

Parsha Ponders

Vayikra | March 23, 2023 | 2 Nissan 5783

Honey and leaven; the golden rule¹

כל-המנחה אשר תקריבו ליקוק לא תעשה חמץ כי כל-שאר וכל-דבש לא-תקטירו ממנו אשה ליקוק: קרבן ראשית תקריבו אתם ליקוק וגו'

All flour offerings that you bring to Hashem should not become leaven. For all leavening and honey shall not be burned on the altar as a fire for Hashem. [However], you shall bring [from] them [for] first offerings²

The Rambam teaches us³ what's become known as his golden rule. Extremes are never good. A person should always act in a balanced way, neither leaning to one extreme or the other. Arrogance is abhorrent, but a lack of self-worth can lead to depression. Someone who gives things away uncontrollably is unstable, yet someone stingy is looked down upon. A healthy balance is key. The Rambam suggests that if someone is leaning to one extreme, they should act in the other extreme, in order to end up somewhere in the middle.

The Torah forbids us from bringing leavening and honey onto the Temple altar. Now, leavening and honey are polar opposites, for leavening is bitter, and honey is sweet. Since the Torah's ideal path in life is to avoid extremes, these two extremes for offerings are usually to be avoided. The middle, balanced path is always the one preferred.

However, as stated, sometimes a person finds themselves off kilter. To rectify this situation, they have to go the opposite extreme of where they presently find themselves. As such, the Torah says that you shall bring from them, i.e. leavening or honey, for first offerings. While this refers to specific offerings which are exceptions to the rule⁴, it also hints to this idea. When a person is starting off trying to fix their character, when they're beginning their journey of growth, they can and perhaps should be extreme the other way. They are to be like leavening or honey. Once they're balanced again, the golden rule can once again kick in.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on [Divrei Shaul](#) to [Leviticus](#) 2:11, by the author of the [Shoel U'Meishiv](#)

² [Leviticus](#) 2:11,12

³ [Shemoneh Perakim](#) Chapter 4. See also [Mishneh Torah Hilchos Deos](#) 2:5,6

⁴ See [Rashi ad. loc.](#)