

# **Salting With Sugar?**

## **Insights Into Halacha - Sefer Vayikra**

### **By Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

One of the main topics discussed extensively in Sefer Vayikra is that of Korbanos (loosely translated as sacrifices), one of whose primary functions was to bring us closer to Hashem.[1] Unfortunately, we no longer have the opportunity to experience Korbanos first hand, ever since the time of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, which resulted in their cessation.

Nowadays, it seems that due to Korbanos' complicated nature and exacting minutiae, as well as the relevant Parshiyos usually falling out during the hectic pre-Pesach season, many of us regrettably do not have an accurate understanding nor a proper appreciation of their deeper meaning and how they are relevant to our daily lives. Perhaps this is in light of the fact that according to the Gemara our daily Tefillos are recited in lieu of offering Korbanos, and are currently 'holding up the world' in their stead.[2]

#### **Contemporary Korbanos**

Yet, there are still some aspects of Korbanos that do impact our lives more noticeably. For example, the Mitzva to have salt on the table when having a meal[3] is directly based on the requirement to have salt on every Korban,[4] as our tables are compared to the Mizbe'ach (Altar) and our food to a sacrifice.[5]

Another practice based on this aspect of Korbanos is the proper size of salt needed to salt our meat and chickens when kashering them. The Shulchan Aruch rules that medium-sized salt should be used.[6] Rabbeinu Bachya famously comments[7] that this can be inferred from the unique phraseology of the verse regarding the Mitzva of ensuring that all Korbanos are salted - "b'melach timlach",[8] "that you shall salt them with salt".[9] He asserts that the fact that the Torah uses the same word twice to describe this action, shows that it should be performed with medium-sized (coarse) salt.

This actually affects everyone's lives, due to the Biblical prohibition against eating blood.[10] As is detailed by the Gemara and codified as halacha, the proper way to remove the blood from a properly slaughtered kosher animal or fowl, and thereby rendering it fit for eating, is via this salting.[11] [12] In fact, the methodology and related halachos of the process of the proper salting of animals, referred to simply as 'Hilchos Melicha', comprise an entire body of study in Issur V'Hetter of its own right.[13]

#### **Sugar = Salt?**

However, over the years, there were several Poskim who furthered the connection between the laws of salting a Korban and our salting of meat. Rav Yaakov Chagiz (1620–1674; a.k.a. Mahari Chagiz, renowned as the Baal Halachos Ketanos), in his Shu"t Halachos Ketanos, addresses the issue of whether sugar can be used as a substitute to "salt" a Korban. He maintains that it is indeed

permissible to use sugar, as, although sugar is sweet, nevertheless, since it can be used as a preservative, it is considered a true salt.[14]

Rav Daniel Tirani (d. 1814), Chief Rabbi of Florence, Italy, and author of *Ikrei HaDa"t*, takes this comparison a step further, noting that sugar in his time was in fact called by many "Indian salt". Interestingly, he concludes that just as sugar may be used to salt a Korban, so too, if one has no salt available to kasher his meat, he may use sugar instead![15]

Several authorities ruled similarly, allowing sugar as a substitute for kashering their chickens.[16] The *Avnei Nezer*[17] even testified that the Gaon from Lisa, Rav Yaakov Loberbaum zt"l, better known as the Chavas Daas and Nesivos Hamishpat, once used sugar to salt his meat! In fact, the venerated Rav of Yerushalayim of the late 1800s, Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l, once publicly ruled to allow meat that was 'salted with sugar' to be eaten at a wedding.[18]

### Not Worth Its Salt

On the other hand, many authorities vigorously argued against permitting sugar for salting. Their main objection was that equating the salt of Korbanos to the laws of salting our meat was a tenuous comparison. They explained, that even if sugar fits into the salt category as a preservative to allow it to be offered on the Altar,[19] nevertheless, in order to be used as salt to kasher our meat and chickens, its proficiency in drawing out blood on an equal level as salt would have to be proven!

Due to these concerns, the majority of Acharonim, including the Divrei Chaim of Sanz, Rav Shlomo Kluger, the Ksav Sofer, the Shoel U'Meishiv, and the Ben Ish Chai,[20] forbade salting meat or chicken with sugar as a salt substitute.

Many contemporary Poskim as well, including Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Rav Ben Tzion Chai Uziel, Rav Moshe Feinstein, the Klausenberger Rebbe, Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner, the Tzitz Eliezer (who adds that the rumor that Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank permitted meat 'salted with sugar' is 'eidus sheker', blatantly false), and Rav Ovadiah Yosef, *zichronam l'vracha* write very strongly that salting with sugar is not a viable option.[21] Several authorities maintain that if one transgresses, he might even be required to kasher his utensils used.[22]

### Sugary Circumstances

However, and although it is not the normative halacha, there have been those who gave dispensation in extremely extenuating circumstances.[23] In fact, Rav Moshe Halberstam zt"l of the Bada"tz Eidah Hachareidis and author of *Shu"t Divrei Moshe*, once informed this author that there even was a historical precedent where this was performed b'shaas hadchak: during the 1948 Israeli Independence War, in certain places where the Jews were cut off from supply lines with no other viable alternative, were forced to rely upon sugar for salting their meat!

In the final analysis, nowadays, most of us would consider this whole issue to be moot, as our meat and chickens, although not actually 'grown on the supermarket shelf', are still generally pre-salted prior to purchase. Yet, the next time we add a "spoonful of sugar" (or a "salt substitute" substitute) into our coffee, or acknowledge the salt placed on our table at mealtimes, we can remind ourselves

of the intricacies of the Korbanos that are woven into our daily lives. We hope and pray that we will soon merit actually attaining the closeness to Hashem engendered by bringing Korbanos in the rebuilt Beis Hamikdash, bimherah b'yameinu amen.

#### Postscript: Sugary Substitutions

Although as detailed, most authorities do not allow sugar replacing salt for salting meat, nevertheless, there are several situations where a sugar substitution is halachically acceptable. For example, Rav Yaakov Emden accepts that sugar is considered a type of salt regarding bishul on Shabbos. The Shaarim Metzuyanim B'Halacha posits that based on this, if one does not have salt on his table, he can fulfill the mitzva of 'bris melach' by having sugar on his table instead. For if the table is akin to the Mizbe'ach, and sugar would work in place of salt for an actual Korban, then certainly sugar can replace salt for this purpose. In fact, the Ben Ish Chai, although rejecting the idea of sugar for use as salt to kasher meat, nonetheless, in Shu"t Torah L'Shma (which is generally attributed to him) he accepts sugar's use as salt for dipping.[24]

However, the Kaf Hachaim argues on the use of this leniency, and writes that the sugar would not satisfy the requirement of salt for dipping after HaMotzi, either. He avers that Kabbalistically it would actually be preferable to dip the bread into another slice of bread, as the words 'melach' and 'lechem' share the same letters. He maintains that only on Rosh Hashanah, and only after first dipping his bread into salt, may one afterwards dip his bread into sugar to 'sweeten his din'.[25]

Although this might sound astounding to some, there are also those who dip their challah and / or apple into sugar instead of honey on Rosh Hashanah. This is colloquially known as the Ben Ish Chai's minhag, and is generally followed by certain Sefardic sects.[26] I guess this just goes to show that halachically, a little bit of sugar goes a long way.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu).

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Rabbi Spitz's recent English halacha sefer, "Insights Into Halacha - Food: A Halachic Analysis," (Mosaica/Feldheim) contains more than 500 pages and features over 30 comprehensive chapters, discussing a myriad of halachic issues relating to food. It is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.

[1]See Ohr Hachaim (Vayikra Ch. 1: 2 s.v. uvaderech), Seforno (ad loc. s.v. adam), and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary (ad loc. s.v. korban).

[2]Taanis (27b) and Megillah (31b).

[3]See Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 167: 5).

[4]Vayikra (Ch. 2: 13).

[5]See Gemara Brachos (55a), Tosafos (ad loc. s.v. haba), Haghos Ashiri (Brachos, Perek Keitzad Mevorchin 22), Beis Yosef (O.C. 167; quoting the Shibolei Leket 141), Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 167: 5), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 15), Machatzis Hashekel (ad loc. 15), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 7; citing the Arizal), Chayei Adam (vol. 1: 42, 11), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (41: 6), Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 167: 12), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Emor 10), Mishnah Berurah (167: 30 and 32), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 38 and 40). See also Shla"h (Shaar HaOsiyos, Eimek Bracha 66), Kiryas Chana Dovid (49), Shu"t Beis Yaakov (165), and Halachic World (vol. 2: pg. 151, "Table Salt"). Practically, the outcome is that although nowadays our bread is 'nekiya' and we would not have an actual requirement to dip it into salt me'ikar hadin, nevertheless, due to the comparison of our tables to the Mizbe'ach, one should still have salt on the table while eating. Moreover, having this salt at the table protects us from punishment, as fulfilling this keeps the Satan at bay as he cannot claim that we are sitting idle without Mitzvos. As cited by many of the above Poskim, Kabbalistically speaking, one should dip their bread into salt three times. See R' Zvi Ryzman's recent excellent Ratz Katzvi on Maagalei Hashana (vol. 1: 3, Ch. 2: 10) who adds a potential reason for this based on the Baal HaTurim (Vayikra Ch. 2: 13) regarding the three times that salt is mentioned in said pasuk.

[6]Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 69: 3). See also the main commentaries ad loc. who explain why salt that is too small (i.e. table salt) and salt that is too big (i.e. rock salt) should not be used lechatchilla for salting meat and poultry; rather the midsize salt (kosher salt) is optimal. However, it should be noted that if midsize salt is unavailable or b'dieved, the other salts are acceptable in a pinch.

[7]Well, actually not so famous, but it should be. This enlightening comment of Rabbeinu Bachya's (a Rishon!) was first shown to this author way back when, during his Semichah Test from and by Rav Moshe Halberstam zt"l of the Badat"z Eidah Hachareidis and author of Shu"t Divrei Moshe. Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the fact that the Torah stressed a double lashon of 'salting with salt' (instead of just 'salting', which would seemingly indicate either davka large or small granules), implies that the salt used should not be too big, nor too small, but just right.

[8]There is another aspect of modern day salting inferred from this verse, by the Issur V'Hetter (1: 9), and cited in Ba'er Heitiv (Y"D 69: 21). The halacha states that the salt must remain on the piece of meat to do its job approximately 20 minutes me'ikar hadin. This is known as 'Shiur Melicha.'

[However, lechatchilla the meat should be covered in salt for a full hour, especially according to Ashkenazic authorities; ; see Rema (ad loc.; citing the Terumas Hadesheh 167)]. The Issur V'Hetter points out that this may be inferred from our pasuk - as the word 'b'melach' has the same Gematriya as 'Mil' (80), the distance that takes approximately 20 minutes to walk (Shiur Hiluch Mil). The actual amount of time is debated among the Rishonim, whether this translates to 18 minutes (Terumas Hadesheh), 24 minutes (Rambam and Bartenura), or 22 and ½ minutes (Gr"a), [for an understanding in the differences of opinions of the Rishonim see Chok Yaakov (O.C. 459: 10), Biur HaGr"a (ad loc. 5), and Biur Halacha (ad loc. s.v. havei)]. There is also some debate among the later authorities how this debate applies to Melicha – whether similarly, or as since Melicha is Derabbanan may we rely on the most lenient shittah, as practically this shiur is only invoked b'dieved anyway. See Pri Chodosh (Y"D 69: 26), Shu"t Chanoch Beis Yehuda (60), Pri Megadim (Y"D 69, S.D. 25), Gilyon Maharsha (ad loc. 54), Yad Efrayim (ad loc. s.v. kdei), Chochmas Adam (39: 9), Ben Ish Chai

(Year 2, Parshas Tazria – Metzora / Taharos 17), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (36: 11), Mishnah Berurah (459: 15), Kaf Hachaim (Y"D 69: 89), Chazon Ish (O.C. 123: 1 and Y"D 10: 18), and Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (vol. 12: 52).

[9]Vayikra (Ch. 2: 13).

[10]See Vayikra (Parshas Acharei Mos, Ch. 17: 10 - 14), Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Assuros Ch. 6: 1 - 4), Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 65 - 68).

[11]This is detailed in Gemara Chullin 113a, in the statement of Shmuel's; and codified as halacha by the Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Assuros Ch. 6: 10), Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 69: 4).

[12]There is an additional method available to remove the blood when salting is not an option – 'tzliyah', or roasting, in a very specific manner, 'ad shayazuv kol damo, until all of its blood has left it,' and then it is permitted for cooking. See Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Yoreh Deah 69: 21 and 76 as to the details of this process. According to many Poskim [see Taz (Y"D 69: 54; citing the Haghos Shaarei Dura, 9: 9), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 54), Pri Megadim (M.Z. ad loc. 54), Chavas Daas (ad loc. Chiddushim 76), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. end 118), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 320)], if one wants to perform this 'tzliyah' lechatchilla, the meat must be roasted until the meat is 'yisyaveish m'bachutz, dried out from the outside,' as only then would all of the prohibited blood be considered completely drawn out l'divrei hakol. Indeed, Rav Moshe Halberstam zt"l told this author (at the aforementioned Semicha Test) that utilizing this hetter is not so practical, as after the proper roasting, the meat is somewhat hard (tough) and quite often not so palatable. On the other hand, there is a specific case where "tzliyah" is not only optimal, it is halachically mandated: regarding liver. As the liver is completely infused with blood, the only way to kasher it is via broiling, after cutting it open "shasi v'arev," meaning sliced open vertically and horizontally or criss-cross. See Yoreh Deah 73 at length for the full details and parameters of the liver-kashering process

[13]Yoreh Deah (69-78). Optimally, this halachic process must commence within seventy-two hours after the animal is shechted (and before the meat is frozen, chopped, or ground), since it is assumed that the blood would be too congealed and set in the meat after this period for the salt to be effective enough to remove it. When necessary, this period may be extended by properly soaking the meat before the seventy-two hours have elapsed, thereby allowing for an additional seventy-two hours before salting will be required. Performing the actual Melicha process lechatchilla is time consuming and consists of rinsing off the meat well (from the outer blood sitting on it), soaking it in water for a half-hour and letting it drip dry a bit afterward, covering every inch of the piece of meat with salt, and letting it sit in its salt for a full hour in a manner where the blood can drain off freely, followed up with a rinse off, and washed three times (meaning three full dunks in different containers of water) to properly ensure the removal of the residual blood-infused salt. After that, the meat is ready for cooking.

[14]Shu"t Halachos Ketanos (vol. 1: 218).

[15]Ikrei Dinim (O.C. 14: 36). This widely quoted commentary was standard in all older versions of the Shulchan Aruch. He writes that if salt is unavailable, one can use sugar instead without a second's hesitation. See also Darchei Teshuva (69: 328).

[16]See Shu"t Beis Yitzchak (Danzig; vol. 2: Y"D 27), Shu"t Ma'aseh Avraham (Y"D 30), Misgeres Hashulchan (Y"D 69: 21), Mizmor L'Dovid (116), Shu"t Mei Noach (29), and Shu"t Menachem Meishiv (vol. 1: 24).

[17]Shu"t Avnei Nezer (O.C. 532). However, the Piskei Teshuva (pg. 71) posits that it is possible that the Chavas Daas wasn't referring to our commercial sugar which "obviously cannot be considered salt." Others claim that this had to have been a one-time occurrence and possibly only b'shaas hadchak. See also Pardes Yosef (Vayikra Ch. 2: 13) and Darchei Teshuva (69: 328) for more on this topic. The Avnei Nezer added that he heard from the Av Beis Din of Lodz that in 'Sifrei HaRofim' (Medical books) sugar is categorized as a type of salt.

[18]See the recently published Aderes Shmuel (Piskei Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l; Hilchos Dam U'Melicha 226, pg. 230 - 232) at length. Rav Shmuel is reported to have said that 'the same way salt draws out blood so does sugar'. However, in the footnotes (ad loc. 261 s.v. ulam), the author / compiler opines that it is possible that Rav Shmuel only ruled to be lenient in that specific case, as a wedding seudah would certainly be considered 'shaas hadchak.'

[19]This is also not so clear cut, as honey is also a great preservative, yet is banned from being considered a salt substitute on the Altar [see Vayikra (Ch. 2: 11)]. It is worthwhile to read Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary to this verse. As a fascinating aside, as pointed out by R' Shloime Baumwolspiner, there is a reason why we do not find the use of sugar debated by Chazal in any context: they simply did not have it. Historically speaking, crystalized sugar was only first cultivated around the year 650, with it being mass-produced and imported from the Middle East from around 850. In fact, sugar only reached England in the 13th century. That is why we only first find halachic mention of sugar in the works of the Rishonim.

[20]Shu"t Divrei Chaim (vol. 1: Y"D 25), Shu"t Tuv Taam V'Daas (Mahadura Kamma 111), Shu"t Ksav Sofer (Y"D 37), Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv (Mahadura Kama vol. 1: 141 and 142), Shu"t Rav Pe'alim (vol. 2: Y"D 4), and Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parshas Tazria 22). Other authorities who forbade salting with sugar include the Maharash Engel (Shu"t vol. 3: 121, 2), the Chessed L'Alafim (Shu"t 72), Rav Chaim Palaji (Ruach Chaim, Y"D 69: 5; although he does at first seem to accept this hetter, nonetheless reversed his psak when he realized that sugar does not draw out blood as salt does), the Chessed L'Avraham (Teumim; Y"D 32), the Arugas Habosem (Y"D 69: 17), the Maharam Brisk (Shu"t vol. 1: 7), and Kaf Hachaim (Y"D 69: 322). The Minchas Chinuch (end Mitzva 119) writes that the Mahar"i Chagiz's chiddush is not a 'davar barur', as we don't say 'Asei Docheh Lo Sasei' in the Beis Hamikdash (see Gemara Zevachim 96b). The Beis Yitzchak (Shu"t Y"D 7; cited by the Darchei Halacha on Issur V'Hetter 69: 3, s.v. b'davar; presumably a different Beis Yitzchak than the one who allowed it), when faced with a complicated sheilah which could easily have been ruled permitted if he would have accepted that sugar works as salt, simply replied that it is too much of a chiddush and the hetter had to be based on other factors. It should also be noted that the Mahar"i Chagiz himself was unwilling to make that much of a jump in logic, and only would allow sugar-salted meat if it was nullified with 60 times against it. The Yad Yehuda (Y"D 69: Pirush Ha'aruch 97) even recorded that when he asked scientists whether sugar can draw out blood as salt does, he was laughed at.

[21]Shu"t Salmas Chaim (old print; vol. 2: 3), Shu"t Mishpetei Uziel (Tinyana Y.D. 8:1), Shu"t Igros Moshe (Y"D vol. 3: 23), Shu"t Divrei Yatziv (vol. 2: 14 - 15), Shu"t Shevet Halevi (vol. 2: 24 and 26), Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (vol. 9: 35), and Shu"t Yabea Omer (vol. 4: Y"D 2 and 3). See also sefer Bris Melach (Ch. 8: 6, pg. 69a) and Shu"t Ba'er Chaim (72).

[22]Including Shu"t Rav Pe'alim (ibid.), Arugas Habosem (ibid.), Shu"t Kol Mevasser (vol. 2: 15), and Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (ibid.). See also Shu"t Yabea Omer (vol. 4, Y"D 3), and Rabbi Yaakov Skoczylas' Ohel Yaakov (on Hilchos Issur V'Hetter, second edition pg. 22-24) on this topic.

[23]See Shu"t Rivevos Efraim (vol. 7: 388) who allows salting with sugar for a sick person who cannot have salt. However, the Shevet Halevi (ibid.) sharply disagrees and prohibits this even 'b'shaas hadchak gadol'; he instead allows chalitah [sort of flash-searing; which ordinarily is not permitted for kashering purposes - see Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 73: 2), Rema (Y"D 67: 6), Shach (Y"D 67: 13 and 73: 10), Rav Akiva Eiger (Y"D 73: 2), and Mishnah Berurah (454: 11 and Biur Halacha 454 s.v. layka)]. This is also the opinion of the Minchas Yitzchak (Shu"t vol. 9: 73) and the Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah (Ch. 40: 87; new edition Ch. 40, 100; quoting the Shu"t Yeshuos Moshe 47). See also Shu"t Yad Yitzchak (vol. 2: 164, 1), Shu"t Maharash Engel (vol. 3: 121, 2), Shu"t Tirosh V'Yitzhar (178), Shu"t Har Tzvi (vol. 2: Y"D 66), and sefer Darchei Halacha (on Issur V'Hetter 69: 3, s.v. b'davar) for various scenarios of mixtures that some authorities allow if sugar was substituted. See also Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l's Ha'aros B'Meseches Chullin (113a) who does not rule conclusively on this topic.

[24]Mor U'Ketziyah (O.C. 318 s.v. kyotzai), Shaarim Metzuyananim B'Halacha (41: 4), Shu"t Rav Pe'alim (vol. 2: Y"D 4), and Shu"t Torah L'Shma (500).

[25]Kaf Hachaim (O.C. 167: 37). For more on this topic, see R' Zvi Ryzman's recent Ratz Katzvi on Maagalei Hashana (vol. 1; 3, Ch. 3 and 4) at length.

[26]See Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Nitzavim 4), Shu"t Torah L'Shma (ibid.), Yafeh Lalev (vol. 2: pg. 118b, 2), Shu"t Maaseh Avraham (Y"D 30), and Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 583: 4). This minhag was personally hammered home to this author some years back, when my chavrusa, the indefatigable Rabbi Jeff Seidel, requested our hosting several secular youth for a Rosh Hashanah meal. One stood out in particular, due to his gargantuan buff size as well as his every movement screaming military. This tattoo-sporting former U.S. soldier, in Jerusalem discovering his roots after returning from a tour of duty in Afghanistan, was very makpid to dip his Rosh Hashanah challah exclusively into sugar. In his trademark Western drawl and measured tone brooking no room for dissent, he explained, asserting rather emphatically, that "us Sefaradim follow all minhagim of the Ben Ish Hai."

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda.