

~LEAVEN (443)

[Hebrew, *se 'or'*, *cha-mets'*, Greek, *zy'me*]

.. Symbolic Significance

- A substance added to dough or liquids to cause fermentation, especially a portion of fermenting dough preserved for baking purposes. This type of leavening agent is specified by the Hebrew word *se 'or'*, sourdough.
- Seven days you are to eat unfermented cakes. Yes, on the first day you are to take away sourdough from your houses, because anyone eating what is **leavened**, from the first day down to the seventh, that soul must be cut off from Israel. (Exodus 12:15)
- The Greek word is *zy'me*, **leaven**.
- It is like **leaven**, which a woman took and hid in three large measures of flour until the whole mass was fermented. (Luke 13:21)
- A **leavened** thing is designated by the Hebrew word *cha-mets'*.
- No grain offering that you will present to Yehowah should be made a **leavened** thing, because you must make no sourdough and no honey at all smoke as an offering made by fire to Yehowah. (Leviticus 2:11)
- Wine, the fermented juice of grapes or other fruit, has long been known to mankind. Of course, wine ferments without the addition of **leaven**.
- The early Egyptians made beer, which requires a **leavening** agent for its production, and they baked both **leavened** and **unleavened** bread. The Hebrews were likely familiar with wheat beer. NW [Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, Leiden, 1958, p. 646]
- Your silver itself has become scummy dross. Your wheat beer is diluted with water. (Isaiah 1:22)
- Their wheat beer being gone, they have positively treated woman as a harlot. Her shielders have positively loved dishonor.

(Hosea 4:18)

- Wild yeast that might be obtained from the spores of certain fungus growths may have served as one of the **leavening** agents for these products. Excavations in Egypt have yielded porous bread containing dead yeast cells.
- The Egyptians are also said to have used natron, sodium carbonate, in making bread. Sodium carbonate would not bring about the process of fermentation as did sourdough, but it would provide gas bubbles to make the bread rise.
- In Egypt, as in Israel, the primary practice in breadmaking seems to have been to save some dough from a batch, let it ferment, and use the resulting sourdough to **leaven** a fresh batch.
- In God's Law to Israel. No grain offering that the Israelites presented by fire to Yehowah was to be made of a **leavened** thing.
- No grain offering that you will present to Yehowah should be made a **leavened** thing, because you must make no **sourdough** and no **honey, from fruit**, at all smoke as an offering made by fire to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 2:11**)
- However, **leaven** could be used in connection with thanksgiving communion offerings, in which the offerer voluntarily made the presentation in a spirit of thankfulness for Yehowah's many blessings. The meal was to be one of cheerfulness, **leavened** bread was normally eaten on happy occasions.
- Along with the meat, that is, the animal offered, and the unfermented cakes, he would bring ring-shaped cakes of **leavened** bread, which were not put on the altar but were eaten by the offerer and by the officiating priest.
- Now this is the Law of the communion sacrifice that anyone will present to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 7:11**)
- If he would present it in expression of thanksgiving, then he must present along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unfermented ring-shaped cakes moistened with oil and unfermented wafers smeared with oil and well-mixed fine flour as ring-shaped cakes moistened with oil. (**Leviticus 7:12**)

- Along with ring-shaped cakes of **leavened** bread he will present his offering together with the thanksgiving sacrifice of his communion sacrifices. (**Leviticus 7:13**)
- And out of it he must present one of each offering as a sacred portion to Yehowah, as for the priest who sprinkles the blood of the communion sacrifices, it will become his. (**Leviticus 7:14**)
- And the flesh of the thanksgiving sacrifice of his communion sacrifices is to be eaten on the day of his offering. He must not save up any of it until morning. (**Leviticus 7:15**)
- At the presentation of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, on the day of Pentecost, the High Priest waved before Yehowah two loaves of **leavened** wheat bread.
- And you must count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day of your bringing the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths. They should prove to be complete. (**Leviticus 23:15**)
- To the day after the seventh Sabbath you should count, fifty days, and you must present a new grain offering to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 23:16**)
- Out of your dwelling places you should bring two loaves as a wave offering. Of two tenths of an ephah of fine flour they should prove to be. They should be baked **leavened**, as first ripe fruits to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 23:17**)
- And you must present along with the loaves seven sound male lambs, each a year old, and one young bull and two rams. They should serve as a burnt offering to Yehowah along with their grain offering and their drink offerings as an offering made by fire, of a restful odor to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 23:18**)
- And you must render up one kid of the goats as a sin offering and two male lambs, each a year old, as a communion sacrifice. (**Leviticus 23:19**)
- And the priest must wave them to and fro along with the loaves of the first ripe fruits, as a wave offering before Yehowah, along with the two male lambs. They should serve as something holy to Yehowah for the priest. (**Leviticus 23:20**)

- **And you must make a proclamation on this very day, there will be a holy convention for yourselves. No sort of laborious work may you do. It is a statute to time indefinite in all your dwelling places for your generations. ([Leviticus 23:21](#))**

- **It is noteworthy that, on Pentecost day, 33 C.E, the first members of the Christian congregation, namely, the disciples of Jesus Christ taken from among the Jews, were anointed with Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, as Yehowah's great High Priest, was able to present before God the first of his spirit-begotten brothers. These were taken from sinful mankind.**

- **Now while the day of the festival of Pentecost was in progress they were all together at the same place. ([Acts of Apostles 2:1](#))**

- **And suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. ([Acts of Apostles 2:2](#))**

- **And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed about, and one sat upon each one of them. ([Acts of Apostles 2:3](#))**

- **And they all became filled with Holy Spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance. ([Acts of Apostles 2:4](#))**

- **Therefore those who embraced his word heartily were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added. ([Acts of Apostles 2:41](#))**

- **About three years and four months later, the first uncircumcised Gentile converts to Christianity, Cornelius and his household, were anointed with Holy Spirit, thereby being presented before God. These were likewise from sinful humankind.**

- **On the day after that he entered into Caesarea. Cornelius, of course, was expecting them and had called together his relatives and intimate friends. ([Acts of Apostles 10:24](#))**

- **While Peter was yet speaking about these matters the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word. ([Acts of Apostles 10:44](#))**

- And the faithful ones that had come with Peter who were of those circumcised were amazed, because the free gift of the Holy Spirit was being poured out also upon people of the nations. (**Acts of Apostles 10:45**)
- For they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter responded. (**Acts of Apostles 10:46**)
- Can anyone forbid water so that these might not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have? (**Acts of Apostles 10:47**)
- With that he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they requested him to remain for some days. (**Acts of Apostles 10:48**)
- That is why, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned. (**Romans 5:12**)
- The **Festival of Unfermented Cakes** occupied the seven days following Passover day, namely **Abib, or Nisan, 15-21**. During those days nothing **leavened** nor any **sourdough** was even to be found in the Israelites houses or seen with them.
- And this day must serve as a memorial for you, and you must celebrate it as a festival to Yehowah throughout your generations. As a statute to time indefinite you should celebrate it. (**Exodus 12:14**)
- Seven days you are to eat **unfermented** cakes. Yes, on the first day you are to take away **sourdough** from your houses, because anyone eating what is **leavened**, from the first day down to the seventh, that soul must be cut off from Israel. (**Exodus 12:15**)
- And on the first day there is to take place for you a holy convention, and on the seventh day a holy convention. No work is to be done on them. Only what every soul needs to eat, that alone may be done for you. (**Exodus 12:16**)
- And you must keep the festival of unfermented cakes, because on this very day I must bring your armies out from the land of Egypt. And you must keep this day throughout your generations as a statute to time indefinite. (**Exodus 12:17**)

- In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening you are to eat unfermented cakes down till the twenty-first day of the month in the evening. (**Exodus 12:18**)
- Seven days no sourdough is to be found in your houses, because anyone tasting what is **leavened**, whether he is an alien resident or a native of the land, that soul must be cut off from the assembly of Israel. (**Exodus 12:19**)
- Nothing **leavened** are you to eat. In all your dwellings you are to eat unfermented cakes. (**Exodus 12:20**)
- Seven days you are to eat unfermented cakes, and on the seventh day is a festival to Yehowah. (**Exodus 13:6**)
- Unfermented cakes are to be eaten for the seven days, and nothing **leavened** is to be seen with you, and no sourdough is to be seen with you within all your boundaries. (**Exodus 13:7**)
- You will keep the festival of unfermented cakes. You will eat unfermented cakes seven days, just as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, because in it you came out of Egypt. And they must not appear before me empty-handed. (**Exodus 23:15**)
- This served to remind them of their hasty deliverance from Egypt by Yehowah's hand, when they did not have time to wait for their dough to ferment but, in their hurry, carried it with them along with their kneading troughs.
- Consequently the people carried their flour dough before it was **leavened**, with their kneading troughs wrapped up in their mantles upon their shoulder. (**Exodus 12:34**)

•• Symbolic Significance

- **Leaven** is used in the Bible to denote sin or corruption. Jesus Christ told his disciples; Watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and, Watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
- The disciples at first did not understand that Jesus was using a symbolism, but they finally discerned that he was warning them to be

on guard against false doctrine and hypocritical practices, the **teaching** of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which teaching had a **corrupting effect**, puffing them up making them feel self important, but not improving their lives at all.

- Jesus said to them; Keep your eyes open and watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (**Matthew 16:6**)
- How is it you do not discern that I did not talk to you about loaves? But watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (**Matthew 16:11**)
- Then they grasped that he said to watch out, not for the **leaven** of the loaves, but for the **teaching** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (**Matthew 16:12**)
- In the meantime, when the crowd had gathered together in so many thousands that they were stepping upon one another, he started out by saying first to his disciples; Watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees, **which is hypocrisy**. (**Luke 12:1**)
- He also mentioned Herod, evidently including his party followers, in one of his warnings, saying;
- And he began to order them expressly and say; Keep your eyes open, look out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees and the **leaven** of Herod. (**Mark 8:15**)
- Jesus boldly denounced the Pharisees as hypocrites concerned with outward show.
- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and immoderateness. (**Matthew 23:25**)
- Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside of it also may become clean. (**Matthew 23:26**)
- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of uncleanness. (**Matthew 23:27**)
- In that way you also, outwardly indeed, appear righteous to men,

but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ([Matthew 23:28](#))

- He pointed out the wrong doctrinal viewpoint of the Sadducees. He exposed the hypocrisy and political treachery of the party followers of Herod.
- Then the Pharisees went their way and took counsel together in order to trap him in his speech. ([Matthew 22:15](#))
- So they dispatched to him their disciples, together with party followers of Herod, saying; Teacher, we know you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and you do not care for anybody, for you do not look upon men's outward appearance. ([Matthew 22:16](#))
- Tell us, therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay head tax to Caesar or not? ([Matthew 22:17](#))
- But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said; Why do you put me to the test, hypocrites? ([Matthew 22:18](#))
- Show me the head tax coin. They brought him a denarius. ([Matthew 22:19](#))
- And he said to them; Whose image and inscription is this? ([Matthew 22:20](#))
- They said; Caesar's. Then he said to them; Pay back, therefore, Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God. ([Matthew 22:21](#))
- At that the Pharisees went out and immediately began holding council with the party followers of Herod against him, in order to destroy him. ([Mark 3:6](#))
- The apostle Paul employed the same symbolism when he commanded the Christian congregation in Corinth to expel an immoral man from the congregation, stating;
 - Your cause for boasting is not fine. Do you not know that a little **leaven** ferments the whole lump? ([1 Corinthians 5:6](#))
 - Clear away the old **leaven**, that you may be a new lump,

according as you are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

- Consequently let us keep the festival, not with old **leaven**, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:8)
- Paul here was drawing on the pictorial meaning of the Jewish Festival of Unfermented Cakes, which immediately followed the Passover celebration.
- Just as a bit of **sourdough** soon causes the whole lump, or batch, of bread to be **leavened**, so the congregation as a body would become unclean in Yehowah's eyes if they did not clear out this corrupting influence of the immoral man.
- They must act to get the **leaven** out of their midst, just as the Israelites could have no **leaven** in their houses during the festival.
- **Leaven** was associated with corruption even in the minds of peoples of antiquity other than the Hebrews. For instance, Plutarch, a Greek biographer, spoke of it as **itself also the product of corruption, and produces corruption in the dough with which it is mixed**. [Moralia, IV, The Roman Questions, 109]
- Because of the negative aspects associated with **leaven**, Jesus evidently had in mind corrupting elements when he said,
- Another illustration he spoke to them; The kingdom of the heavens is like **leaven**, which a woman took and hid in three large measures of flour, until the whole mass was fermented. (Matthew 13:33)
- And again he said; With what shall I compare the kingdom of God? (Luke 13:20)
- It is like **leaven**, which a woman took and hid in three large measures of flour until the whole mass was fermented. (Luke 13:21)
- The Scriptures do indicate that corruption of truth would be brought about by individuals professing to be in line for membership in the heavenly Kingdom.

- I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness. (**Acts of Apostles 20:29**)
- And from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves. (**Acts of Apostles 20:30**)
- However, the inspired utterance says definitely that in later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons. (**1 Timothy 4:1**)
- By the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, marked in their conscience as with a branding iron. (**1 Timothy 4:2**)
- Forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who have faith and accurately know the truth. (**1 Timothy 4:3**)
- It was with irony that Yehowah told transgressing Israel in Amos day;
- And from what is **leavened** make a thanksgiving sacrifice to smoke, and proclaim voluntary offerings, publish it, for that is the way you have loved, O sons of Israel, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah. (**Amos 4:5**)
- God was telling them that all their worship at Bethel and at Gilgal was transgression against him, so they might as well go ahead and offer **leavened** as well as **unleavened** bread on the altar hold nothing back. It would all still be in vain because they were committing idolatry.