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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

Sponsored in memory of Esther Malka bas Avraham Yaakov Ha' Levi a"h

LEMONADE, ANYONE?

PARSHAS VAYIKRA

Alex Scott was less than a year old when she was diagnosed with cancer. After receiving a stem cell transplant around her fourth birthday, she vowed to start a lemonade-stand to raise money for other children going through the same thing. With the help of her brother, the first stand raised \$2,000. The lemonade-stand to support cancer research became an annual event for her family and Alex raised over \$1 million before losing her own battle at eight years old. Her family continues to carry on her legacy through Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation and has raised over \$150 million to date in the hopes of finding a cure.

Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat who served as vice consul for the Japanese Empire in Kaunas, Lithuania. During World War II, Sugihara helped save thousands of Jewish refugees. In direct defiance of his pro-Nazi government, Sugihara put his life and the lives of his family at risk by issuing approximately 6,000 life-saving transit visas to Jewish refugees, allowing them to flee to Europe.

In July of 1940, Sugihara and his family woke up to find a crowd of Polish refugees gathered outside the gates of the consulate. Desperate to flee, the refugees knew that their only chance to escape the impending Nazi invasion was to head east. Sugihara was sympathetic to their situation but needed permission from his foreign ministry in Tokyo to grant the visas. His request was denied, but he decided to issue the visas anyway.

Aware that he would soon have to leave the country, as the consulate would soon be shut down, Sugihara wrote thousands of visas by hand over six weeks. He worked all day, every day, late into the night until his hands ached so much that his wife had to massage

“...with all your offerings you must offer salt”. Vayikra 2:13

them just so he could fall asleep. When Sugihara boarded the train back to Japan, it was reported that he was still writing visas and throwing them out of the window into the desperate crowd as his train departed. Because of Sugihara's heroic actions, thousands of Jews were saved.

A boy went to a coed Hebrew day school. He was a typical American who enjoyed playing basketball and baseball. After day school, he went to a modern Jewish high school where he was president of the student council and a starting centerfielder for the baseball team. At the age of 17, he went to Jerusalem to learn in the Mir yeshiva. He learned Torah very diligently day and night, often only stopping at 2 in the morning. He became the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Mir. Much later, during the last 30 years of his life, he continued learning and teaching Torah, despite having Parkinson's disease. He also continued to fundraise for his yeshiva. Under his guidance and tutelage, the yeshiva grew to over 7,000 students! This great Rosh Yeshivah and great human being who went from playing center field to

become one of the great Torah leaders of our generation, was Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l.

The Torah (Vayikra 2:13) commands us to put salt on every korban that is brought on the altar. Why was that imperative? **Rav Ovadia from Bartanura** explains that during the six days of Creation, Hashem wanted to make the *rakiya* which divided the upper and lower waters. The lower waters “complained”. “Why are we different from our friends [the upper waters] that **we** have to be far from the Heavenly throne?” The lower waters felt saddened that they would be far from Holiness. Hashem heard their cries and promised them that they would also be close. The lower waters (those of the oceans) received an assurance that they would be offered on the altar in the form of salt, and as water in the ceremony of “the libation of water” (*nisuch hamayim*) on the Holiday of Succos.

The **Maharal** (quoted in Emes L'Yaakov by Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l) questions how Hashem resolved the waters' complaint by saying that salt would be sprinkled on every korban! It was the lower waters that complained to Hashem. Hashem should have said that the lower waters themselves, should be poured on every Korban.

The **Sifsei Chachamim's** explanation of **Rashi** gives one answer to the question. He says that water is brought to the altar by the means of salt because salt has its origins in water.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l gives a different explanation. First, he quotes **Rashi's** description in the **Talmud** (Kesubos 79B) of how salt is manufactured. A person digs a ditch next to a body of saltwater, allowing some saltwater to overflow into the ditch. The heat of the sun then causes the water to evaporate, leaving only the salt. The evaporated water rises and joins the upper waters. That is how it achieves holiness, which was its initial concern. The residue of salt may be used to sprinkle every korban. The residue, the lowest part of the lowest waters, that which remains after the lowest water rise heavenward, is what Hashem desired to be put on a korban. **Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky** zt"l says that this teaches us a very important lesson, that Hashem prefers the “low”. Spirituality and holiness is not only for the great people! **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** (Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 2) learns from this that no matter what the status is of an object, there is always potential for greatness. The lowest of the low was sanctified by being placed on a korban.

Similarly, a “regular” person can become great by overcoming his personal tests and temptations. Hashem does not expect us to be perfect like angels. Hashem cherishes and rewards our efforts. Our mission is to reject the lures of the yetzer hara who tries to drag us down, while we keep trying to be as good as we possibly can.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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