

LEAVEN EGYPT

Many of you are familiar with Passover, called Pesach in Hebrew and you know that Pesach kicks off the Week of Unleavened Bread. But what is Leaven? But before we look at leaven, shouldn't we look at bread first?

(Slide) The word "leaven" or "yeast" in Hebrew is **שֵׂאֵר** *se'or*. However, the Hebrew word for something that has "become leavened" is **חָמֵץ** *chametz*, such as leavened bread.

In Hebrew thought, bread is a daily part of one's service to Elohim. The Avinu says, **"Give us this day, our daily bread."** (Matthew 6:11) Both leavened and unleavened bread are used in the Divine service. Bread is one of the few food substances that are part of the furnishings in the Mishkan. Bread, particularly unleavened bread, represents life (Chai), which ultimately points to Yahshua (who is **"the bread of life"** [John 6:35]). Leaven bread the other hand often represents boasting and arrogance.

A Bracha that is Untrue?

Bread is a very mystical thing in Scripture. It carries its own bracha: Baruch "Atah Yahweh, Eloheinu Melech haolam, Hamotzi lechem min haaretz." The interesting thing about this bracha is that it says, "who brings forth the bread from the earth." Only problem with this statement, is that it is not true. Adonai does not bring a bread from the earth. Not at all. He brings grain.

Rabbi Z'ira explained that Eden was so perfect that it contained "bread trees as large as the cedars of Lebanon." He draws his understanding from the fact that when Adam and Hava were expelled from the garden, Elohim said, **"Because you ate of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it'...by the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat."** (Genesis 3:19) Rabbi Z'ira concludes that before the expulsion they must not have had to bake their own bread.

Indeed, there was a time when bread grew freshly on trees and was consumed without labour.

Bread has four potential faces. How so?

(Slide) There was a man who lived in the mountains. He knew nothing about those who lived in the city. He sowed wheat and ate the kernels raw. One day he entered the city. They offered him good bread. The man asked, "What's this for?"

They replied, "It's bread, to eat!"

He ate, and it tasted very good. He asked, "What's it made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

Later, they offered him thick loaves kneaded with oil. He tasted them, and asked, "What are these made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

Later they offered him royal pastry kneaded with honey and oil. He asked, "And what are these made of?"

They answered, "Wheat."

He said, "Surely I am the master of all of these, since I eat the essence of all of these: wheat!"

Because of that view, he knew nothing of the delights of the world, which were lost on him. So, what can this be likened? The mainstream Christian has the Bible, but the Pardes of the text are lost on him. The kernels represent the *p'shot* (plain meaning), the bread is the *remez* (the hinted at meaning), the cake is the *drash* (the comparative meaning) and the pastry is the *sod* (the hidden of mystical meaning in the text).

Earthly bread is a variant of Manna, a distinct heavenly food, a food of angels that fell daily from the sky. The word Manna means: "What is this?"

Challah is the most dominant form of bread in our walk. The preparation of Challah is exclusively the domain of the Yisraelite woman. Two loaves are baked representing the two houses, Yisrael and Y'udah. This bread is leavened, but for once a year, for one week, it represents pride, boasting and puffiness. But more than that, it represents malice and wickedness.

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man has the isha of his abba (Lev 18:8). And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Adoneinu Yahshua on the one who has been doing this. In the name of Adoneinu Yahshua, when you have assembled in your shul and I am with you by the same Ruach *Hakodesh* along with the *gevurat Adoneinu Yahshua*, You are to hand over to *Hasatan* such a person for the *churban* of the *basar* (3:16-17), that his neshamah may be spared in the Yom Hashem (Amos 5:18) Your boasting is not good. Do you not have *da'as* that a little chametz in all the mixture leavens? Purge out the old chametz (leavened bread), that you may be new dough, having no indication of fermentation, as you are indeed like *matzot* (unleavened bread). More than that, Moshiach our Korban Pesach has been sacrificed. So, let us celebrate Pesach, not with old chametz, nor with the chametz of *kavvanah ra'ah* (malice) and wickedness, but with *matzot* of *kenut* (sincerity) and *emet*." (Corinthians 5:1-8)

As we go through the Feast of Unleavened Bread we should remain aware of avoiding foods that contain leaven. Leaven is a raising agent in food and is used to represent an over-inflated view of one's self. This week should principally be teaching us to keep a sense of humility that is rooted in sincerity and truth.

The Mouth is a Two-Way Street

(Slide) The founder of the Jewish Chassidic movement, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov instructed several of his disciples to embark on a journey. The Baal Shem Tov did not tell them where to go, nor did they ask; they allowed divine providence to direct their wagon where it may, confident that the destination and purpose of their trip would be revealed in due time.

After traveling for several hours, they stopped at a wayside inn to eat and rest. Now the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were pious Jews who insisted on the highest standards of *kashrut*; when they learned that their host planned to serve them meat in their meal, they asked to see the *shochet* of the house, interrogated him as to his knowledge and piety and examined his knife for any possible blemishes. Their discussion of the *kashrut* standard of the food continued throughout the meal, as they inquired after the source of every ingredient in each dish set before them.

As they spoke and ate, a voice emerged from behind the oven, where an old beggar was resting amidst his bundles. "Dear Jews," it called out, "are you as careful with what comes out of your mouth as you are with what enters into it?"

The party of chassidim concluded their meal in silence, climbed onto their wagon and turned it back home. They now understood the purpose for which their master had dispatched them on their journey that morning.

(Slide) "Yahshua called the crowd to him and said, 'Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.' Then the talmidim came to him and asked, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?' He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit...whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts--murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.'" (Matthew 15:10-15,17-20)

"'Be careful,' Yahshua said to them. 'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' They discussed this among themselves and said, 'It is because we didn't bring any bread.' Aware of their discussion, Yahshua asked, 'You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?

Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matthew 16:6-12) Yahshua is saying in his response to his talmidim, 'how could I be talking about bread in evil terms when it was used for such good? I am not talking about bread, but about the puffed-up perception of those in positions of authority.' **"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith Elohim has given you."** (Romans 12:3)

(Slide) **"Do not be over righteous, neither be over wise--why destroy yourself?"** (Ecclesiastes 7:15)

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Yahshua told this parable: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'Elohim, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'Elohim, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before Elohim. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Torah is taught through both oral, written and acted out demonstration. In an apparent contradiction, King Messiah Yahshua warned in Matthew 16 against the teaching of the Pharisees and later endorses their teaching. **(Slide)** **"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moshe's seat. 'So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.'" (Matthew 23:2-3)**

While their teaching was sound, they had abandoned the servitude nature of their responsibilities. **"Yahshua replied, 'And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.'" (Luke 11:46)**

"But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves." (Luke 22:26)

When Torah teaching is accompanied with a correct measure of humility and gentleness it grows.

Just as the Kingdom of HaSatan can draw near from small beginnings, so too can the Kingdom of Heaven. **(Slide)** **"Again (Yahshua) said, 'With what will I compare the Kingdom of Elohim? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with a bushel of flour, then waited until the whole batch of dough rose.'" (Luke 13:20-21)** Living organisms in the leaven grow overnight,

so that by morning the entire quantity of dough has been affected. The final outcome is inevitable once the natural process of growth has begun, whether for good or for evil.

“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘Elohim opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Peter 5:5)

When we eat matzah this Pesach we should be careful to eat it with the full humility and meekness that Yahweh’s grace that he has bestowed upon us deserves.

The Pharisee’s poor condition is a warning to us not to become conceited and full of ourselves. It also teaches us that truth can still be taught when one is in a poor spiritual condition, but this truth gets robbed of its effectiveness when we fail to apply it to ourselves in its fullest measure. People are watching us, judging our every move. If we allow yeast in our own lives to fester it can grow within us.

The word "yeast" comes to us from Old English word *gist, gyst*, and from the Indo-European root *yes-*, meaning *boil, foam, or bubble*. Yeast microbes are probably one of the earliest domesticated organisms.

(Slide) Yeast or leaven is a micro-organic fungus. It is a living thing. They are a source of energy that does not require sunlight to grow. Yeasts, like all fungi, may have asexual and sexual reproductive cycles. The most common mode of vegetative growth in yeast is asexual reproduction which occurs in a process called budding. During their growth, yeasts metabolize some food components and produce metabolic end products. This causes the physical, chemical, and sensible properties of a food to change, and the food is spoiled. Old yeast can have detrimental effects on general health and well-being. On a practical level the cleansing of old yeast from a dwelling heightens the physical health of that place’s occupants. This is one of the practical reasons why Jews who stick to strict kosher diets have less health issues than Gentiles and generally enjoy longer lifespans.

One’s participation in the Pesach preparation is both beneficial to the body and the spirit.

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(Slide) Humility is among the greatest of the virtues. It is the opposite of pride, which is among the worst of the vices. Moshe, the greatest of men, is described as the most humble: **“Now the man Moshe was very meek, above all the men that were on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3).”** When the patriarch Avraham protests to Elohim, he says; **“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto Adonai, who am but dust and ashes (Genesis 18:27).”**

When Saul was chosen as Yisrael’s first king, he was discovered **“hid among the baggage (1 Samuel 10:22),”** a phrase which became current among Jews for the man who shuns the

limelight. The Hebrew king was to write a copy of the law and read therein all the days of his life, **“that his heart be not lifted above his brethren (Deuteronomy 17:20).”**

Elohim is teaching us humility through the object lesson of removing any possessions that containing raising agents.

It’s not about how clean you can get your house and it’s not about how much matzah you eat! It’s about what these things represent. (Slide) Remember the 1984 movie Karate Kid with Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita. In the film Pat Morita plays Mr. Miyagi, a Karate expert disguised as a janitor who agrees to train Ralph’s character, a young boy by the name of Daniel, who is the target of severe bullying at school. In a series of training exercises that gradually escalate in complexity, Mr. Miyagi appears to be utilising the boy to do menial household chores for the first portion of the film, until the boy finally snaps at him.

His first training exercise is trimming a bonsai plant, the next is applying and removing wax from a personal fleet of cars owned by Miyagi, then he is instructed to sand wood and then paints a fence. Every exercise he is taught represents a crucial counterpart mental and physical discipline that is demanded in the practice of Karate.

We can often feel like Daniel as our training reaches its fruition. We can feel tired, drained, sometimes thinking thoughts like, ‘how long will this go on.’ (Slide) **“How long must your servant wait? When will you punish my persecutors?” (Psalm 119:84)**

The answer comes when we just obey. If we don’t, we put faith in our own opinion. We think that we know best and we often find, sometimes when it’s too late, that we’re actually way off the mark.

Torah speaks to all our senses. It speaks to us in action (ritual and social contact), in smells (incense), in foods (offerings & sacrifices), in sounds (Shofar), in touch (tefillin), and visually (Tzitzit).

We need all these methods. If we shuck but a few or concentrate on them in of themselves, we lose sight of the bigger picture.

***Biur chametz* -- Getting Rid of Chametz**

By removing everything in the home, car and place of work that contains any sort of raising agent (this includes, yeast, thickener, gum of any type, even soy), we think about how we should also remove those qualities in us that resist instruction, advice, warnings, moral ethics and kindness.

Normally we start in the easiest rooms first, toilet, bathroom, laundry, bedrooms, corridors, lounge room, dining room and then finally with the most difficult, the kitchen. We wipe down benches and shelves in pantries, vacuum floors and carpets. If you can afford it, you can get the carpets steamed cleaned. One should thoroughly clean, dishes and utensil, stove, microwave oven, sink, refrigerator, tables clothes, toaster, and the bread box etc.

The Torah says: *Lo yera'eh lecha chametz, velo year'eh lecha se'or bechol gevulecha* – “**neither chametz nor se'or shall be visible to you in all your boundaries.**” And the verse goes on to say, “**And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Yisrael.**” (Exodus 12:19)

Food that can be consumed over Pesach includes:

- Matzo in any form (matzo meal, matzo cake meal, matzo farfel – see gebrochts exception below)
- Any kind of fruit
- Any kind of vegetable, excluding those listed under kitniyot
- Beef, chicken, turkey, duck, goose, or fish with scales. If keeping strictly kosher, the meat must be kashered by a kosher butcher or sold as a kosher cut of meat.
- Eggs and egg whites
- Nuts, nut flours, and pure nut butters (no additives), excluding those listed under kitniyot (peanuts, sesame seeds, poppy seeds)
- Dairy products, like cheese, yogurt, and kefir, are acceptable when they are not mixed with additives (like corn syrup). Dairy products cannot be mixed with meat.
- Quinoa. While somewhat controversial, most sources agree that quinoa is not technically a grain, and therefore it is permissible on Passover.
- Spices. Note that I do not consider spices like cumin and coriander to be kitniyot, so they may appear in Ashkenazi categories throughout the site.
- Herbs
- Broth from kosher meats and vegetable-based broth

Most of us, having Christian backgrounds, might find this exercise quite strange and exhausting. It's such a foreign concept to most Western thinkers, that a religion could follow you home and make you clean your home. But the key is to treat it like an object lesson for removing sin, especially the type of sin that makes us have an inflated view of ourselves.

(Slide) “**Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith Elohim has given you.**” (Romans 12:3)

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (Romans 12:16)

“Do not be over righteous, neither be over wise--why destroy yourself?” (Ecclesiastes 7:15)

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When we continue to eat mahtzah this week, we should be careful to eat it with the full humility and meekness that Yahweh's grace which has been bestowed upon us deserves.

Remember our obedience is based on our obligation toward Yahweh's grace and mercy.

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One's participation in eating unleavened food products is both beneficial to the body and the spirit.

Conclusion

Leaven is used as a symbol in Scripture and rabbinic writings to represent human evil and corruption, and, to a lesser extent, it can represent the complete or permeating effect of a transforming agent. Yeast is an appropriate metaphor for something that spreads.

(Slide) On Pesach, the use of unleavened bread reminds us of the haste with which the Yisraelites left Egypt, but especially considering Sha'ul's usage, it reminds us of the need to cleanse ourselves of sin and reminds us that Yahshua himself was without sin.

The positive symbolism of leaven is applied when we eat leavened bread throughout the rest of the year in that the Kingdom of Elohim spreads throughout the world even as leaven spreads.

Thus both good and evil tend to spread, rapidly and completely. Both aspects are nicely summed up in the rabbinic proverbs, "Woe to the wicked, woe to his neighbour," and "Happy the righteous, happy his neighbor."