

“A disturbing demonstration of depletion effects in judgment was recently reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The unwitting participants in the study were eight parole judges in Israel. They spend entire days reviewing applications for parole. The cases are presented in random order, and the judges spend little time on each one, an average of 6 minutes. (The default decision is denial of parole; only 35% of requests are approved. The exact time of each decision is recorded, and the times of the judges’ three food breaks—morning break, lunch, and afternoon break—during the day are recorded as well.) The authors of the study plotted the proportion of approved requests against the time since the last food break. The proportion spikes after each meal, when about 65% of requests are granted. During the two hours or so until the judges’ next feeding, the approval rate drop steadily, to about zero just before the meal. As you might expect, this is an unwelcome result and the authors carefully checked many alternate explanations. The best possible account of the data provides bad news: tired and hungry judges tend to fall back on the easier default position of denying requests for parole. Both fatigue and hunger probably play a role.”

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman (2011)

good book to read