

FLOWING WITH CHOMETZ AND HONEY

by Rabbi Label Lam

Any meal offering (Mincha-gift) that you offering to HASHEM shall not be prepared leavened (Cometz) for you shall not cause to go up in smoke any leavening (Chometz) or honey (fruit honey) as a fire offering to HASHEM. (Vayikra 2:11)

Why are Chometz and Honey categorically excluded from the ingredient list of fire offerings to HASHEM? What's so wrong? Although the real answer is, "that's what's written" maybe still there's a taste, a flavor for us to be found on the most pedestrian level.

There is a language of symbolism employed here begging to be decoded. What is the message of Chometz and Honey in this context? The verse may also be instructing us about attitudes that are more and less desirable in approaching HASHEM. The Kotzker Rebbe explained that Chometz and Honey mean that one should neither be too coarse nor overly familiar in serving HASHEM. The Sefer HaChinuch points out that these two items refers to those matters that retard spiritual progress, namely sluggishness and obsessive pleasure seeking. So confirms the Baal HaTurim that leaven represents the Yetzer Hora-the negative inclination which is attractive and alluring to us like honey. One ought not serve HASHEM with an inflated ego or a light hearted charm.

In the affirmative, then, how does one step up to pray and perform more perfectly before his Maker? King David had said it directly on more than one occasion in differing ways, "Serve HASHEM with fear, and rejoice with trembling!" (Tehilim 2:11) "The offering to HASHEM is a broken spirit; A broken and humbled heart G-d You will not despise!" (Tehillim 51:19) How does one "rejoice with trembling?" And how in G-d's world are such lofty mindsets available to the likes of you and me?

Rabbi Aaron of Karlin was once the Chazzan for Shacharis on Rosh HaShana. However, as soon as he recited the first word, "HaMelech"- (The King), he burst in a fit of tears and was unable to continue. Later, his Chassidim asked him, "Rebbe, what caused you to break down crying the way you did?" He explained, "No sooner did I say the word "HaMelech" than I was reminded of a story in the Gemara. When Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai came to Vespasian, he greeted Vespasian, "Peace be to you O' king!" When Vespasian, who had not yet received news of his appointment by the Roman Senate, heard this he replied: "You deserve death for one of two reasons. 1) If I am not the king, how dare you refer to me that way! 2) And if I am the king, why did you not come to me till now?" Reb Aaron explained, "When I referred to HASHEM as 'HaMelech', I was filled with remorse. As HASHEM is the King, why have I not come to Him in repentance until now?"

Once, on Simchas Torah, when all were dancing joyfully with the Torah, the students of Reb Yisrael Salanter noticed that he seemed sad and they asked him why his countenance was so. "Imagine," said Reb Yisrael, "that a man is sad about one event and happy about another. In such a case, the joy may overcome the sadness. What happens, however, if the joy and sadness come from the same source? For example, if a man has a son whom he loves very dearly and then that son becomes extremely ill. Can the joy of having such a son outweigh the sadness of the fact that he is sick? Of course not! On the contrary, the more the father loves his son, the more he will feel sad about his illness. It's the same with me. On the one hand, I rejoice greatly in the fact that we have a precious Torah. On the other hand, I am I am terribly saddened that there are so many Jews who violate the Torah daily. So it is that the more joy I experience on Simchas Torah, the more keenly I feel the pain over the level we have sunk in our observance."

In these few glimpses of greatness we might be able to appreciate somewhat the depth that can be found in a moment, and in a mind no longer flowing with Chometz and Honey. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).