



# GROWTH

## At The

# SHABBAT TABLE

## PARSHAT RE'EH

### Excitement

"Just the blood – do not consume it. You shall pour it on the ground like water..." (Devarim 12:16)

Why is there a prohibition of consuming blood? As Jews on this earth, we were put here to elevate creation, and when it comes to food and drink, we make a *berachah* upon eating and drinking to infuse our meal with spirituality and *kedushah*. So why don't we do the same for blood? Why can't we elevate it by reciting a *berachah* and then consuming it?

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, gave a fascinating answer. When we make a *berachah* and elevate creation, we do it to spread spirituality in the world. Whatever spiritual energy was contained in that apple or pizza or steak has been extracted and amplified to positively energize the environment around you and even beyond. Thus, reciting *berachot* with great fervor and excitement is a big deal, as doing so spreads *ruchniyut* and blessing throughout the world in unimaginable ways. However, when it comes to blood, it's a little different. Blood signifies *gashmiyut* and embodies physicality, as it is the lifeline in keeping our physical bodies alive. Moreover, the redness of blood represents excitement, passion, and "fire" for the materialism. Thus, we don't recite a *berachah* and consume blood like we do for our lunch, because we don't want to get excited over "blood," over physical possessions and pleasures, and spread that type of energy in the world. While physicality and material possessions are nice and can even play an important role, it's definitely not where our hearts should be. Passion and excitement are reserved for spirituality and *kedushah*, and the Torah's prohibition of consuming blood exemplifies that it's only spiritual matters that should "get our hearts pumping."

*So the next time you're about to take a bite or grab a drink, don't just throw away your berachah like you would a wrapper. Be cognizant of the power and importance of what you are accomplishing – injecting more spirituality in the world. That is, indeed, something to be excited about...*

(Based on a *d'var Torah* from R' Menachem Goldberger)

### Prerequisites

Towards the end of this week's Parsha, the Torah discusses the *eved ivri*, a Jew who has sold himself into servitude. "If a fellow Hebrew man or woman is sold to you, he shall serve you for six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free. When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed. Furnish him out of the flock, threshing floor, and vat, with which Hashem, your G-d, has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and Hashem, your G-d, has redeemed you; therefore, I enjoin this commandment upon you today" (Devarim 15:12-15).

I once heard a phenomenal idea from R' Avraham Mirsky, quoted from the Dubno Maggid. Throughout the Torah, we find messages along these lines. *Don't oppress a convert, for you were sojourners in Egypt. Don't mistreat your servant, because you were slaves in Egypt.* This theme is not just mentioned in passing; it is stressed over and over again throughout various passages. The Dubno Maggid would cite these examples in bringing out a fundamental concept. Obviously, we can never fully understand G-d's ways, as His calculations are far beyond us. However, we can sometimes get a glimpse. Our difficult and brutal time served in Egypt was obviously deemed necessary in Heaven for several complex reasons, but one of them is something we can appreciate. It would be almost impossible to grow into compassionate and kind people without ever "being in the shoes" of the underprivileged, abused, and struggling. Thus, Egypt was like a training-school for developing our own characteristic of *chesed* – to turn us into more sensitive and understanding people. Furthermore, Egypt taught us how to be subservient to its taskmasters. We learnt what it means to be a slave, and thus acquired the prerequisites towards becoming devoted servants of G-d. That is why the Torah constantly reminds us of our servitude in Egypt – to reinforce within us that our tears and traumas weren't for naught at all, but were there to serve a crucial function and build us as a nation.

Let us internalize, too, that whatever we are put through in life is meant not to break us but to reveal an inner spark within us that we never knew existed. R' Zecharia Wallerstein would always emphasize that we are each put through unique hardships in order to experience what that pain feels like and use that to then understand and help others in similar situations with a deep sensitivity to the subject, as we were all put down here to be messengers of G-dliness through utilizing personal experiences for light and hope. Indeed, the knowledge that there is deep purpose behind the pain often serves as the biggest form of consolation and is the beginning to a whole new life of meaning...

*"Crowds are moved by great speakers, but lives are changed by great listeners."* (R' Jonathan Sacks)