

CHEVRAH TORAH...LT, 5780

Discovering the Other—Understanding Ourselves

Being a student of Elie Wiesel means being yourself and cultivating your humanity, your sensitivity to others...It means knowing you do not have to choose between your particular identity and your concern for all people...that the particular and the universal can be mutually reinforcing." [Witness Ariel Burger, pgs. 253-254]

VaYikra

Leviticus 2:1-13

Key KOSHI:

WHY does the Mincha offering prohibit leaven & honey and insist on salt?

WHAT does this recipe teach us about the offering we bring to God in Covenant?

P'SHAT...The Story that Unearths THE Question: WHAT Are We to Become

2:1] When a person presents an offering of meal to the Lord, his offering shall be of choice flour, he shall pour oil upon it, lay frankincense on it, 2] and present it to Aaron's sons, the priests. The priest shall scoop out of it a handful of its choice flour and oil, as well as all of its frankincense; and this token portion he shall turn into smoke on the altar, as an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the Lord. 3] And the remainder of the meal offering shall be for Aaron and his sons, a most holy portion from the Lord's offerings by fire.

4] When you present an offering of meal baked in the oven, [it shall be of] choice flour: unleavened cakes with oil mixed in, or unleavened wafers spread with oil.

5] If your offering is a meal offering on a griddle, it shall be of choice flour with oil mixed in, unleavened. 6] Break it into bits and pour oil on it; it is a meal offering.

7] If your offering is a meal offering in a pan, it shall be made of choice flour in oil.

8] When you present it to the Lord a meal offering that is made in any of these ways, it shall be brought to the priest who shall take it up to the altar. 9] The priest shall remove the token portion from the meal offering and turn it into smoke on the altar as an offering by fire, of pleasing odor to the Lord. 10] And the remainder of the meal offering shall be for Aaron and his sons, a most holy portion from the Lord's offerings by fire.

11] No meal offering that you offer to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for no leaven or honey may be turned into smoke as an offering by fire to the Lord. 12] You may bring them to the Lord as an offering of choice products;^a but they shall not be offered up on the altar for a pleasing odor. 13] You shall season your every offering of meal with salt; you shall not omit from your meal offering the salt of your covenant with God; with all your offerings you must offer salt.

¹ וְנִפְשׁ כִּי־תִקְרִיב קִרְבָּן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה סֹלֶת יְהִיָּה קִרְבָּנוֹ וַיִּצַק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וַנִּתֵּן עָלֶיהָ לִבְנֵהָ: ² וְהִבִּיאָהּ אֶל־בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים וְקִמְצָ מִשָּׁם מְלֵא קִמְצוֹ מִסֹּלֶתָהּ וּמִשֶּׁמֶן מִנָּה עַל כָּל־לִבְנֹתָהּ וְהִקְטִיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־אִזְכָּרְתָּהּ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: ³ וְהַנּוֹתֵרֶת מִן־הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה: ⁴ ס וְכִי תִקְרַב קִרְבָּן מִנְחָה מֵאֲפֶה תִנּוּר סֹלֶת חֲלוֹת מִצֹּת בְּלוּלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן וְרִקְיָקִי מִצֹּת מִשְׁחִים בְּשֶׁמֶן: ⁵ ס וְאִם־ מִנְחָה עַל־הַמַּחֲבֵת קִרְבָּנָד סֹלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן מִצָּה תִהְיֶה: ⁶ פְּתוֹת אֹתָהּ פְּתִים וַיִּצַקְתָּ עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן מִנְחָה הוּא: ⁷ ס [שְׁלִישִׁי] וְאִם־ מִנְחַת מִרְחֶשֶׁת קִרְבָּנָד סֹלֶת בְּשֶׁמֶן תַּעֲשֶׂה: ⁸ וְהִבֵּאתָ אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מֵאֲפֶה לַיהוָה וְהִקְרִיבָהּ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן וְהִגִּישָׁה אֶל־ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ⁹ וְהָרִים הַכֹּהֵן מִן־הַמִּנְחָה אֶת־ אִזְכָּרְתָּהּ וְהִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: ¹⁰ וְהַנּוֹתֵרֶת מִן־הַמִּנְחָה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה: ¹¹ כָּל־ הַמִּנְחָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה חֲמֵץ כִּי כֹל־שָׂאֵר וְכֹל־דָּבָשׁ לֹא־תִקְטְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה: ¹² קִרְבָּן רֵאשִׁית תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹתָם לַיהוָה וְאֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא־יָעֲלוּ לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ: ¹³ וְכָל־קִרְבָּן מִנְחָתְד בַּמִּלַּח תִּמְלַח וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵית מִלַּח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחָתְד עַל כָּל־קִרְבָּנְד תִּקְרִיב מִלַּח:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...An Interchange of Truths: The More Jewish—The More Human

V. 1 *When a person presents an offering of meal before the Eternal.*

VaYIKRA RABBAH...*nefesh—a soul*...This term is not used with any of the voluntary offerings, only with the mincha. And who brings such an offering? It is the gift of a poor person who can afford nothing else. All the more must we value it...Once, a priest expressed contempt for the handful of flour a woman brought to the Temple. God rebuked him in a dream, “*She offered her very soul.*”

V. 11 *No offering of meal that you offer to the Eternal shall be made with leaven, for no leaven or honey may be turned into smoke before the Eternal*
SARNA...It is not typical for Levitical law to explain the basis of prohibitions, nevertheless, it is clear that leaven and honey were not unsuitable for all offerings, but only those burned on the altar. The explanation that sour or fermenting spoiled foodstuffs is hardly convincing because the best foods were often subject to leavening. Conversely, matzah was a poor man’s bread.

RAMBAM...The idolaters of old did not offer any other bread but leavened, and chose only sweet things for sacrifice, seasoned with honey. Our Torah therefore forbids all leaven and honey from the altar.

V. 13 *You shall season your every meal offering with salt; you shall not omit from your meal offering the salt of your covenant with God—with all your offerings you must offer salt.*

TALMUD...It was taught: I might think that one who brought a meal-offering brought salt along with it, therefore it is written: “*the salt of your covenant.*”...The salt is provided communally. ...From “*with all your offerings you shall offer salt,*” That is “*the salt of your covenant.*” To teach, as it is written “*a covenant of an everlasting priesthood.*” [Numbers 25:13] Just as there are no sacrifices without the kohanim, there are no offerings without salt. [Menachot, 20a-b]

R’ B. LEVINE... According to priestly law, all sacrifices were to be salted. In the case of meat, salt functioned to remove whatever blood remained after slaughter. The unexpected use of salt in grain offerings is likely a reflection of uniformity in ritual. In effect, the term “*melach brit-Elohecha*” refers to the God-ordained commitment to offer up with salt...Scholars note that in ancient Near-Eastern treaty curses if a treaty was violated, one’s land was sowed with salt. Similarly, the symbolic role of salt in hospitality rituals has been used to support salt’s covenantal function...In our text, the use of salt is a binding obligation...

E.FOX... In many mid-Eastern cultures to the present day, salt is used in the sealing of agreements. Wenham points out that in the ancient world, salt was considered as indestructible. Thus, its use as a symbol of permanence.

E.J....Honey and leaven symbolize fermentation, and subsequent decay. Salt is a preservative. God gave the Kingdom of Israel to the House of David “*through a covenant of salt.*” [II Chron 13:5] and it is in the same sense that the returned exiles protest their loyalty to the King of Persia “*because we eat of the salt of his palace,*” an expression of abiding loyalty [Ezra 4:14]

RAMBAN...The aim of sacrificial service must be to eliminate extreme elements that stand in opposition to one another in this world...such as leaven, on the one hand, which causes food to ferment, and honey, on the other, which brings out intense sweetness. “Korban” must be a drawing close together, bringing the elements close. On the altar, our offering brings nearer the higher and lower realms and thereby restores Divine unity...Salt is the essential element in the mix, for it can destroy or preserve. The “covenant of salt” teaches us that the sacrificial service, if performed sincerely, preserves Israel, but if an empty offering, brings exile and destruction.

DRASH...A Dialogue of Celebrating Difference: Listening for the Light

MARK KURLANSKY...

...Ernest Jones, Welsh psychologist and friend of Sigmund Freud, published an essay about the human obsession with salt...He stated the curious custom of presenting a piece of rock salt to a guest who would then lick it. Jones states that “in all ages salt has been invested with a significance far exceeding its natural properties, interesting and important as these are. Homer called it a divine substance. Plato described it as especially dear to the gods. And we note the importance attached to it in religious ceremonies covenants, and magical charms. That this should have been so in all parts of the world and in all times shows that we are dealing with a general human tendency and not only a local custom.”

Salt, Jones argued, is often associated with fertility. The notion may have come from the observation that fish, living in the salty seas, have far more offspring than a land-based animals. The Romans called a man in love “*salax*”, in a salted state, which is the origin of the word *salacious*. In the Pyrenees, bridal couples went to church with salt in their left pockets to guard against impotence. In Germany, the bride shoes were sprinkled with salt.

Perhaps a better explanation for the human obsession with this common compound is the one offered in the 1920s by the Diamond Crystal Salt Company of Saint Clare Michigan in a booklet “*101 uses for diamond crystal salt.*” This list of uses included: keeping the colors bright on boiled vegetables, making ice cream freeze, whipping cream rapidly, getting more heat out of boiled water, removing spots on clothes, putting out grease fires, making candles driplless, and treating dyspepsia, sprains, sore throat and earaches.

...Chloride is essential for digestion and respiration. Without sodium, which the body cannot manufacture, the body would be unable to transport nutrients or oxygen, transmit nerve impulses, or move muscles, including the heart. An adult human being contains about 250 g of salt, which would fill three or four salt-shakers.... Salt is so common, so easy to obtain, and so inexpensive that we have forgotten that from the beginning of civilization until about 100 years ago, it was one of the most sought-after commodities in human history.

...Salt was to the ancient Hebrews, and still is to modern Jews, the symbol of the eternal nature of God’s covenant with Israel. In the book of Numbers it is written: It is a covenant of salt for ever before the Eternal...On Friday night, Jews dip the Sabbath bread in salt. In Judaism, bread is a symbol of food which is a gift from God, and dipping the bread in salt preserves the agreement between God and the people...Thus, loyalty and friendship are sealed with salt because it’s essence does not change...There is no place on earth without salt...

... Egyptians were the inventors of raised bread. To make leavened bread, a gluten producing grain, Egyptians developed yeast that could be ground and stretched into a dough capable of rising... The Egyptian bakers created an enormous variety of breads of different shapes sometimes with the addition of honey or milk for sweetness. Most of these, as with modern breads, were made from the base of flour water and a pinch of salt.

In 1250 BC, when Moses liberated the Hebrew slaves, leading them out of Egypt and across the Sinai, the Hebrews took with them the only flat unleavened bread, matzo, which is described by the Hebrew phrase *Lechem Oni*—*the bread of the poor*. Poor Egyptians did not have the sumptuous assortment of Egyptian arrays of breads. Like people outside of Egypt, the poor ate flat bread. According to Jewish legend, the fleeing Hebrews took unleavened bread because they lacked time to let the bread rise. But it may also have been that they were used to making it as slaves in Egypt, Or perhaps it was a conscious rejection of Egyptian culture and the luxuries of the slave owners. Israel left behind the bread of Egypt...as salt became a sacred commodity. [[Salt: A History](#)]

SOD: The Open Questioning that Leads to Love

R' ZELIG PLISKIN...

*“Every meal offering you offer may not be with chametz or honey...
with your offerings you shall offer salt.”*

Yeast and honey were not permitted in offerings on the holy altar. Yeast makes dough rise higher, but it is an external additive. Honey makes things taste sweeter, but it is also external. Salt, on the other hand, brings out the flavor of the food, but only after that flavor is already there. Thus, says Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, salt symbolizes a basic principle in spiritual matters. When serving the Holy One, follow the model of salt. That is, utilize all the abilities and strength you have within to serve the sacred. Do not be as the yeast, causing distortion of what is really there. Do not be like the honey, very sweet only because you borrowed it from an outside source. Understand—you shall offer salt—serve up your essence, and your offering will bring out the sacred potential already inside.

INTERPRETER'S BIBLE...

This reminds us that a covenant was considered inviolable, either because people who've eaten salt together are bound together, or because salt arrests decay...Too many personal covenants in our own day are made and taken with “a grain of salt.” If our covenants among individuals, between husband and wife, between the human family are to stand, they must be sealed with salt...In the end, it is the people of our nation who must be worth their salt.