

Hag HaMatzot: Feast of Unleavened Bread

Are we to rid our houses of yeast or leaven?

NOTE: I received this from a sister in Yeshua via her email. I am not sure where she got this but it is good information.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is meant as a reminder to us of the Israelites' redemption from bondage in Egypt and of our redemption from sin through Mashiach Yeshua/Jesus Christ. God's Word tells us that during *Hag HaMatzot* - the Feast of Unleavened Bread we have to spend a week without "leaven" in our lives. This feast, which immediately follows Pesach/Passover, is observed in the spring time and lasts for seven days.

Unfortunately, some Bibles have mistranslated the whole idea about what Yahweh was referring to - specifically, the exchange of the word "leaven" to "yeast." For instance, the NIV reads:

Exodus 12:18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. 19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. 20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

Notice the word "yeast" appears over and over again where it should read "leaven," as it does in most other versions. Stern's Complete Jewish Bible reads:

Exodus 12:18 From the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day, you are to eat matzah. 19 During those seven days, no leaven is to be found in your houses. Whoever eats food with hametz in it is to be cut off from the community of Isra'el - it doesn't matter whether he is a foreigner or a citizen of the land. 20 Eat nothing with hametz in it. Wherever you live, eat matzah."

It is truly a shame that we must communicate with each other in a language other than Hebrew to study the Bible because the meaning of words as they were translated from Hebrew to Greek, and then to modern languages, and then to our understanding of the meaning of the word as it is used today - as you can see, causes serious problems.

We need to remember, there is a difference between yeast and leaven. As you saw above, Yahweh deemed this issue important enough to threaten to "cut off" from Isra'el anyone who disobeyed the command to refrain from eating leaven. In other words, they were to be killed!

So here is the issue.

In our understanding of the word “yeast,” the picture that comes to mind is that of a little foil bag of yellowish powder called “Fleischman’s” Yeast which we pour into our dough, toss into the oven and, PRESTO! - we have bread! Because this is all we are familiar with in these modern times, we miss the meaning in these scriptures - and we can blame the various Bible translations which, over the centuries, have caused enormous problems with our understanding. Let’s look, for example, at a description of the Jewish observance of Passover:

During Passover, Jews refrain from eating *khametz*, which is anything that contains barley, wheat, rye, oats, and spelt (a kind of wheat), and is cooked within 18 minutes after coming in contact with water. No leavening is allowed. This signifies the fact that the Hebrews had no time to let their bread rise as they made a hurried escape from Egypt.

What does *khametz* actually mean? It is any flour of the five species of grain, mixed with water and allowed to ferment before being baked, comes under the definition of *khametz*. The five species of grain are wheat, spelt, oats, barley, and rye. *Khametz*, in reality, comes from a root which means “to be sour.”

The following information was borrowed from Michael Morrison’s [“Passover: Feast Without the Yeast”](#).

1. Jews of different backgrounds do not observe all of the same rules. Ashkenazi Jews, who come from Europe (most Jews in America), also avoid corn, rice, peanuts, and legumes as they are also used to make bread and may have other grains mixed in. These items are known as *kitniyot*.

2. Rules and guidelines may be extremely stringent. Not only must Orthodox Jews not eat these items, but they also must completely remove them and any food that has come in contact with them from their homes. They may throw them away, burn them, or sell them to a non-Jew (they are allowed to buy them back at the end of Passover). Some go through amazingly thorough and labor-intensive cleaning processes to rid their homes of any hint of *khametz* or *kitniyot*. For example:

- Sinks, refrigerators, ovens, and stoves must be scoured and then not used for at least 24 hours before the beginning of Passover. Specific Passover china must be used.
- Silverware must be “heated to a glow” and then cooled. Items are placed in a pot of boiling water (usually one at a time, because they must not touch each other during the process) and then immediately submerged in cold water.
- Pots must be cleaned inside and out. To accomplish this, a pot must be filled with water and brought to a boil. Then to clean the outside, a brick or rock is placed inside to cause

the boiling water to flow over the sides. However, said rock must be hot because the water must still be boiling as it cascades over the sides. A cool rock would cool the water when it came in contact.

3. Items which seem acceptable for Passover but may not be:

- **Soda:** Most sodas contain corn syrup. Since eating corn is not allowed, soda containing corn syrup is also out. Even if corn syrup is not used, sodas generally have “additional flavorings” which are not divulged and could be derived from grains. Only sodas produced under supervision of a rabbi or other official certified agencies are acceptable.
- **Frozen vegetables:** Many bags of frozen vegetables are produced on the same machinery that also produces pasta or pasta/vegetable blends. Since pasta is made from grain and not allowed, neither are most frozen vegetables, unless made under supervision.
- **Raw vegetables:** Some fruits and vegetables (cucumbers for example) have wax coatings that may be made from soy proteins and oils derived from grain.
- **Dried fruits:** These are often dried in ovens where bread is sometimes baked. Some also have waxes, oils, and even traces of flour to prevent sticking.
- **Marshmallows:** Not allowed unless made under supervision. They contain gelatin, which is made from the bones of potentially non-kosher animals.
- **Milk:** Unsuitable additives are often used. Chocolate milk is usually unacceptable because it could contain corn syrup or malt, which is made from grain. And these are just food items. Balloons and rubber gloves can have a powdered coating on them, which may be considered Khametz. Even some bug traps use an oatmeal or wheat-based substance and must be removed from the premises.

And let’s not even get started on pet food!

Okay, clearly there is something wrong here. Yahweh says no leaven is to be in your house, and that you are not to eat food with *khametz* in it. The above Orthodox rules tend to go a little too far, don’t you think? And remember, in the NIV, Exodus 12:19 says: *For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses.*

If that were the case, then the NIV has just asked you to perform the impossible: For instance - stop reading and take a deep breath. You’ve each just inhaled millions of yeast spores! Natural, wild yeast is all around you, including in your homes; you can’t avoid it.

So what, exactly, is yeast? We know that bakers use it to make the dough “rise,” without it, our bread would be nothing but flat, hard cakes - like what? - *Matzah!* Clearly bread has been around for a long time.

We don't know when or how the first leavened bread occurred; only that the first records of any sort of bread are in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs from around 5,000 years ago which depict bake-houses with dough rising next to bread ovens.

In ancient Egypt, wine-making and brewing occurred alongside baking and, it's possible that some fermenting brew - a kind of liquid yeast known as barm - could have ended up in the bread dough which then caused the dough to rise. No one knows how it happened, but one good guess is that Yahweh simply told man how to make bread.

Continuing with the topic of yeast, the exact nature of yeast - where it comes from and what it is - has remained a mystery for thousands of years. It took, in fact, the invention of the microscope in the early 17th Century to finally allow scientists to see what a single-celled yeast looks like and they soon realized that yeast cells multiply in a sugar solution, but they did not realize in that era that the cells were actually alive. A 19th Century food chemist thought it was decomposition of the cells that caused fermentation, and refused to accept the theory that yeast was a living organism.

It took Louis Pasteur to solve the mystery in 1859 when he discovered how yeast works. He established beyond doubt, using grapes, that it was the dust on the surface of the grape skin which made wine ferment that yeast was a living organism and that only active living cells can cause fermentation.

Simply stated, the fermentation process in dough can be described as the breakdown of the starches in flour - producing carbon dioxide - which, in turn, expands the gluten proteins in the flour and causes the dough to expand. A small amount of alcohol is also produced, but this burns off as the bread bakes.

Bread makers understand this process:

When you slice your bread, you can see tiny pockets, parts of holes. Those holes are a result of carbon dioxide oozing through the wet dough, and when the bread was baked, it drove just enough of the moisture out to dry out the dough, drive out the carbon dioxide, and kill the yeast.

(An interesting side note: In England in 1468 - in the "Brewers Book of Norwich," the name for barm was "goddisgoode" because it was made by the blessing of God.)

Yeast is a plant that is capable of reproducing itself. A piece of yeast consists of minute cells with walls composed of cellulose and an interior of living matter called protoplasm. You can feed it with a solution of sugar to make it grow, or it can be "killed" with heat.

Now, here is the important connection:

The ancients did not use yeast as we know it today. Since the days of ancient Egypt, 5000 or more years ago right up to the present, bakers have captured and used wild yeast to make bread.

(Remember your deep breath? The same stuff.) And you can do this as well, right in your own kitchen. Here's how:

1. Mix a cup of flour (whole wheat or white) with a cup of lukewarm water in a small jar, and stir them together until they are smooth. Place the mixture on a shelf or windowsill and leave it uncovered so the yeast will be able to find food. Now wait and watch it change over the next several days.
2. Stir that mixture each day with a wooden spoon or stick. After a few days, it will start to smell a little sour and become sticky. The mixture is fermenting - which is another way of saying that it has attracted invisible wild yeast which are feeding off the flour and water and changing everything in the process. Once it begins to ferment, place a cloth napkin or piece of cheesecloth over the jar to keep it from drying out on top.
3. After five to ten days, depending on the place and temperature of the room, you will notice small bubbles in the mixture. This is that carbon dioxide which is a by-product of the reproduction of the yeast. Notice that the smell is more pleasant - almost like peaches. Give it another five days to build strength, stirring it daily and feeding it by adding a few tablespoons of flour and maybe a little water if it is too dry.
4. You now have a cup of guess what? Sourdough starter that you can add to bread dough to make it rise. Remember a few minutes ago we explained the meaning of *Khametz* is "to be sour"? Isn't that amazing? You can store it in the refrigerator to keep it fresh and to slow down the fermentation process. After you have added it to the flour and water you use to make your bread dough, be sure to take a cupful out before adding any other ingredients so it will stay pure and be usable again and again.

Do you know what was just described? **LEAVEN!** Not yeast - yeast is a small microscopic plant and an important part of the substance, but it is the mixture - the mixture of sticky, pleasant smelling "stuff" that as a whole is the substance you add to knead into dough to make the dough rise. This is leaven.

Yahweh said "no leaven is to be found in your houses," not "no YEAST"! We can't get the yeast out of our homes, but we certainly can get the mixture out (if we had it) which we don't really use these days anymore - the small quantity of the starter material, the "chunk of leaven"....

And of course, the second part of the command, "eat no food with *khametz* in it." Now you understand that *khametz* is the raised bread that was made by using the leaven. This is not the NIV version which says don't "eat anything with yeast in it."

Do you get the point? Unless you understand the meaning of "leaven" you won't be able to understand Yeshua's teachings:

Yeshua told His disciples in Matthew 16:6: "*So when Yeshua said to them, 'Watch out! Guard yourselves against the Khametz of the P'rushim (Pharisees) and the Tz'dukim (Sadducees)', the talmidim (disciples) thought He was talking*

about "bread," - but He meant the leaven of FALSE TEACHINGS and FALSE DOCTRINES! (Verses 8-12).

But if you read the same verse from a translation called "The Message" it says:

Matthew 16:5-6 On their way to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring along bread. In the meantime, Jesus said to them, "Keep a sharp eye out for Pharisee-Sadducee yeast."

Huh? Wow! That has no meaning whatsoever! The original meaning of the scripture is totally lost.

This is why it is so important to read the Bible in its true context. Don't be led astray by man's ideas; pray that God will reveal those words that cause misunderstanding and ask Him to give you the desire to seek His true meaning.

And be aware of the **LEAVEN** that can take you from God.