

Pesach: Chametz & Sin

Free from Bondage • Free from Sin

Chametz

The Biblical Mandate

The biblical mandate regarding the removal of chametz comes from Exodus 12:14-20. Not only are we commanded to remove chametz, but to eat matzah as well. But what's all the fuss, and why is it so important that we do so?

The Search for Chametz

On Erev Pesach, the father searches through the house with the children for the last traces of chametz. The instruments used for this ritual are: a feather, a wooden spoon, a candle and a paper bag. As chametz (intentionally left for this ritual) is found, they are swept onto the spoon with the feather and placed into the paper bag. In the scriptures leaven is symbolic of sin. The candle represents the Torah that exposes sin. The feather symbolizes the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), who is responsible for helping us remove our sin. The wooden spoon reminds us that Yeshua is the one who carried the sins of the world upon himself, and he was lead to the execution stake on our behalf. When all of the chametz is found and placed into the bag, the bag is taken outside and burned. This ritual reminds us that once we do *teshuvah*, Hashem casts our sin "as far as the east is from the west" and will never again hold them to our account.

Chametz as Sin

Chametz reminds us of sin, in that it is puffy & bloated, a picture of pride, arrogance and haughtiness. In relationship to pride, the Talmud tells us that Hashem has no patience for an arrogant man, stating, "*It is impossible for he (the arrogant) and I to coexist in the world*" (b.Sotah 5a). The Scriptures have many things to say about the proud:

No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure (Psalm 101:5b, NASB)

Adonai detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished (Proverbs 16:5)

Opposite pride is humility. Humility comes from realizing one's own insignificance in comparison to the Almighty, and—according to the Talmud—is one of the basic attributes of a Jew (*Eruvin 70a*).

He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:34).

Chametz, in its symbolic representation of sin, is also compared to the *yetzer hara*. *Berachot 17a* states that the thing that keeps us from doing right is the "leaven in the dough," an allusion to the *yetzer hara*. Yeshua makes this allusion several times as well.

Matthew (16:5-12), Mark (8:14-21) and Luke (12:1-3) all give various details regarding Yeshua's remarks concerning the "yeast of the Pharisees," with Matthew and Mark being in one context, and Luke in another. While Matthew and Mark end the discussion with the disciples still not exactly sure of what Yeshua is talking about, Luke's account has Yeshua spelling things out very clearly to his disciples.

In his first letter to the *ekklesia / kahal* at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), Rav Sha'ul uses chametz as a reminder to purify ourselves from pride and sinfulness

vs. He also alludes to this in his letter to the Galatians (5:7-9, answering himself in finality in verses 22-26).

Purging from Chametz

In his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:17-32) he also tells us that anyone who partakes of "The Lord's Supper" (i.e. the Passover ritual) in an unworthy manner "eats and drinks judgment upon himself." Why is this so important?

The author of Hebrews (10:26-31) gives us this answer, telling us that if we deliberately continue to sin after coming to faith, we are worthy of severe punishment for trampling "the Son of G-d under foot" and have "treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him," insulting the Spirit of grace (vs. 29). With this line of reasoning, we would be eating and drinking judgement upon ourselves to enter into the remembrance of the work of Messiah through the Passover ritual if we partook with the guilt of sin still upon us. We must remember that we have been freed from sin (and **not** the Torah, as some would have us to believe) and slaves to it no longer. (*Discussion Question - why was it necessary to kill the Egyptians during the Exodus?*)

The sixth chapter of Romans is Paul's discourse on freeing oneself from the clutches of this chametz (i.e. "sin"). He uses the analogies of death and resurrection, slaves and freedmen. Following this, in the seventh chapter he goes around and around with trying to explain the nature of struggling with sin. He culminates his argument in chapter eight, telling us that we must "put to death the misdeeds of the body" in order to be fully sons of G-d (12-14). But on a practical level, how do we do this? It begins by heeding the words of the Master.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, Luke 6) is the embodiment of the mussar teachings of Yeshua's day. In this apogee of Yeshua's teachings, he sets the bar high, and puts the responsibility of separating oneself from sin on the individual.

Just as the proper application of the blood of the paschal lamb was so important, so is the application of the blood of Yeshua. Just as the Israelites could not expect Hashem to honor blood of the lamb that was thrown on the ground (rather than applied to the doorposts), we cannot expect Hashem to honor our misappropriation of the precious blood of our righteous Moshiach. If we continue to live in sin* once we have come to the knowledge of the truth, we are throwing the blood of Moshiach on the ground and full of the chametz of sin. Let us not only speak of our immersion into Moshiach and thus deceive ourselves (James 1:22), but do just as Rav Sha'ul instructs us and "keep the

Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the *matzah* of sincerity and truth.”