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The Leaven of Heaven

Every year in the spring we come to the week of Unleavened Bread. The most common spiritual application of this week usually assigns the definition of sin to leaven, and as leaven is removed from households, and we are to eat only unleavened bread, it is to remind us to remove sin from our lives, and not sin.

Exodus 12:15

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”

However, is leaven really supposed to symbolize sin? Consider

Matthew 13:33

“He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

So, if leaven is supposedly sin, then is the kingdom of Heaven like sin? That is what Yeshua would be saying, and that doesn't make any sense. Everything of Heaven is good, and is there any such thing as good sin? That would be an oxymoron. Leaven must be symbolically defined as something other than sin.

Matthew 16:6

“And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Yeshua was always teaching against the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

He was against their teachings, their schools, and doctrines - the mainstream seminaries of Yeshua's time. Consider what Yeshua said in Mark 7 and Matthew 23 for example. Their doctrine was so far off that they were accused as being lawless and negating the Word of God by misunderstanding Moses. Thus, Yeshua is teaching us that anything that is against Moses, we are to purge that from our theological framework.

Matthew 16:12

“Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Their teachings negated Moses and thus were considered lawlessness. We are to beware of such teaching.

Matthew 23:28

“So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Mark 7:8-10

“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said...

and then Yeshua goes on equating the commandment and Word of God, as to what Moses wrote.

Their teaching negated Moses and was thus considered lawlessness and we are to beware such teaching. And it was also lumped into the same basket as Herod, a type of the antichrist meaning he is against the Word of God (John 1:14)

Mark 8:15

“And He was giving orders to them, saying, ‘Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’”

Luke 12:1

“Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’”

As Matthew 23:1-3 declares, the Pharisees were hypocritical because they would read Moses verbatim from the Seat of Moses, which Yeshua commanded us to do as well. Yet they would not practice Moses in the ways and doctrine, thus rendering them hypocritical. So, coming full circle, there are two types of leaven. There is the leaven of Heaven:

Matthew 13:33

“He spoke another parable to them, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.’”

And, there is the leaven that is against Heaven, against what Moses wrote , like the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees:

Matthew 16:12

“Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Every Passover, during the week of Unleavened Bread, we are then left with an interesting Spiritual teaching.

1 Corinthians 5:7

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

As is the usual practice, the physical ways teach us the spiritual understanding. That is why Yahweh gave us these instructions - to teach us. Let's apply the spiritual understanding of Unleavened Bread with leaven biblically defined, as teaching or doctrine. Every year, this means that we are to spiritually cleanse out all doctrine out of our lives, assume that we know nothing, and purge all bias and examine the pure Word of God, His Truth, starting from scratch. We are to annually test everything and come back to the true Word of God. Imagine if we really did that every year. The Catholic Church would have never happened. Pagan days such as Christmas and Easter would have never happened. The resulting lawlessness of abolishing His dietary instructions, or His Sabbath, would have never happened. Instead, we have 2,000 years of eisegesis doctrine building on prior doctrine, placing themselves on shoulders of the men of the past, and perpetuating and solidifying theological error in the Body.

Let us reject the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, drop the traditions and doctrines of men, stop nullifying what Moses wrote, and come back to the pure Word and truth, the leaven of Heaven.

Now that we have covered the spiritual understanding of getting the leaven out of house, how would we physically obey this commandment? How would we observe this commandment?

Exodus 12:19

For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses: If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land.

In order for us to remove leaven from our homes, we need to understand what leaven is. We are told to remove the leaven, the Hebrew word “se’or” (H7603), from our homes. It

is defined as something that swelled due to fermentation. It is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb “sha’ar” (H7604) which means to remain or be left over.

So, according to the Hebrew, leaven is a product of a leavening agent that resulted from fermentation and is left over, or the remnant from something larger. Leaven is often misunderstood to be simply yeast. In reality, yeast is all around us; it is even in the air that we breathe. Yeast is a fungus; it is a leavening agent, it is the catalyst of creating leaven but not really leaven in and of itself.

Yeast enables something to become leaven. Yeast is activated when exposed to water and something the yeast can use as food. This begins a fermentation process. When the fermentation process begins, a swelling occurs due to the escaping gas from the yeast as the yeast processes the sugars. So, something such as yeast extract that one might find in various food products today, is not leaven. Yeast extract is simply a by-product of yeast; it is added to enhance the flavor of certain food products.

The ancient way of creating leaven was to leave out your dough and allow the natural yeast in the air to come into contact with the dough.

The yeast would then begin to feed on the dough and the dough would then become leaven.

This would then become a sourdough starter and would be added to the dough.

A remnant, or lump of leaven, would be left remaining after every batch to be used for the next batch.

It was set aside and the process occurred over and over.

This is why the Hebrew word for leaven (seor) literally means:

"A lump of old dough in high fermentation."

When Scripture speaks of something being leavened, it is speaking of something being mixed with "a lump of old dough in a high state of fermentation."

Some propose that removing leaven from their households includes cheese, yogurt, wine, etc. as there is a fermentation process with yeast or bacteria that is involved in producing each of these products.

Despite that the Hebrew words we observed in the context of leaven was related to a remnant of fermented dough, some believe that the fermentation process that takes place with wine and/or beer is made also makes that product "leavened," in the sense that it is not permitted to remain in or be brought into our households during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Any study done on the sacrifices and offerings commanded in scripture will show that there were at times certain drink offerings that were required.

These drink offerings were wine.

How does this relate to the Feast of Unleavened Bread and leavened products?

Because wine was to be offered to YHWH during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, specifically First Fruits.

Leviticus 23:13

And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD (YHWH) with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin.

Thus, this simply evidences that the context and intent of the leaven we are to remove from our home is the sourdough starter remnant used to make leavened bread.

1. The biblical definition of leaven is not yeast, a naturally occurring fungus, which, when not being mixed with a liquid, is growing and dividing, not breaking down. The same applies to any other living organism that can be a leavening agent such as the bacterial cultures in butter and cheese. Neither the yeast nor the bacteria are leaven, as scripture defines it. But, yeast can be an ingredient in making scripturally defined leaven.
2. The biblical definition of leaven is *seor*, which is a lump of dough that was allowed to sit in open air for several hours allowing the naturally occurring wild yeasts to begin the fermentation process. It is extremely similar, if not identical, to our sourdough today.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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