



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Vayikra

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A Taste of Torah Worth Its Salt

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya Freeman

There is a widespread custom is to dip the first piece of bread one eats at a meal into salt. The Gemara (Brachos 40a) teaches that one may not interrupt between the recitation of the *bracha* (blessing) of *hamotzi* recited on bread prior to taking a bite. However, says the Gemara, one may interrupt to request salt, since this is a necessity for eating the bread. Rashi explains that salt is a necessity because when one takes the first bite of bread after reciting the *bracha*, it is proper that the bread upon which the *bracha* is recited is flavored with something such as salt. Tosafos explain that this halacha does not apply today, since our bread is generally flavored by salt or something similar.

However, Tosafos continue that Rabbi Menachem was careful to always bring salt to the table for a different reason based on a Medrash. The Medrash says that when Jews are sitting silently around the table waiting for the head of the household to wash and recite the *bracha* of *hamotzi*, they are devoid of mitzvos, and the Satan can seize the opportunity to prosecute against them in Heaven. The covenant of salt, says Rabbi Menachem, provides protection at this time. This halacha is codified in the Rema (Orach Chaim 167:5).

What is this covenant of salt? The verse in this week's parsha states (Vayikra 2:13), "You shall salt your every meal-offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d's covenant from upon your meal-offering."

Rashi comments that a covenant was made with salt during the Six Days of Creation. When, as described in the Torah, the primordial waters were split

between Heaven and Earth, the lower waters complained that they wanted to be close to Hashem. Hashem placated the lower waters by telling them that they would be offered upon the Altar in the form of salt (which comes from seawater). This requires explanation, as it would make more sense for the water itself, not the salt extracted from it, to be offered up on the Altar.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (1891-1986) explains that Hashem was trying to placate the lower waters by showing that the lower world is more desirable to Him. This is manifested through the process of obtaining sea salt, which is made by gathering seawater and allowing the water to evaporate through the heat of the sun; the salt is left behind. Salt thus shows that Hashem desires the part of the lower waters that actually remains part of this world to be used upon the Altar. Hashem wishes for the physical world to be infused with spirituality; He does not look for solely spiritual entities that are completely removed from this world.

Based on this, the importance of salt on the table can be better understood. The covenant of salt, Hashem's assurance that the most Earth-bound part of the water will express spirituality by being used upon the Altar, is a most appropriate protection from Satan's attempts to speak badly of Jews as they wait to eat bread. Eating is a very physical activity; it is performance of mitzvos that imbues our lives with sanctity. As Jews sit silently awaiting the actual start of their meal, the Satan attempts to depict these moments as a purely physical endeavor of people doing nothing but waiting to eat. By placing salt upon the table,

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Stories for the Soul

Message Received

Rabbi Eliezer Zusia Portugal, the Skulener Rebbe (1898-1982), immigrated to the United States in 1959 from Romania, where he and his son had been imprisoned by the Communists. On a visit to *Eretz Yisrael* (Israel) some years later, he travelled to the northern city of Meron and went to the grave of the great Tanna Rabi Shimon bar Yochai. The chief rabbi of Meron, Rabbi Meir Stern, accompanied the great *tzaddik* as they entered the structure built over the grave. Suddenly, a voice rang out in Yiddish, "Menuwal, arois!" (Vile one, get out!) The Skulener Rebbe turned white and began to tremble. Rabbi Stern turned to the Rebbe and reassured him, "This is just one of the interesting people who frequent this area. He is yelling at his *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination), not at you!"

Rabbi Portugal replied, "Of course I realize the voice was not directed at me! But if Heaven has caused me to hear this precisely as I was about to enter the place where the great Rabi Shimon bar Yochai is buried, it is a message that I am not yet fit to enter."

Rabbi Portugal turned and left the area and returned to Rabbi Stern's house, where

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Kollel Happenings

**SPRING-SUMMER AVOS
UBANIM ON SHABBOS
AFTERNOON**

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Center in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

**CHOL HAMOE'D LEARNING
AT THE KOLLEL**

The Kollel is proud to present Chol Hamo'ed learning during Pesach. A daily *shacharis* and breakfast will be followed by a *shiur* every day of Chol Hamo'ed at the Kollel's Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for more info.

**BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND
SECURE THE FUTURE OF
TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE
& LEGACY**

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: How is it possible to create a requirement of a *bracha* for a food by adding a coating to it (where the coating is *tafel* [secondary] and does not get its own blessing)?

Answer: No blessing is made at all on dried ginger (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 202:16). However, if one were to make crystallized/candied ginger from dried ginger, the *bracha* would

then become *ha'adama* (Mishna Berura 202:44). (Crystallized/candied ginger is usually made with fresh ginger, and its *bracha* is also *ha'adama*. This is not a change, though, as one recites *ha'adama* on plain, fresh ginger, as well [Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*:18].)

This week's question: How could the proper *bracha* on a food differ depending if it's cooked or fried?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part XXI

Areas such as G-d's justice, free will, the nature of the soul, the Jewish People, the Written and Oral Torah and ethical living are covered in *Emunos Vide'os*. The work contains ten sections, with each section divided into chapters. Rav Saadia wrote *Emunos Vide'os* in

Arabic, which was the vernacular, making it accessible to all Jews, thus maximizing its impact. The work was very influential in providing guidance to Jews confused by the ideas that were popular at the time.

A Taste of Torah

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a clear message is displayed: While this gathering may look very tied to the Earth, there is great potential to imbue sanctity into the physical activity of eating that is about to take place. Indeed, the recitation of a

bracha before eating begins the process of bringing holiness into what is otherwise an animalistic engagement of eating. Through one's efforts to raise the spiritual level of ingesting food, Satan's attempts are foiled.

Stories for the Soul

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he was staying. He began working on creating a yeshiva for immigrant children who were living in the area. Soon, rooms were rented, teachers were hired and students signed up for the new yeshiva that would exist near the burial place of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai. Two weeks later, the yeshiva was up and running, and only then did the Skulener Rebbe visit the grave of Rabi Shimon bar Yochai, feeling that now he was fit to enter the sacred area. Some 100 years earlier, the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin;

1816-1893) remarking on another incident of a Chassidic Rebbe who took such "messages" to heart, that this approach is a Tosefta in this week's parsha. Commenting on a verse (Vayikra 5:1) "And a soul that will sin and hear the sound of an oath" (which is discussing one who is adjured and swears falsely), the Tosefta homiletically interprets the verse and states that one who sees those who perform sins was found wanting and had to see them, while those who see mitzvos merited to see them.