

## Worth The Wait

*Ruchi Koval | Parsha Korach | July 1, 2022*

My family and I are traveling around the east coast as we do every summer. My parents and three of my siblings live in Lakewood, NJ; my brother and three of my husband's siblings live in Monsey, NY; and my grandmother lives in Brooklyn. We've been visiting, swimming, shopping, and eating some of the country's best kosher food.

On Wednesday I went with my girls and my niece to Six Flags Great Adventure amusement park in Jackson, NJ. We were planning our trip, buying our tickets online (along with a \$33 parking pass) and figuring out food. The park does not allow patrons to bring food in, but there's very little by way of kosher food in these places. Then my niece piped up.

"There's a kosher food stand at Six Flags." A kosher food stand? At a New Jersey theme park?

You have to understand that my childhood consisted of going to Geauga Lake (of blessed memory) every summer, toting soggy sandwiches and cut up watermelon along with us because we kept kosher, and Geauga Lake, well, didn't. We always used to watch people digging in to all that greasy fried food with a sense of wistful longing mixed with a feeling of pride for being unique and different. And now... could it really be so? Could we have our greasy fried food and eat it too?

So after a few hours of getting our brains rattled around in our skulls on some of the country's finest roller coasters, we decided to break for dinner. We made our way to "Chickie's," approached the dude with the yarmulke manning the station, placed our orders for chicken fingers, fries, and a knish, and settled in.

And now for the question: was it everything I'd hoped and dreamed of in an amusement park greasy meal?

On the one hand, yes. It was super convenient not to have to shlep along our food. It was delightful to be able to buy hot fresh food in a brown paper box instead of unloading brown bagged soggy stuff wrapped in foil. And the fries, I must say, quite exceeded my expectations.

And also, no. The chicken fingers were just boring old chicken fingers that you buy in the freezer section. It was expensive too but I guess everything in a theme park is expensive (see: \$33 parking pass). I mean, it was just food.

I find that in life there is often a mystique in that which you can't have. King Solomon said it best: Forbidden fruit is sweeter. It's sweeter because you can't have it, not because it's sweeter. The yetzer hara, the negative voice in our heads, builds up a fantasy image of that which is off-limits to us, convincing us that it is more delightful, more delicious, than anything we already have. This is why movies often focus on illicit relationships rather than on established marriages. What you can have is boring, goes the mentality. What you can't have is exciting.

The illicit relationship will always seem superior to the established one, purely by virtue of being illicit.

I can guarantee you that any Shabbat dinner I've ever had reigns supreme over the brown box of fries and chicken fingers, but that rush of excitement, that first salty, crunchy taste, felt like heaven in my mouth. Human beings are funny like that.

The Jewish mikveh laws are designed with just this concept in mind. A husband and wife have seasons in their marriage where sometimes they are best friends without the physical aspect of their relationship, and most of the time in a state where they are lovers, with the physical intimate aspect that doesn't exist in any other relationship. What these periods of physical abstinence do for a marriage is this: they make the relationship most likely to be taken for granted, something illicit and exciting. It's one of the most brilliant inventions of Torah Judaism.

If you want to learn more just let me know. Come on over to JFX and we'll talk. I'll even let you park for free.