

Take Heed... Beware of Leaven

*A Messianic Jewish Teaching by Rabbi Jeff
... to build, to encourage, to inspire*



Why matzah? Why unleavened bread? What does it mean? What does it symbolize?

In the story of Passover there are seven verses in which God says nine times either 'eat unleavened bread', or 'do not eat leavened bread'. And those who eat leaven are to be cut off from the people. (Exodus 12:14- 20) That is serious!

Leaven is an agent which, when placed in a batch of dough, produces fermentation and causes the dough to rise. It works silently, secretly, gradually, until the whole batch is leavened.

Leaven speaks of influence. Influence can be positive or negative. In the case of Passover, leaven speaks to us of things that must be removed in order for us to partake of the Passover. The New Covenant has more to say about leaven than the Tanach. In fact, it identifies five different kinds of leaven, corrupt influences, that we must identify, isolate, and remove from our lives.

1. The Leaven of Herod – Mark 6:16-18 & Mark 8:13-15

This is the leaven of lawlessness and worldliness. Herod basically did whatever he wanted to do. He thought that, because he was king, he was accountable to no one. As believers, we need to be aware of that deception. This kind of leaven is living life with ever increasing boundaries. A life focussed on liberties rather than sacrifice. Yeshua said, "take heed and beware of the leaven of... Herod". Allowing ourselves laxity and worldliness is a slippery slope. No one ever intends to backslide.

2. The Leaven of the Sadducees – Matthew 16:5-12 & Mark 12:18-27

The Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural, in spirits, in angels, or in the bodily resurrection. They believed in part, which is really unbelief.

Yeshua said they were greatly mistaken and in error. Why? They did not know the Scriptures, nor did they perceive the power of God. That's leaven!

Believing in the entirety of God's word reveals His truth and releases His power. By faith, God has given us the opportunity of being filled with His Holy Spirit and operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let us not miss out!

This is the season to challenge our attitudes and beliefs. "Lord, search me and see if there be any wicked way in me..." It's also time to make sure that we are still teachable and not 'know-it-alls'!





3. The Leaven of the Pharisees – Luke 12:1-3

This is the leaven of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means to pretend to be one thing; but you are not what you appear to be. Yeshua said in Matthew 23:28, “you outwardly appear to be righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy, lawlessness... extortion and self-indulgence.”

In any great forest, you will find many huge trees. They tower above other trees and appear to be the very picture of strength and maturity. However, loggers may not even bother to cut down these huge trees. Why leave them? After all, a tree that big must contain twice the amount of lumber as a smaller tree. The reason is simple. Huge trees are often rotten on the inside. They are the hollow trees illustrated in children’s stories, with raccoons living inside. And they are the trees that are often blown over in a strong windstorm. So, while they appear to be the picture of strength, in fact their hollowness makes them weak.

This is the essence of hypocrisy – appearing strong on the outside, but hollow and rotten on the inside.

4. The Leaven of Corinth – 1Corinthians 5:1-2

This is the leaven of sexual immorality. Rabbi Shaul says that these leaders were puffed up and full of pride. They should have removed the person committing sin from their midst. Why? Because leaven left on its own will spread and influence the congregation. Four areas that leaders must correct are: sexual immorality (including pornography), doctrinal error including false prophecy, gross out of order lifestyles, and discord/strife which leads to rebellion and insurrection.

5. The Leaven of Galatia – Galatians 1:6-7 & Galatians 5: 1-4, 7-9

They were running well, but something... a persuasion, an influence...came into their lives. It was leaven! What kind of leaven?

Galatians 5:1-4 shows us it was a shift in focus. A shift off of Messiah and off of love, onto distractions and the law. It speaks to us of legalism; a hyper-focus on side issues. We must stay focussed on the Messiah, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the great commission that we have been given. Yeshua is the head, the cornerstone, the capstone. He must be the center! At Passover, we are to feed on Him!

As we prepare for this Passover season, let us purge out the old leaven; corrupting influences which weaken our spiritual life and strength.

The Leaven of Herod – worldliness, lawlessness, and doing our own thing.
Let us stay within the boundaries of the Word and the Spirit.

The Leaven of the Sadducees - half believing means unbelief.
The Leaven of the Pharisees – hypocrisy.
The Leaven of Corinth – sexual immorality.
The Leaven of Galatia – legalism and side issues.



Having removed leaven from our lives, let us feed on the unleavened bread, Messiah Yeshua. Let us keep the feast this year in sincerity and truth!

P.S. During Passover the Jewish People always brought a special offering to the Temple in Jerusalem. In that same spirit, would you consider sending us a special Passover holiday gift?

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