

The Unleavened Bread Challenge

By Matthew Day

I would like to present a challenge to you. Go without eating anything with leavening in it for one week. Actually, I didn't come up with this; I found it in the Bible (Exodus 13:3-10; Leviticus 23:4-8). So, how is this challenge done and why does it even matter? Let's start with the how.

The feast of unleavened bread will most likely start on April 11th (sunset of the 10th) and go to sunset of the 17th this year (I'll talk more about the calendar in a later issue). Before this week begins, we are to clean all of the leavening out of our houses. This includes yeast, baking soda, baking powder, and anything else used as a leavening agent. Of course, this includes things like bread and donuts. But leavening can lurk in less obvious places too like the breading of fried chicken or even your toothpaste. During this week we eat only things that do not contain leavening. One thing we eat every year is matza (and homemade matza is good).

Moving on to the second question, why does this matter? Leaven is often used as a picture of sin (especially pride). In Matthew 16:6-12 and Luke 12:1, Yeshua talks about the leaven of the Pharisees. Leaven is equated to hypocrisy and the teaching of the Pharisees. This festival is a physical picture of trying to get sin out of our lives.

Paul echoes the challenge to keep the feast of unleavened bread:

1Co 5:6-8 ESV Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (7) Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (8) Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul here is showing the spiritual significance of the festival. Does the physical nullify the physical? No, for it says "Let us therefore celebrate the festival." Rather the physical helps us to understand the spiritual as Yeshua said in John 3:12 "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" At the same time, the physical act does us no good if we ignore the spiritual meaning behind it.

So, I encourage you to "celebrate the festival" and remember the lessons to be learned from it.

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