

ברית מלח The covenant of the salt

In our parsha Korach, Bemidbar 18:19, we read:

כל תרומות הקדשים אשר ירימו בני ישראל לה' נתתי לך ולבניך ולבנותיך אתך לחק עולם
ברית מלח עולם הוא לפני ה' לך ולזרעך אתך

All the holy offerings which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, have I given you and your sons and daughters with you, as an eternal statute, it is a covenant of salt for ever to you and to your children with you.

So what is this “eternal covenant of salt” mentioned here ?

In Berashit, 1:6 it says:

ויאמר אלקים - יהי רקיע בתוך המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים

And G-d said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide water from water.

Now the water in the firmament became the clouds, and the water below was gathered together and became the oceans.

According to the Midrash, the salt in the oceans then went to Hashem and complained, saying that man will appreciate the upper (sweet) waters, which give him rain, water his crops, and make for him rivers and springs to drink from; but as for the salty oceans – no-one will want them.

So Hashem said to him, don't worry, I will make a ברית - a covenant - with you. I will tell בני ישראל to always offer salt with their sacrifices.

OK, said the salt, but what happens after the temples are destroyed and they no longer offer You sacrifices ?

Then, said Hashem, they will still add salt to their meals, dipping their bread in it, as a perpetual reminder of our ברית מלח - ברית “the covenant of the salt”.

And that's the reason why we have salt with our meals.