

## **Parshas Korach-Covenant of Salt** **By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

Towards the end of Parshas Korach, we read of the gifts that Am Yisroel give to the Kohanim. At the end of the list [Bamidbar 18:19] the Torah states that the covenant between Hashem and the Kohanim is a covenant of salt. What is the connection of salt to a covenant? Furthermore, we read in Vayikra 2:13 that there is a mitzvah to bring salt with all korbonos. Clearly, salt is significant.

The Ibn Ezra understands salt as an expression of cutting. When a covenant is made between individuals or nations, something is cut. Also, when we find an expression of desolation of an area in Tanach, we frequently find the expression, *Eretz Melaicha*, salty land. The context there is that plant life is cut off. In our context, it means the covenant was cut with *melach* between Hashem and the Kohanim for the Kohanim to be ministers in Hashem's house.

The Rashbam understands the phrase of salt to express perpetuity. We find this expression of covenant of salt used in a similar way regarding the kingdom of Dovid Hamelech. In Divrai Hayamim 13:5 we find the eternal status of Dovid's Kingdom described as a covenant of salt.

The Sefer Hachinuch [Mitzvah 119] writes about salt in the context of Korbonos. All korbonos were to have salt for the same reasons that we use salt for our food. Just as salt enhances food, so too should our korbonos that we give to Hashem should be enhanced. Secondly, just as salt preserves food, so too, the korbonos preserve us.

Rabbeinu Bachaya in Parshas Korach [Bamidbar 18:19] gives the following explanation of covenant of salt. Like the Ibn Ezra, he writes that *melacha* literally means to cut. Rabbeinu Bachaya adds that salt is generally obtained through cutting and mining. On a deeper level, salt is primarily the product of water that the sun caused to evaporate, leaving

behind the salt. [We can see this readily in the case of sea-water.]Therefore, salt is a product of fire and water, a combination of judgment represented by fire and *chesed*, kindness, represented by water. Because nothing will ever grow in salt as the expression salty land [Devarim 29:22] is used for arid regions, it symbolizes eternity.

Furthermore, Rabbeinu Bachaya states that the expression of salt is used in connection with the gifts for Kohanim and the Leviyim. The gifts for the Kohanim, numbering twenty-four, symbolize the written Torah consisting of twenty-four books. The gifts for the Leviyim symbolize Torah Shabal Peh, our oral tradition. Yaakov Avinu promised [Bereishis 28:22] that he would give back to Hashem a tenth of all that would be given to him. Moreover, we see the idea from Vayikra 27:32 that the tenth will be holy. If we count Yaakov's children starting with the youngest, Levi comes out number ten. Both the Kohanim and Leviyim are descended from Levi. While the Kohen's kedusha is on a higher level, the Levyim have a special mission to guard this kedusha. Similarly, while the written Torah is the greatest treasure as the holiness is in the very words and not just the concepts, the Mesorah is what beautifies and protects it. Salt, consisting of the forces fire and water, judgment and kindness, Torah Shebichtav and Torah Shebal Peh unifies all into one grand harmony as ultimately as Hashem is all one and Hashem is one with his Torah.