fire was lit before Shabbos. These groups would eat cold food and sit in the dark throughout Shabbos, just as they sat in spiritual darkness all their lives. (Artscroll Tanach, commentary to Shemos – Exodus 35:3) The Sages therefore enacted that we should eat warm Cholent on Shabbos to show that we believe in the Oral Torah. Namely, we believe that on Shabbos we may benefit from a fire lit before Shabbos. We now see why eating Cholent is so important on Shabbos. Cholent symbolizes our belief in the Oral Torah. Therefore, we are suspicious of one who insists on not eating warm food on Shabbos, that perhaps he denies the Oral Torah.

We see then that eating Cholent is one of the most physically and spiritually delicious mitzvahs. So, when we sit down to the table together with family and friends Shabbos around noontime, and we are served a big plate of steaming Cholent, let us have in mind that we are fulfilling a mitzvah of the highest order. Take a spoonful and enjoy. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**