

# Don't Miss the Most Important Deleavening

## Could we have a deleavened home – but have missed the biggest pieces of leaven?

by Philip Shields

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Summary: By sundown of Passover day we may have our homes deleavened – but could we have missed the most important leavening still in our homes? Could we be entering the Feast of Unleavened Bread full of leavening? This is a timely and important topic about the most important deleavening we can do before the Passover.

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Welcome, brothers and sisters in Messiah, to Light On the Rock website. This is Philip Shields with pre-Passover message I hope you will take to heart.

With Passover just days away now, are you properly ready for it? Are you, your house and your household – deleavened? Are you sure? ***Is it possible to have a perfectly deleavened home (is it?) but still be full of leaven that we have missed?*** That's not double-talk. That's a serious question. That's what we'll be talking about today.

The point of this talk today is this: as we deleaven our homes, let us not forget to put even more focus, effort and time into *the most important deleavening we need to be sure we've done* and continue to keep this part unleavened the rest of our lives.

Many of us are in the process of carefully deleavening your homes. I am involved in that also. We isolated the obvious leavened products into one area of the kitchen some days ago and cleaned out the pantry, and now we're working our way through the rest of the home. Two Sundays before Passover I will take a few hours to start to go through the outer reaches of our living spaces --our finished basement, office, the garage, and the upstairs of our home. I say all this to make the point that as you hear what I'll be saying shortly, don't think I've decided to skip physical deleavening. My wife and I do deleaven carefully. And we will keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But you'll also notice I said a few hours. This is not final deleavening, but doing some of the heavier checking and not leaving anything til the last minute.

But as we carefully deleaven, could we possibly be leaving behind the biggest chunks of ugly leaven hiding in plain sight? That's what I want to talk about today: the Most Important Leaven to remove as we deleaven.

Let's start with the first command to deleaven, found in Ex. 12:14-20, and then ask and answer if we even have to deleaven our homes and lives today in the new covenant times.

Exodus 12:14-20

'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. **You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. 15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from**

your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. 16 **On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat — that only may be prepared by you.** 17 So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. 18 *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.* 19 *For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.* 20 ***You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.***"

So obviously back then they were commanded to deleaven their homes and they were commanded to keep it as an "everlasting ordinance" (Verse 14). Verse 17 repeats it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence of that verse: "Therefore you shall observe this day *throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.*" In case there was a question if this was only for Israelites, Yahweh spells it out at the end of verse 19 that his command to be unleavened applies "to the stranger or a native of the land" as well.

By the way, that part, end of verse 19, is not practiced today in Israel. In fact, I've heard it said that some Jews will give all their leavening to a Gentile neighbor to hand on to for a fee during the Days of Unleavened Bread. That is hypocritical and not obedient to what is clearly stated in verse 19.

Many orthodox Jews do keep the feast of Unleavened Bread, while many Jews who are not religious do not observe this. They will eat regular bread during these days of Unleavened Bread and those non-observant Jews even eat lobster or pork, for that matter.

***So what about us today? Are converted Gentiles expected to keep this Feast, and the holydays?*** (Never call God's feast days "holidays". They are holy unto Yahweh, so we say "holydays".)

### **Holydays kept by the New Testament Christians**

God's children in the New Testament kept the holydays as well. If they hadn't had been worshipping together on the exact day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-2), they would not have received the Holy Spirit, at least not then. There is no scripture which shows Paul explaining to Gentiles that they didn't need to keep Passover or the holydays – but quite the opposite. The apostle Paul discusses Passover quite openly with the Gentile Corinthians in 1 Cor. 5 and 11, as we shall see later.

Some use Col. 2:16-17 and Gal. 4:10 to say he taught against the holydays, but that is not what he is saying. Clearly they were together for Pentecost, clearly they kept Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread and other holydays (1 Cor. 5:6-8; Acts 2:1; 1 Cor. 11:20-33; 1 Cor. 16:8; Acts 27:9; Acts 12:3-4). If the holydays were done away with, why would Egyptians be expected to observe them in the Millennium? If they don't keep the holydays, specifically Feast of Tabernacles, they have famine and drought for years (Zech. 14:16-21).

This is not the focus of this sermon, but it is also historically easy to show early Christians kept the holydays and were originally considered a sect of Judaism called "the Nazarenes". They absolutely did keep the holydays after Christ's death and resurrection. That really should not be an issue.

**Everyone in the family should be involved**

Before going further, as I am preparing this on Sunday the 21<sup>st</sup>, I have to leave and help my wife do some deleavening upstairs and in the garage for a couple hours. My point in saying this is this: men, we absolutely should not leave the bulk of the process of deleavening and cleaning up to our wife. Not only is that not fair, but it leaves us out of learning major lessons we all should receive from personally cleaning out all leaven as we carefully vacuum everywhere or clean out our cars, the garage, bedrooms, office spaces and so on.

When married, if one has to work full time and one is a stay-at-home Mom, then most of the deleavening will be done by the wife in that case. But the husband should do some of it so the lessons aren't lost on him. Men, on a couple Sundays before we could be very involved in the cleaning and deleavening of the garage, our office, our cars, etc. Don't forget the glove box of your car. It's amazing how many times we find someone has left crackers or cookies in there. If you have small children, it's a given that you'll find crumbs all through the car, under the car seats – everywhere!

My daughter recounted a lesson of deleavening: "it's easier to find and remove leaven in the light, than in the dark". That's a great point. It made me think of this passage:

**John 3:19-21**

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

So we want to be coming to the light of God and His word and asking Him to show us where we have leaven in our lives so we can expose it, see it as our own, take responsibility for it – and then dispose of it, all of it. As we self-examine pre-Passover, we certainly want to value what Yeshua and His Father/our Father did for us and take sin very seriously. Throughout the year we can find ourselves cozying up too much to pleasurable sins. I know I find myself giving in to "small sins" quite easily when I'm not close to God.

If we could see Yeshua beaten and impaled on the stake or tree for our sin we want to do, perhaps we would not be so quick to give in to it. Ponder the cost of each and every sin.

Now, having said that, let's remember that Scriptures not only tells us to dispose of leaven, but then to also be sure to eat some unleavened bread every single day during those 7 days. That teaching has been watered down over the past few years. Many times scripture says "for seven days *you shall eat* unleavened bread". There's a lesson there too. We are to take in Christ daily, completely (seven = perfect completion), as He is the unleavened bread from heaven. "Give us this day our daily bread" was not just about having toast, but eating of Yeshua each day as we study His word and commune with Him, making Him a part of us, as surely as eating bread makes that food a part of you (see John 6:33-35, 47-58 and Matthew 26:26 – "take, eat, this is my body...").

So we not only put sin out, we must replace it with righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-31). We are not only to put leaven out, but we must actively eat unleavened bread each day for seven days. We must not miss days of prayer or study or communing with Yahweh.

But my point today is also this: it was not to take forever to deleaven your home physically. It is implied that it could be done even in one day.

**Ex. 12:15** –“...on the first day [of the Feast] you shall remove leaven from your houses.”

We interpret that today, probably correctly, to be “by the first day, you shall have removed leaven from your homes.” Why? Because verse 19 says, “During those seven days, no leaven shall be found in your houses”. You can’t have “no leaven found in your houses” if we wait until the first holyday to deleaven. For that matter, no work except cooking was to be done on these holydays. So it’s clear, that by the first day, the leaven was gone. But it’s worth contemplating, isn’t it? You don’t get the sense that this deleavening was to take weeks, as it can today, as practiced by some. We ourselves do start deleavening days before the Passover, but only because we still have to do our regular job too. So we devote 1-2 hours a day, or every other day, starting at one end of the house to the other. Another reason for this is so we’re not worn out by the end of the pre-Passover period.

But again, why do some people literally take 40-80 hours to deleaven? And then by Passover they are worn out, they haven’t had time to focus spiritually, they are stressed out as they also prepare for Passover footwashing, then the Night to be Observed (similar to the Jewish Seder in some ways), then the first holyday church services – and there’s a weekly Sabbath in there as well....

***Are you catching my drift? Are we putting the focus on the right things as we deleaven?*** It can feel very satisfying and make us feel we are doing everything right as we focus on the physical. The physical is measurable, visible, and can make us feel so (self) righteous. But Yeshua was constantly trying to teach His disciples – and that includes us today – to hear Him in a spiritual context.

Christ was constantly speaking spiritually. At the well with the Samaritan woman, he told the disciples, “I have food you know not of”. He was talking spiritually. “A sower went out to sow – and some fell on good soil and some on rocky soil”, etc. He was talking spiritually. “I am the Bread from heaven” – He was talking spiritually. “I am the good shepherd” – spiritually. On and on.

***His focus was on the spiritual, not the physical.*** Is *your* focus this year on the spiritual deleavening, or the physical?

Please hear me right: we do deleaven, and carefully at that. But I’ve said for years, don’t get so tired, and spend so much time searching for every possible crumb of physical leaven that we have little time or energy left to focus on the much more important spiritual leaven in our lives.

Now to be fair to the story here, their homes back then were usually a lot smaller than ours are today - - unless they were super wealthy. It wouldn’t have taken as long to deleaven back then. I’ve participated on a major archaeological dig in Israel for 2 months plus we’ve seen the results of many, many other digs – and their homes and living spaces were often no bigger than typical USA living rooms today. That’s it; their entire home could fit in most of our living rooms or a living room and a side room. That’s it.

***As we proceed, I want to ask a question: is it even possible to remove every evidence of leaven from your homes? I would absolutely say “no”.*** No doubt there is leaven in some of your air vents, or old jacket pockets, or crumbs in some of your books – maybe your very own Bible even!

There even are leaven spores in the air. How do you think sour dough gets leavened?

Is this not part of the lesson also? That we can't deleaven ourselves? That we have to die to the self and accept the risen Christ as our new lives? "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (paraphrasing Gal. 2:20). Or as he says in Col. 3:3, "For you died, and your life is hidden in Christ in God". HE is the only sinless life. He is the only unleavened bread from heaven. HE becomes our life. He is our Way. He is our righteousness.

### **The More Important Leavening**

Now back to the fact that Yeshua taught us to focus on the INSIDE, on the spiritual – which you can clearly read in Matthew 23. Now bearing down to the meat of this teaching:

#### **Luke 12:1**

In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, **"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."**

Hypocrisy is one of the biggest forms of leaven that we have – I have it, have had it, and so have you, so have all of us, and that is why Yeshua says to His disciples (and that includes US!), "beware of this horrible leaven of hypocrisy."

**This word "hypocrisy"** is an interesting word when you look at the original Greek. According to Vine's, **the Greek refers to actors on a stage who were *play-acting***. Making something look real that wasn't. That's the "word picture" for the word "hypocrisy" in the Greek.

#### **Matthew 23:27-28**

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

Is he possibly talking to me? To you? I say, "Yes He is", or could be. Anytime we don't live this way of life 24/7, we're technically hypocrites. We're professing one thing and doing another. I've had to deeply repent of this. This year. I hope you'll see this leaven in your own life and join me in repenting of this as we come to Passover. This is part of what I mean by the Most Important Deleavening we can be doing. This is far more important than the satisfaction that there is no leaven in your toaster or vacuum cleaner bag. As we deleaven, Christ wants you and wants me to search for this leaven – hypocrisy - in our lives too.

***When you were rushing to have the leavening out before the garbage collectors came, did you remember to toss hypocrisy in there too?***

I have it in me. Can you admit you have it in you? What I mean is this: we claim to be followers of Messiah, we claim to be Christians, and then we go places, do things, act in ways that are not at all like Him, especially when we're under temptation, when we're weak or when we're stressed.

Then, when we come to church services, we look good, preach well, look like pillars of the church – but we're only play-acting. Or are we?

So we see that Messiah warns us against hypocrisy. Paul does too – but he takes the positive: urging us to keep the feast with sincerity, the opposite of hypocrisy. Once again, he's focusing on the spiritual unleavened bread. Let's read it.

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 **Therefore purge out the old leaven**, that YOU may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 **Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven**, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, **but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

Several things here: He's obviously talking in context of Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread.

The Greek for this word "sincerity" has the meaning of "purity", being pure. Untarnished. It also referred to the pottery and handicrafts sold in the market places. If one had a crack in it, they would dub it with more wax or varnish to hide the crack. "Without wax to cover the cracks" was part of the meaning of "sincere". It was pure pottery, without shading the problems. No cracks dubbed over with some covering paint or varnish to make it look intact, when it isn't – it has that meaning too. God wants us whole, without cracks that have been painted over. He wants us to be pure, to be real. What someone sees is the real you, 24/7. No facades. No masking. No false illusions.

**One thing about unleavened bread: what you see is what you get.** No airy, puffy pastry, that's for sure. On the other hand, some leavened bread can appear flat and "unleavened"! So beware of false humility and false sincerity.

Sincere, pure, for real. Are you there yet? I'm sure not.

James 3:17

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and *without hypocrisy.*"

*So as we come to Passover, this is also part of the deleavening we need to be doing: repenting of not being completely real, of facades, of claiming to be Christians but giving in far too often to too many temptations and sins after all these years with God's spirit in us.*

**The Leaven of Man-Made Traditions Superseding God's Laws**

Another type of leaven we are to put out is false doctrine of the Pharisees. What was that? Again, remember Jesus was constantly talking with a spiritual emphasis.

**Matthew 16:5-12**

Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said to them, "*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.*"

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? 9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? 10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? **11 *How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? — but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.***"

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but **of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

Even the Sadducees (who were the priests) had false doctrine. They did not believe in spirit beings, or angels, or the resurrection. Paul had to address this in Corinth, for these heresies spread all the way to the Greek world. Remember that many of the priests were converted and had some clout among the brethren apparently. See Acts 6:7.

What doctrine were Pharisees best known for? In my books, it's this: that the oral traditions they claim were passed on by Moses to the elite elders (untrue!), was sometimes as important, or in practice – more important – than God's written Torah, or law. Yeshua Himself said this over and over. All you have to do to read the series of examples Jesus Himself used against the Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-29. Can we be so focused on physical things and man-made traditions that we're doing the same thing today?

Where did this notion that deleavening had to be so fussy that we'd go through entire books looking for leavening in the book pages? Or that it would take 40-50-80 hours of work? Or that deleavening for many has evolved into top to bottom spring cleaning? So now we're changing sheets, washing windows, scrubbing tile, and sure – end of the day we have a wonderfully clean house, we're physically pure, but haven't scrubbed the INSIDE of our hearts yet. Where did that come from? Could that be a type of modern day Phariseeism? Could it be legalism at its most extreme? So we feel pure, because the visible, physical arena is clean?

***Jesus taught us 'FIRST clean the inside, and the outside will be clean also' (Matthew 23:25-26). Proper deleavening is an inside job.***

#### **Matthew 15:4-9**

"For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" — 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.** 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:  
8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,  
And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.  
9 And in vain they worship Me, **Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**"

There it is: their doctrine is that their oral traditions could explain, or worse yet supersede, the commandments of God. Matthew 23 gives a long litany of examples. It got worse over the years as the Talmud came out chronicling all these traditions. It was the Pharisees who eventually controlled the calendar after the destruction of the temple. So they affected the calendar so that the first day of

the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Feast of Trumpets) doesn't have to have a new visible crescent moon the night before, in fact (this year, 2010, that's the case).

We can laugh at these traditions they have – like not answering the telephone on the Sabbath and many more – but we can be just as guilty of this ridiculous emphasis on the physical in our own ways. What do you do because it is taught as tradition, but something that has no Biblical basis whatsoever? God says, that's a type of leaven, something that will spread, something that will put us on to the wrong focus.

So that's another form of deleavening to focus on this Spring holyday season: spotting the man-made traditions we are observing which enslave us, which have no basis in the intent of scripture.

### **Lessons from Leaven**

We have all heard sermons about lessons we can learn as we deleaven, or from leaven itself Leaven of Vanity, ego, being puffed up. That's an obvious one. Pride is in all of us. Pride is a terrible sin, as we want to be recognized, or respected to the point of a fault. Or needing the acceptance and approbation of men. I see that as a sin so many of us have.

Here's another: the fact that leaven can be found in the most unsuspected places. Have you thought of your air vents? Some people forget to put out the final garbage, or empty the vacuum cleaner bag. Or to check their car glove box. Sin is everywhere. Sin sneaks up on us from even the most unsuspecting places.

The lesson that leaven can sneak in to so many seemingly unlikely-to-be-leavened foods. You literally have to read the labels on everything. Sin is the same way. Where has sin snuck in to our lives and we can't even see it? Others can, but we often can't.

I'm asking God this year to show me – very gently please -- my secret sins. We can actually ask God to gently show us. He sure knows what those sins are. Just as you can so easily see the faults in your children (as well as all their cute things), God – Abba above – can see us so openly too.

#### **Psalm 90:8 KJV**

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

#### **Ecclesiastes 12:14**

For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

#### **Proverbs 5:21**

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths

What “*secret sins*” do *you* have, known only to you – and to God, and Christ, and the 24 elders, and the 4 living Creatures around his throne and hundreds of millions of angels? You get the point? They're not so secret. Beware especially the sins that are pleasurable. Perhaps some drink too much and become less than sober. It's time to confess and give that up. Perhaps we eat too much. I confess to that, and I can't hide that. But I'm working on that one.



The sexual drive can be strong. Sex in its proper place is great, is fine, and is even called “undefiled” in Heb. 13:4. But the urge to give in to temptation and use sex in sin is easy. It’s all over the place. Men – and some women: do we sometimes go places on the internet unknown to our spouse, and then try to cover up the trail? Can we even sometimes be justifying ourselves by going to websites that aren’t really real that bad-- but just a little bad, by our standard? Who are we kidding? And I wouldn’t be at all surprised if thousands and thousands of Christian men, sabbath-keeping men and some women too, aren’t doing this from time to time.

Is that a huge chunk of leaven in our lives that has to be discarded?

These are just a very few of the many leavened pieces that must be rooted out of our lives!

*Again, I get back to my main point: put out the pieces of bread, crackers, baking, yeast, yeast products, sodium bicarbonate – but don’t get so overwhelmed with the physical that you forget the spiritual. Don’t get so focused on the tiny things that you forget what’s important.* Jesus called it, “Straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel”. Both the gnat and the camel were wrong to eat. Are we so careful to avoid the small sin, the gnat – and then swallow the bigger sin (the camel)?

### **Destroying the false gods in our Lives**

One last thing, because I could go on and on, but I think you’ve mostly got my point by now: Remember God struck all the gods of Egypt just as the days of Unleavened Bread were about to begin. This was a knock-out blow against all the gods of Egypt.

**Exodus 12:12** a strike against all the gods of Egypt.

‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; *and against all the gods of Egypt* I will execute judgment: I am the Lord

I’ve heard that even the lamb was a god of Egypt – and here were the Israelites sacrificing lambs in large numbers.

**Exodus 12:29-30**

“And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock”.

So many living things were gods in Egypt. Even the Nile, the Sun, and so much more. The bull, the scarab beetle, the cat, the dog – so many gods. I’m sure you’ve heard sermons showing how each plague targeted a specific god of Egypt. The 9<sup>th</sup> plague – the thick darkness in daytime – was a direct blow against the sun as their god, for example. He was called Re, the sun god and later fused with Amon their creator of all things. Osiris was the earth god, mother earth. Hapi was the god of the Nile and its annual flooding. They had a moon god named Thoth and Khonsu. They had the two falcons as god. Anuket was represented by the gazelle. There was the bull god Apis. The goddess of love (Hathor) was depicted as a cow. Then there were Sobek the crocodile god and Thoth, the god of sacred writings and wisdom who was a baboon! I kid you not. A baboon for wisdom.

OK, we laugh at those “gods”. But we’re just as guilty with *our* false gods.

What, and who, have you or I placed before God, as more important than Yahweh in practical terms in your life, that is a god, in other words? That has to be destroyed. Nothing and nobody can come before you and Yahweh.

That by itself is worth a whole sermon. But I hope you got that last point. Identify the false gods in our lives.

But my point is this: be sure to slow down enough to take time to examine yourself before the Feast of Unleavened bread, and then humbly partake of the bread and the wine and the footwashing. That's what it says in 1 Cor. 11, as you know.

Just please understand that the Body of Christ is currently in such a poor condition that it makes Him want to vomit (Revelation 3:16). Many will be repulsed by a statement like that, and exclaim, "No way, the body of Christ is in fine shape". If you are thinking that, you're making my point exactly. That's what Yeshua said many would say: "I'm rich and increased with goods [physically and spiritually] and in need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). He goes on to say, as you know – that the way He sees many in the Body is "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked". That's hardly a church in great shape.

So this spring Feast season, even during the feast itself, I recommend we take time to go for a long walk, take time to do extra quiet meditation and evaluate as we munch on the matzah or home made unleavened bread – and ask yourself, what big chunks of leavening do I still have in my life?

We have no time to lose. We're being called to get back into shape spiritually while we can. ***Don't let yourself get so worn out deleavening physically – that you have no energy or time left to do the most important deleavening: spiritually.***

### **HOW we Deleaven Spiritually**

How does one deleaven spiritually? Well, how do we deleaven physically? We find the leaven and get rid of it. We don't try to save it somewhere. We don't try to make it look different. We either use it up or toss it. None of it can remain behind.

Spiritual deleavening is much the same: we must leave no stone unturned in searching for it in our lives. The problem is: we love some of our pet sins. We really do. That's a huge problem. Paul at least talked about "the things I hate, I do" (Rom. 7:14-20). Do we even "hate" some of the wrong things we still do? If we don't, there's some major repentance in order. There's some major soul-searching in order.

The sins we don't hate tend to be the sins that give us pleasure (Heb. 11:25). These are sins that easily beset us (Heb. 12:1). For some, that's sharing some very juicy gossip with someone. I suspect most of us, at some point or another, are guilty of that - - probably weekly. Sins of passion fall into this category. Sins of putting things we enjoy doing, but things that have become gods to us: putting our job ahead of God; being workaholics to the exclusion of prayer and study, sexual sins – even the kind just in our head but not actually acted out, sins with alcohol, sins of lust, sins of pride, sins of

ego, maybe some gambling here and there (on the Lottery for example), sins of flirting with people at work – these are the fun sins that don't seem that harmful.

But all of these things are leavening. And they have to be tossed.

Perhaps we're far too loopy-goopy with the **Sabbath**. Even watching the news on the Sabbath - - if that takes up oodles of time, is that really the Stop Sign that the Sabbath is to be? Do we work to the last few minutes of the dying sun end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day, are we still not even home by that time but stuck in traffic or still working? Do we find ourselves transacting business on the Sabbath – at stores, restaurants, and so forth on the Sabbath day, when it is clear we are not to? See Nehemiah if you think I'm overstating it.

That's all leaven that has to be tossed too.

So that's my point today: really delevien. When you put the time into physical deleviening, don't get so busy that you forget the big leavened items of the spirit, the *real* leavening that needs to be recognized, discarded and forever removed from our hearts, from our lives. It is easy to forget the most important leavening as we tend to be so rushed this season. We're deleviening our homes, cars, and work places – even as we plan for Passover, and plan for the Night to be Much Observed on the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup> of God's first month, then there are holyday services on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and frankly, we can just get too worn out to focus on the big stuff.

**Don't major in the minors, as you delevien. That's the message. Focus on the spiritual deleviening even more than the physical deleviening.**

### FOOTWASHING LESSON

**And that reminds me of yet another area to be contemplating: forgiving and reconciling with everyone you possibly can.** As you come to the footwashing, yes – it pictures humility and service and we have heard that over and over, and that's true. But it is much more.

*We must now look at one another as someone Yeshua has already washed.* Yes, as we travel the roads of life, we pick up some dust between our toes and on our feet and yearly we wash them off each other. That is so beautiful when we understand it. We are washing one another and presenting one another as clean. We are also remembering what Yeshua said. "I've washed your feet. Now you wash one another" (John 13:12-14).

So as I come to Footwashing, I want to remember the King has already washed you. The Saviour has already forgiven you. The Master has already accepted you. He washed you first, in baptism when you were immersed in Messiah. I'm just here to validate and show that I also fully accept you, and no longer see you as dirty, but as washed. And then you wash my feet – and show me that you accept what Christ has done in my life too. It's a service of acceptance, of forgiveness, of washing one another. And it's beautiful.

Remember we are told many times, if we don't forgive others, we won't be forgiven either (Matthew 6:14-15; James 2:13; Matthew 18:35; Luke 17:2-4).

If you or I once knew of someone as “a this or a that” – a drunk, let’s say, or an adulterer perhaps, in the past – we are to no longer view them that way. God is working in his/her life. It may not be obvious to us yet. Few unfinished works are beautiful in their earlier stages. That’s us – God’s work in process in our lives. So we see this person and we give them a shot to let God make them new too. If we once thought of them as a horrible husband or unfaithful wife, give them a shot at being new and letting Christ create some wonderful new person, a new creation which has never been before. Let me let Paul tell us in His words, from God’s own lips:

**2 Cor 5:14-17**

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

16 *Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.* Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”

So as we come to footwashing, accept and love this person as washed by your Savior Himself. See him or her as a new life, a new creation, a new beginning.

If we can’t, perhaps this is yet another big chunk of leaven we have to discard.

So to wrap up, we covered a lot of things:

- The days of Unleavened Bread were to be kept for an everlasting ordinance
- the New Testament Christians kept Passover, Days of Unleavened bread, Pentecost, and God’s holydays.
- *My main point today: Focus on the spiritual even more so than focusing on the physical.*
- *Focus on cleaning the inside, and the outside shall be clean also. A clean heart is our focus. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. Deleavening is an inside job.*
- Beware the leaven of the Pharisees – hypocrisy
- Another time he identified their leaven as their doctrine. They were best known for their rigorous human traditions that they added to God’s law.
- All false gods have to be tossed.
- See each other as deleavened, washed by the Master.

I think you got my point, so I’ll end it with that, so you can go pray and meditate about the leavening we each have in our lives. Have a wonderful Passover. What a joyous meaning there is to Passover, as our God forgives and passes over our past sins. **May this Spring feast be a memorable one for you, and a time of joyful renewal in Christ.**

Til next time, this is your brother in Christ, Philip Shields.

