

Kehillah

Chiddushim and Insights for Shabbos | 3 Nissan, 5783 | 14



A Time for Humility

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer

The first word of the Book of Vayikra, which includes virtually all the laws relating to our service of Hashem in the Mikdash (alongside a range of other halachic material), is written with a small letter *aleph*. Hashem called Moshe, *vayikra*, but the call was somehow subdued.

The *Baal Ha-Turim* explains that this represents the modesty of Moshe Rabbeinu. From his own perspective, Moshe wanted the word to be written without the *aleph*, reading *vayekar* and implying an incidental meeting rather than an intimate beckoning. Hashem insisted that the word be written with the *aleph*, and Moshe complied – yet wrote a small letter.

This unique opening to the book of Vayikra teaches us a profound lesson concerning the subject matter of the entire book – our service to Hashem.

Chazal teach us that the wicked “stand upon their gods,” while Hashem “rides upon the righteous” (Bereishis Rabba 89:4). The righteous and the wicked, those who serve Hashem and those who serve other gods, define a totally different internal motion.

The wicked place themselves above their gods, playing a game of give-and-take. They might need the gods, but the gods also need them, and their weaknesses can be manipulated as leverage for exacting needs and desires. They “stand upon their gods,” ordering them to grant their wishes.

The righteous, by contrast, serve Hashem as part of a relationship, a covenant. As with every relationship, our connection with Hashem begins by making space for Him in our lives. In so doing, we serve Him as a “chariot,” bringing him into our world and receiving His blessing through His love and closeness.

As we begin the book of Vayikra, the part of the Torah detailing our service to Hashem, we open with an insight relating to humility. Relationship requires us to consider the other. To make space for him or her within us. To give him that most precious of commodities: our trust. Doing so requires modesty. If we’re full of ourselves, there’s no room within us for others.

In a sense, the path we trace from Purim to Pesach, from exilic salvation absent of Divine revelation to a full redemption by explicit Divine miracles, is a path from pride to humility.

In exile, we have no choice but to assert ourselves while striving to find Hashem behind the scenes. Mordechai and Esther are heroes of the Megillah. In redemption, we are able to leave maximum space for Hashem. Even Moshe Rabbeinu goes unmentioned in the Pesach Haggadah. There are no heroes, nobody other than Hashem.

The path we trace from Purim to Pesach, from exilic salvation absent of Divine revelation to a full redemption by explicit Divine miracles, is a path from pride to humility.

As we approach Pesach – a time when chametz, which represents the inflated self, is forbidden – perhaps we can learn a lesson for the current moment in Israel when rival factions find themselves in a struggle that has split families, and many raise the specter of civil war.

At a time when there is no choice but to take sides – in such matters of great significance, it becomes incumbent upon us to take a side – the trait of humility becomes an existential commodity. Sadly, it appears to be sorely missing.

Even as we debate and dispute, humility ensures that we continue to see the other, continue to respect him though we disagree. It ensures that notwithstanding the tensions, we maintain the relationships that keep us together, the bonds that maintain our unity even in disagreement.

It was Moshe’s humility that allowed him to hear the pure call of Hashem, unadulterated by his own sense of self. Our humility, likewise, will ensure that we know the boundary between standing up for the right and just and standing up for our own pride.

Why Honor the Humble Offering?

Rabbi Yaacov Haber

In this week's parasha, we read about the korban olah, an elevated or burnt offering. This takes three forms according to the economic status of the man who brings it. It may be an animal from the man's cattle or sheep. If those aren't affordable, it could be a bird. Finally, if he cannot afford any of the above, he may bring a korban mincha (meal offering), made of flour, oil and frankincense (a gum resin from a certain type of tree), baked on a griddle, in an oven, or fried in a pan.

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Interestingly, the other two types of offerings are burned completely on the altar. But this, the cheapest offering, has the merit, apart from a handful that is burned, of being eaten by the Kohen Gadol and his sons. Why should this offering – the economy version – have a special privilege?

The Baal HaTurim explains that this is a form of command to the Kohen Gadol not to be contemptuous of such a humble offering. We can imagine how honored the person bringing this offering would feel watching the Kohen Gadol himself and his sons sit down together just to eat the pancake that this man had prepared.

But there is a problem with this explanation: why should the Kohen Gadol, of all people, be contemptuous of such an offering? He was probably the holiest man there, and, we might think, be the least likely to express contempt for any man's offering, rich or poor. If any of us were guests at a kiddush presented by a poor man, would we laugh at his meager offerings? Of course not. More likely, we would be touched, realizing that for him even this was a big sacrifice. Even more so, we might imagine, would the Kohen Gadol react with appreciation and respect for the man's humble sacrifice.

I would suggest that it is precisely because of the Kohen Gadol's holiness that he might look down on the korban mincha. He might very well think: "I know

this man is poor, but if he or his child were sick, he wouldn't get cheap medical advice. Somehow he'd beg or borrow enough money to go to a good doctor. Why can't he do the same in this case? After all, the purpose of this offering is to repair a breach between this man and G-d caused by some sin. It should therefore have top priority."

The Kohen Gadol might be right about the ability of this particular man and his offering. But it is not, and must not be, the job of the kohen to judge the devotion of the person bringing the offering. The Kohen Gadol cannot tell how much of a sacrifice it was to bring even a flour offering. If, indeed, the man could have done better, that is for G-d to know and G-d to judge. The Kohen Gadol must, in this case, treat his offering with the greatest respect and show this respect by eating it in public with his sons.

Sometimes people become so bound up with their holiness and spirituality that they cannot appreciate qualities in their fellow men that are not exactly like their own. They forget how to judge other people reasonably.

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The goal for most people should be to integrate their Torah studies with their daily lives, not to separate themselves from the world but to bring holiness into it.

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A famous Gemara in *Shabbos* describes how Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was forced to hide in a cave with his son for twelve years in order to escape the Roman authorities. He had criticized those authorities, and they wanted to kill him for it. Rabbi Shimon and his son were able to survive in the cave because of a miracle: a carob tree and a stream both appeared in the cave and provided them with sustenance.

According to tradition, while in the cave Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai wrote his famous Kabbalistic work, the Zohar. After twelve years, the prophet Eliyahu appeared to him, told him that the emperor had died and he could safely leave the cave. Rabbi Shimon did so, but there was a problem: whatever or whomever he looked at was burned to a frazzle! You can imagine the consternation this caused. Eventually a Heavenly voice said: "Is this why you left my cave, to destroy the world? Get back into your



» cave!” Rabbi Shimon returned to his cave and stayed there another twelve months, after which his laser vision seems to have vanished.

What are we to make of this story? I like the explanation of the Alter from Slobodka. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was so holy and had reached such a high degree of spirituality in the cave that he could no longer tolerate the world around him. He had no understanding of the fact that most people have to spend a large part of their time earning a living. (According to this explanation, the fact that everyone and everything withered under his searing glare could be

taken figuratively.) Because of this intolerance, he had to return to the cave until he was ready to accept the world around him.

If one is able to attain the spiritual level of the Kohen Gadol or Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, that’s wonderful. However, for most people this is probably not achievable. The goal for most people should be to integrate their Torah studies with their daily lives, not to separate themselves from the world but to bring holiness into it. Their efforts should be respected, not scorned or mocked by those fortunate enough to attain a higher level of spirituality.

Sharing With a Thief

Rabbi Asher Meir

Our parasha lists the transgressions that require a variable sin offering, one that depends upon the means of the penitent. The first is the sin of refraining from testifying (Vayikra 5:1):

“If a person will sin: If he accepted a demand for an oath, and he is a witness – either he saw or he knew – if he does not testify, he shall bear his iniquity.”

The verse indicates that a sacrifice is required only when there is a demand for an oath – an *ala* – imposed upon someone who is able to give testimony and does not do so. Imposing such an *ala* on any person who committed a suspected transgression has been a common practice throughout the generations.

A *cherem stam* (anonymous ostracism) is mentioned dozens of times in the *Shulchan Aruch*. For instance, rather than offering a reward for somebody who comes forward with information concerning a civil case, the plaintiff will announce a *cherem* on anyone who has knowledge regarding the case but refrains from disclosing it (*Shulchan Aruch*, CM 69:5, 75:17).

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 6:2) associates this imprecation with the one mentioned in Mishlei (29:6): “He who shares with a thief is his own enemy. He hears the imprecation and does not tell.” The Midrash connects the two halves of the verse, sharing with a thief and hearing an imprecation: the witness is induced to refrain from testifying, thus bringing a curse upon himself, by an offer of a share in the stolen goods.

This Midrash illustrates how someone who enables the thief to sell stolen merchandise is an essential partner in the crime. This same insight is presented in the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 56b and elsewhere) with the memorable analogy: “It is not the mouse that steals; it is the hole.” If the mouse doesn’t have anywhere to store the food he snatches, he will stop taking food altogether.

The Mishnah in *Bava Kama* (118b) forbids making purchases from those who can be reasonably suspected of having stolen their merchandise. For example, one cannot buy merchandise from a seller when one knows that the seller’s employer usually carries that merchandise.

The Rambam (*Geneiva* 5:1; *Gezeila* 5:1) explains that in buying stolen goods we are “strengthening the hand of the transgressor, thereby encouraging wrongdoing.” This rabbinic prohibition, primarily expounded in the fifth chapter of tractate *Sheviis*, is somewhat different from the more familiar instances of vicarious transgression, where one person bears Torah liability for the sin of another. *Lifnei iver* (enabling a transgression) and *mesaye’a* (abetting a transgression) generally relate to the enabling or abetting some specific sin. “Strengthening,” in contrast, generally refers to condoning or encouraging wrongful conduct, thus making it more likely in the future, which is exactly the case in fencing stolen merchandise.

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Chazal never permit helping someone steal just because if I don't help him someone else will.
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All three instances of vicarious liability – enabling (*lifnei iver*), abetting (*mesaye’a*), and encouraging – have associated leniencies. For example, enabling occurs only if the help is essential for the sin; and it is often permitted if the transgression is not directly enabled by the relevant action, or when a non-Jew is involved in the enabling mechanism (*Shulchan Aruch*, *Even Ha’ezer* 5:14 in the Rema). Assisting

» involves only active participation, while encouraging is forbidden only when transgression is likely.

However, it appears that none of these leniencies apply in the case of sins that include a clear victim, such as theft. Chazal never permit helping someone steal just because if I don't help him someone else will (see *Sema* on *Shulchan Aruch*, CM 356:3). Neither is it permitted to ask one non-Jew to ask another non-Jew to steal or to condone stealing in order not to disturb neighborly relations (in cases of clear and present danger, the latter is permissible; see *Nedarim* 21b).

This is clearly evident in the prohibition mentioned above from the Mishnah in *Bava Kama* concerning purchasing merchandise that is merely suspect. The usual rule regarding *mechazkim yedei ovrei aveira* (encouraging sinners) is that we resolve doubts leniently.

Occasionally, employees may be called upon to take part in business activities that victimize others. It is likely that such participation is forbidden even if the employee's participation is indirect and non-essential. Situations like this require alertness and certainly justify asking a *shayla*.

Finding Spirituality at the Office

Rabbi Tzvi Broker

As we move into Sefer Vayikra, the focus on the parshiyos is turned to the avodah in the Mishkan. It's fascinating to consider the other contexts where the term *avodah* is used. How can it be applied to both tefillah and work?

When it comes to tefillah, we can easily understand the connection to avodah in the Mishkan. Both are experiences of *ruchnius* (spirituality) and *dveykus* (attaching oneself to Hashem). As the Gemara (*Taanis* 2b) teaches: "To serve Him with all your heart. What is service with the heart? That is tefillah." More so, the Gemara teaches that our formal tefillah was established in place of the avodah in the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash.

Contrastingly, the link between the avodah of the Mishkan and the meaning of avodah as work seems out of sync. The Sfas Emes in this week's parasha sheds light onto this connection by examining the explanation of Rashi on the following pasuk: "A man among you brings an offering to Hashem." Rashi explains why the word *man* (*adam*) is used.

We are called upon to be like Adam, to uplift each aspect of creation for its higher purpose.

Just as Adam HaRishon didn't bring a korban from something stolen since everything was his, so too one may not bring a korban from something that is stolen. The Sfas Emes begins by asking a fundamental question about korbanos: how is our atonement achieved through slaughtering animals that are another part of Hashem's creation?

He answers that, in essence, the slaughter of an animal as a korban is to uplift that animal for a higher

spiritual purpose. Being a facilitator of this process provides the atonement and permits us to slaughter Hashem's creations. If not, we would have no right to do so.

That work is also called avodah is a subtle message for us to approach our jobs with a great sense of responsibility and pride.

The Sfas Emes continues by explaining the connection to Adam HaRishon, who understood that the role of man is to uplift all of creation for a higher purpose. In the aforementioned pasuk, we are called upon to be like Adam, to uplift each aspect of creation for its higher purpose. In doing so, we are playing a facilitator role similar to Adam's, which enables us to bring korbanos properly.

In this light, we can understand why the term *avodah* refers to work. There are two mindsets one can have when involved at work: the consumer mindset or the facilitator mindset. In the consumer mindset, work is merely a tool to earn money for our benefit. In the facilitator mindset, we view our engagement with the physical world through our work as playing out our crucial role in uplifting all aspects of creation.

In our work environments, we come into contact with many different aspects of this world. We have the opportunity to uplift those aspects by viewing and approaching them with a higher intention. That work is also called avodah is a subtle message for us to approach our jobs with a great sense of responsibility and pride. When we do so, we can transform otherwise mundane tasks behind the desk into experiences of *ruchnius* and *dveykus*.

Understanding the Mean Kid

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Our kids are very different from each other. This often comes as a surprise to parents, even though it really shouldn't. After all, we are different from our siblings, so why wouldn't our kids be different from their siblings?

The problem begins when our expectations of sameness give way to comparison, because there is usually one kid who is nicer than the others, and often there is one kid who is meaner.

So, with your permission, I'd like to talk to you about your least-nice kid. But first, let's talk about middos. In the world of shidduchim, everyone wants to know about good middos. Yiras shamayim is less in demand these days, but good middos are still high up there. But what do we mean by good middos? Do we just mean *niceness*?

Let's take a look at Moshe Rabbeinu, for example. When he struck the Egyptian did that qualify him as a model of good character? See, it depends upon what you mean. It wasn't exactly a nice thing to do. If that's what we mean by having good middos, I think the shadchanim of yore might have struggled to get him a top girl. If we're talking about actual good middos, however, it's a different story. And indeed, the Torah praises Moshe Rabbeinu's amazing middos, his empathy, justice, and sense of responsibility. "Nice" is not included.

Now, back to the least-nice kid. First, let's add some context. Not everyone has an easy time sharing their stuff. If your child is sensory, germ-conscious, pedantic, OCD, anxious, or territorial, sharing will be an enormous challenge. Don't mistake that for bad middos. And don't judge her for sharing less well than her siblings.

A child who blames or complains may one day be a justice seeker, just like Moshe Rabbeinu. A child who kicks up a fuss about things not being fair may be exhibiting the ability to take responsibility for a situation, just like Moshe Rabbeinu. A child who wildly overreacts or exaggerates or has tantrums, may have deep feelings of empathy, just like Moshe Rabbeinu, who felt the pain of his brethren. When

children are little they are not yet equipped to put these middos into practice.

Sometimes, the classroom can't handle such children. Imagine being the first-grade teacher of little Alan Dershowitz, who had an answer for everything. Or little Steven Spielberg with his creative imagination.

The Torah praises Moshe Rabbeinu's amazing middos, his empathy, justice, and sense of responsibility. "Nice" is not included.

Our job is not to despair if our kids' middos give us much concern. We need to identify the potential greatness that those "bad" behaviors might indicate. Additionally, we need to advocate for and protect the kids who internalize the despair of other significant adults in their lives.

Of this you can be sure: The most difficult kids are also the smart, sensitive, and discerning ones. Our wringing hands are not lost on them. They see our concern, despair, panic, guilt, and worry. They intuit when we feel like we have failed by the expression on our faces. They might not have the customary good middos right now, but they have some of the most amazing middos, if you follow my meaning.

They have the capacity to disprove those of little faith. They have the potential of becoming the great movers and shakers of our communities. Critically, they are also at risk for being labeled, unappreciated, rejected, and, sadly, proving that all those who said they wouldn't amount to much were right.

It's hard to know which way life will proceed. However, parents play an enormous role. Our kids see themselves through our eyes. If we see their greatness (despite what it looks like to others), we increase the likelihood that they will channel who they are now into the realization of their potential excellence.

Education in Sacrifice ?!

Rebbetzin Tamar Pfeffer

Question

I have a general question. As a mother of five, I see my kids growing up in the lap of (relative) luxury. They have all they need and (basically) all they want. This is not how I grew up.

My parents were poor. Spending for Shabbos and

festivals and other mitzvos was a strain, yet my parents did it with love, joy, and dedication.

How do I give this to my children? How can I train them to sacrifice when they have it all?



Response

Thank you for the question. You are certainly a person who cares and thinks deeply about Chinuch.

Allow me to focus on a word you use at the end of the question: “sacrifice.” This is not a word I employ often, and your question made me think: why not?

I think that a Torah outlook does not see sacrifice as a core value. In countless places, the Tanach describes an ideal of living a good life replete with Hashem’s blessing. There is no mitzvah to suffer. Despite specific anecdotes that Chazal mention (Rabbi Akiva’s death comes to mind), we are not “sacrifice seekers.”

I don’t think you should be looking back at your childhood poverty and thinking that you’re missing something by being relatively affluent. Hashem has blessed you in this area, and there is nothing negative about it.

And what about Chinuch? Rather than sacrifice, I would

use the word “choice.” Even in relative wealth, we can’t get all we want, and we need to make choices that involve, by definition, giving up on alternatives.

We choose a job, a school, or a spouse and give up on alternatives. We choose to keep Shabbos, and we give up time to do homework or play a computer game. We choose to observe the Torah and give up on time, resources, chametz on Pesach, and so on.

Each choice, in effect, is a boundary. There’s an alternative you can’t have. When we give our children boundaries, we educate them in this skill, and we empower them to make choices – even ones that hurt. That is a truly essential tool for living a Torah life.

Wishing you much joy and success,

Tamar Pfeffer

Tamar Pfeffer is a parenting and relationship counselor with years of experience, certified under Mrs. Rachel Arbus. Questions should be submitted to ask-en@akshiva.co.il

Leaving the Yeshiva, Dignity Intact

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

“In a place where you find greatness, you will find humility.” These famous words of Rabbi Yochanan capture the essence of this week’s story.

On a wall in my home, there is a picture of HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l. It is there not only because he was a Gadol HaDor in his influence and learning and not only because he was a rebbe for my father and our family. Those are important reasons. But chiefly, it is because of the Rav’s incredible love for the Jewish People, his exceptional middos, and his intense humility that ensured the best for every Jew. Rav Shlomo Zalman’s yahrzeit has just passed, and this Shabbos in Parashas Vayikra we see a small *alef* that symbolizes Moshe Rabbeinu’s humility.

Rav Shomo Zalman was the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Kol Torah in Bayit VeGan in Yerushalayim. One day a meeting was convened to discuss the behavior of a certain student in the yeshiva. He was certainly

not acting in line with what the yeshiva expected. Everyone around the table, with the exception of Rav Shlomo Zalman, voted that he be sent away from the yeshiva.

Rav Shlomo Zalman was very upset. He was saddened that someone who had found himself under the care of the yeshiva – especially an orphan – was about to be told that he needed to leave. The Rosh Yeshiva understood the decision. He accepted the decision but pleaded, “Please do not do anything for a month. Give me a month. I doubt that he will change, but give me one month.”

The extension was granted. Afterwards, the Gadol HaDor went to an older student in the beis medrash and made a request, “Listen,” Rav Auerbach confided, “I need you to learn with Shloimie for the next month. I need you to learn these two pages with him and work with him so he knows them by



» heart. With the Tosafos and Maharsha. It will take a while, but whenever he is willing to learn, please learn with him. I will check up on how it is going every few days. This is very important.”

“Give me a month. I doubt that he will change, but give me one month”.

And so the older student enjoyed learning with the younger Shloimie and developed a connection with him. Slowly but surely, they learned the two pages by heart. Every word. Every line. Every question of Tosafos, even the very difficult one at the bottom of the page. Every few days, the Gadol HaDor would inquire about the chavrusa. Slowly, Shloimie became a master of those pages.

However, not much else changed. It was clear that as the month was drawing to a close, the yeshiva’s decision would need to be carried out. When they told Shloimie, he simply shrugged. He realized that his time in yeshiva was almost up.

One day, the Rosh Yeshiva visited the shiur that Shloimie attended. The rebbe of the shiur moved aside as the beaming face of the Rosh Yeshiva zeroed in on the students.

“I want to ask about these dapim in the fifth perek, particularly a Tosafos that has been bothering me,” Rav Shlomo Zalman began. He then asked the Maharsha’s question on the Tosafos. Shloimie, who usually sat daydreaming, lit up. “That’s no question!” he responded to the Rosh Yeshiva.

No one could believe it. Shloimie was right. He held his own, arguing over the complicated Tosafos with the Rosh Yeshiva. Shloimie then went on to ask a *bomb kasha* and Rav Shlomo Zalman was stumped.

The entire shiur was amazed by Shloimie’s brilliance. Reb Shlomo Zalman was overjoyed. The boy had shown what he was capable of, and the Rosh Yeshiva could barely contain his pride.

As the boy continued his journey through the sugya, Rav Shlomo Zalman sat there transfixed. His bright, angelic eyes gazed gently at the boy sitting at the back. Finally, the Rav spoke. “Shloimie, it is such a shame that you have chosen to leave the yeshiva. Such a gifted student, and you are leaving.”

Shloimie wanted to jump up and shout, “But it isn’t my choice! I want to stay!” Before he could open his mouth, however, the venerable Yerushalmi sage continued, “It is such mesiras nefesh for you to leave Kol Torah just in order to move closer to your widowed mother. I

envy your olam haba. Just imagine the incredible middos that you must have and your tremendous sense of responsibility.”

With that, the Rosh Yeshiva stood up and walked to Shloimie’s seat. The Rav smiled and gave him the warmest of brachos, with the envious eyes of dozens of friends and roommates upon him.

Such was the way of Rav Shlomo Zalman. “Its ways are ways of pleasantness,” we read in *Mishlei*. With wisdom, with tact, and with an investment of time and energy, he was able to maintain – even enhance – the dignity of the student. It is no wonder that this orphan grew up to become a serious ben Torah. He had encountered a personal life lesson that he would never forget.

What an incredible message.

The Rav smiled and gave him the warmest of brachos, with the envious eyes of dozens of friends and roommates upon him.

I cannot help but end with a teaching that the Kotzker Rebbe used to explain a seemingly difficult statement in the Midrash Tanchuma at the end of Ki Sisa. The Midrash tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu’s face shone because it had been touched by some of the extra ink used in writing the Sefer Torah. What could the midrash be teaching, and why was there any ink left over? Could HKBH not measure accurately? Clearly, there is a message.

Explains the Rebbe from Kotzk: the extra ink came from the humility of writing a small *alef* instead of a large one. Moshe Rabbeinu’s humility gave him his shining face. Rav Shlomo Zalman had both humility and a shining face.

May we merit to connect to the Gedolei HaDor and thereby connect to the Shechinah.



Do We Need to Dip Bread In Salt on Weekdays?

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

"Elie, I saved you a seat!" called Avishai. "The lunch room is really busy today."

The two boys put their lunches on the table and walked together to the washing station. After netilas yadayim, they sat back down at their table. Elie made the bracha of hamotzi and then took a big bite of his sandwich. Avishai was still unwrapping his sandwich while Elie was on his next few bites. Avishai hesitated before his first bite, looking around the table. He went off and eventually returned with a salt shaker. He made hamotzi, dipping a corner of his sandwich into the

sprinkling of salt on his plate three times, and then ate.

"Wow, Avishai, I've already finished my sandwich! What took you so long?"

"I wanted to find the salt! Our table didn't have any, so I had to go looking," answered Avishai.

"We put on salt when we eat our bread on Shabbos, but do you really have to use it during the week, too?"

"I think it's important," nodded Avishai.

Elie thought for a moment, "But it took you two extra minutes to find the salt and come back to the table. Isn't that a hefsek between netilas yadayim and hamotzi?"

Discussion

Q: What is the connection between our story and the parasha?

A: Parashas Vayikra discusses the laws for the various korbanos. One very important rule was that every korban needed to be brought with salt (Vayikra 2:13).

Q: Why is salt important for our meals?

A: The Rema teaches that the tables we eat on today are like the altar of the Temple. Just as the altar was used to bring forgiveness to the Jewish people, so too the tables that we eat on can bring forgiveness to us (*Shaar Tzion* 167:5). In order for this to happen, however, we have to have intention that the reason we are eating food is to serve Hashem and not to enjoy for our own selfish pleasure. For example, we should make sure that

divrei Torah are spoken (*Shaar Tzion* 167:25). Just as it was important to have salt present for the sacrifices, it is important to have salt present for the avodah that we hope to perform for Hashem during our meals.

Q: Did Elie choose randomly to dip his bread in the salt three times?

A: No. This is a teaching from the Kabbalah (*Mishna Berura* 167:33). However, this is not an obligation, and only some people have the custom of doing so.

Q: After Avishai washed for netilas yadayim, he discovered that there was no salt at the table. Was it acceptable to delay making the blessing of hamotzei in order to find salt?

A: Yes. There is no concern in this case for a hefsek because the salt is needed in order to perform the mitzvah ideally (*Mishna Berura* 167:29).

Back to Our Story

The boys' rabbi was patrolling the lunch room that afternoon and overheard the boys' discussion. He happily paused at their table to explain to them the importance of having salt at their table. He added that it is not considered a hefsek if one needs extra time to fetch the salt between netilas yadayim and hamotzi.

The next day, the boys took their usual seats at lunch time. Avishai noticed that Elie exhibited an extra fancy flourish as he unpacked his lunch. He pulled out a napkin and placed it on the table. On top of the napkin he put his drink, cream cheese sandwich, muffin, green apple, and – right at the edge of the napkin so that Avishai could easily reach it as well – a little plastic salt shaker.

*Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer and based in part on the lecture "Salt in Jewish Law" by Rabbi Mendel Kaplan on www.chabad.org.
L'iluy nishmas Frumit Bat Yosef, Edith Nusbaum a"h*

