

Parshat VAYIKRA 5777

Any meal offering that you offer to Hashem shall not be prepared leavened , for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or fruit honey as a fire offering to Hashem ' (ch 2 :11).

Thus when bringing a mincha in the Beis Hamikdash it was forbidden to add either a leavening agent- seor, or sweeteners - dvash .

Rambam says that all aspects of korbonos are chukim which are beyond us to even begin to fathom but also that idolaters would add both seor and dvash to their offerings so clearly we want to distinguish.

If one were to add honey to the ketoras, the aroma would have been heavenly. Bar Kavra says that even though we would assume this would be much improved, this teaches that we have to put aside all personal calculations and do what Hashem (Who only knows what's truly good) wants. The most pleasing sacrifice to Hashem is not what we determine but to listen to Him. 'To obey is better than to sacrifice' (Shmuel 1, 15:22). - The only way to come close (Korban, Karov, near) to Hashem.

Rav Nevenzahl explains that when yeast is added to the other ingredients in a dough , the dough begins to rise to fill the entire bowl , eventually overflowing .The gas produced makes the dough grow into a much bigger entity but if punctured , it escapes and the dough falls flat again . The yetzer hara is like the seor because it's ' full of fluff ' . When we are facing a strong yetzer hara, it seems huge and insurmountable but if we could just pierce that bubble it would collapse! Because in truth the yetzer hara is no more than an illusion, more attractive in the abstract than in reality. It makes us anticipate some sort of excitement but when the urge to indulge is followed, we invariably find disappointment. In the physical realm, expectation and anticipation always exceed reality. This command not to add seor teaches that if we could only deflate the arrogant yetzer hara before it overpowers us, by identifying it as mere emptiness, then there would be no need to bring sin offerings.

Yeast, unlike other inanimate objects, only moves (of its own volition) if left alone.

Sometimes we have signs from Hashem and feel motivated but then the yetzer hara tells us to relax and stay where we are. This idea of non movement, complacency, is the function of yeast ie apathy and the yetzer hara takes effect. Thus we must ' work our own dough ' quickly and dynamically to prevent this,

like the Cohanim in the Temple with alacrity and constant progression, not stopping to allow sluggishness and extraneous negative thoughts to detract.

The prohibition against honey also hints to the sinner that sin is rooted in an unbridled preoccupation with satisfying ones desires. (Sefer HaChinuch)

As both leaven and honey so powerfully represent the strategies of the evil inclination, we do not want them included in our service.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch maintains that leavening represents independence and sovereignty over oneself, the bread of riches; versus the matza of poverty and of being subservient to the higher authority of Hashem, therefore how could we bring leaven as a sacrifice (which is meant to express submissiveness)? Honey too is a symbol of abundance (versus self-abnegation).

Rav Moshe Feinstein says that one of the greatest things that harms us in this world is our deep desire to enjoy ALL the pleasures of this world, the 'goodtime'... have the leavening, have the lazinessendless sweet enjoyment for its own sake . Certainly there are appropriate times eg Shabbos, Yom Tov etc but we must realise that nothing will match the pleasures in ruchniyoseven if things have a hechsher they could be traif! ie do we really need it ? We used to find the taste in a gemara or a Rashi, says Rav Feinstein, but today people find taste in potato chips ! Dvash is inherently not 'wrong ' but it has no place on the mizbeach.

Dvash represents worldly pleasures, materialism, which draws us down and with which we can never be satisfied and which can be taken away overnight, unlike spiritual pursuits which can never be taken away.

Yeast and honey are external additives which change the nature of the food whereas the salt, which is also an additive, is unique in that it brings out the flavour that was already there. Rav Mordechai Gifter says that when serving Hashem we should follow the example of the salt (a requisite additive to all offerings) and utilise our inherent abilities and talents. Do not cause distortion of what is there (yeast), do not borrow something external no matter how sweet it may be (honey). Be yourself, but make every effort to be all that you can be.

Sources : Michtav MeEliyahu , Rav Chaim Freidlander , Rabbi Meir Levin , Rebtz Shira Smiles