

Feast of Unleavened *Bread*?

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to establish what is meant by “Unleavened” in “Feast of Unleavened *Bread*” (or *Chag HaMatzot*). Some believe that the word “unleavened” is all-encompassing. In other words, they believe that for the Feast to truly be unleavened, all products that have gone through even a minute amount of a fermentation process must be removed. This is mainly taken from the fact that the word “bread” is not in the Hebrew text of “The Feast of Unleavened *Bread*.” Others believe that the only products that contain leaven, as scripture defines it, are to be removed. The main difference between the two is that the former will also remove products such as wine, beer, butter, yogurt, vinegar, soy sauce, and cheese, because these have all gone through some type of fermentation process. We will examine the information that shows which of these beliefs are scripturally accurate.

What is Leaven?

The first and most important thing that needs to be established is exactly what “leaven” is. Dictionary.com defines “leaven”¹ as follows:

1. A substance, as yeast or baking powder, that causes fermentation and expansion of dough or batter.
2. Fermented dough reserved for producing fermentation in a new batch of dough.
3. An element that produces an altering or transforming influence.

The first part of the first definition is the most commonly understood definition of “leaven.” But is this an accurate or complete understanding? We cannot remove the first part of this definition from the second. Two other things are mentioned here, dough and batter. Again, from Dictionary.com:

¹ “Leaven.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 17 Apr. 2011.
<Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/leaven>>.

Dough²

1. flour or meal combined with water, milk, etc., in a mass for baking into bread, cake, etc.; paste of bread.
2. any similar soft, pasty mass.
3. Slang. money.

Batter³

1. a mixture of flour, milk or water, eggs, etc., beaten together for use in cookery.

As we can clearly see both dough and batter contain some form of liquid such as milk or water. This is an important thing to understand. Flour, being dry by itself, cannot be “leavened” by yeast or any other leavening agent. The fermentation process cannot take place until the yeast is exposed to moisture and starts breaking down. The same also applies to wine. The yeast doesn’t start breaking down the sugars in the grapes until it is exposed to the juice.

The fact is that yeast is all around us. It is probably inhaled with every breath you take. As we will see later, this is how they made bread in the past. But, we must consider something else. Yeast is a fungus that actually grows until it is exposed to the right conditions. Remember, fermentation only takes place when yeast is dying or breaking down. Yeast, along with baking soda and the like, is a leavening **agent**, not leaven itself, and certainly not leaven as scripture defines it, as we soon will see. Dictionary.com provides the following definitions of “agent”⁴:

1. an active cause; an efficient cause.
2. Chemistry. a substance that causes a reaction.
3. Pharmacology. a drug or chemical capable of eliciting a biological response.
4. Pathology. any microorganism capable of causing disease.

The common thread between all of these is that an agent is something that causes something else. Yeast, without being combined with some form of moisture, does not cause

² “Dough.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 17 Apr. 2011. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dough>>.

³ “Batter.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 17 Apr. 2011. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/batter>>.

⁴ “Agent.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 17 Apr. 2011. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/agent>>.

fermentation. It is a leavening agent in that when the proper ingredients are added to it, it causes fermentation.

Before proceeding it is important to note that we are stepping back into ancient days, so-to-speak, when researching this subject. We cannot think of our baking processes as we have them now, we must look at this subject through the eyes of the ancients, as best as possible, that is. The ancients did not have nice little packets of Fleischmann's Instant Yeast like we can purchase today. Yeast was not cultured until after Louis Pasteur (check out the article⁵ in the "History" section for more information on this).

So, how was bread made in the past when they didn't have these nice convenient packages of yeast? Well, as mentioned above, yeast is a very abundant, naturally occurring organism present in the air. Have you ever heard of sourdough? This is a very similar, if not identical, ingredient used in bread making in ancient times. We read the following from an article⁶ on Wikipedia.org:

"Sourdough starter is likely the oldest, being entirely reliant on wild yeasts present in the grain and local environment. Sourdough starters are maintained over long periods of time. The Boudin Bakery in San Francisco for example, has used the same starter dough for over 150 years. These starters generally have fairly complex microbiological makeups, most notably including wild yeasts, lactobacillus, and acetobacteria."

How intriguing! That bakery in California has been using the same batch of sourdough starter for 150 years! Sourdough is made by mixing flour and water and then letting it stand in open air for several hours. The wild yeasts in the air fall on the dough and start fermenting it. We can see from another article⁷ that sourdough is indeed ancient and is something that can last indefinitely as long as certain conditions are maintained:

"Sourdough bread is made by using a small amount (20-25 percent) of starter dough (sometimes known as "the mother sponge" [*pre-ferment, above*]), which contains the culture, and mixing it with new flour and water. Part of this resulting dough is then saved to use as the starter for the next batch. As long as the starter dough is fed flour and water weekly, the sourdough mixture can stay in room temperature indefinitely and remain healthy and usable... Sourdough likely originated in Ancient Egyptian times around 1500 BC, and was likely the first form of leavening available to bakers."

Bread making in the past, before cultured yeast, consisted of making a lump of leaven, which was then mixed and blended into a larger batch of dough that was to be baked into bread or other bread-like products.

⁵ "Baker's yeast." Wikimedia Foundation. 30 Mar. 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baker%27s_yeast>.

⁶ "Pre-ferment." Wikimedia Foundation. 30 Mar. 2012 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-ferment>>.

⁷ "Sourdough." Wikimedia Foundation. 30 Mar. 2012 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sourdough>>.

Prior to this baking a small lump of the leaven was set aside for the next mixing. This process was then repeated over and over. (On a separate note, wine was made in a very similar way. The naturally occurring wild yeast would rest on the skins of the grapes. As soon as the juice from the grapes was exposed to the yeast it would start to ferment, finally resulting in wine). But, can this be found anywhere in scripture? Absolutely! Let us first define “leaven” as it is used in scripture. For the various Bible dictionaries below the Hebrew word רָאֵץ , *seor*, is used throughout.

“Heb. *seor* (Exodus 12:15, Exodus 12:19; Exodus 13:7; Leviticus 2:11), the remnant of dough from the preceding baking which had fermented and become acid.”⁸

“*seor*. A lump of old dough in high fermentation.”⁹

“(1) In Bread-Making. The form of leaven used in bread-making and the method of using it were simple and definite. The “leaven” consisted always, so far as the evidence goes, of a piece of fermented dough kept over from a former baking. There is no trace of the use of other sorts of leaven, such as the lees of wine or those mentioned by Pliny (*NH*, xviii. 26). The lump of dough thus preserved was either dissolved in water in the kneading-trough before the flour was added, or was “hid” in the flour (the King James Version “meal”) and kneaded along with it, as was the case mentioned in the parable (Matthew 13:33). The bread thus made was known as “leavened,” as distinguished from “unleavened” bread (Exodus 12:15, etc.)”¹⁰

“Various substances were known to have fermenting qualities; but the ordinary leaven consisted of a lump of old dough in a high state of fermentation, which was mixed into the mass of dough prepared for baking.”¹¹

“**Terms:** The Heb. Term *seor* occurs only five times in Scripture, in four of which (Exodus 12:15, Exodus 12:19, Exodus 13:7; Leviticus 2:1-11) it is translated “leaven” and the fifth (Deuteronomy 16:3) “leavened bread.” The NIV translates “yeast” in each of these references. This probably denotes the small portion of dough left from the preceding baking that had fermented and turned acidic. Its distinctive meaning is *fermented or leavened mass*. **Preparation:** In early times leaven was made from fine white bran kneaded with mold or with the meal of certain plants such as fitch or vetch, or from barley mixed with water and then allowed to stand until it turned sour. In later times it

⁸ Easton, Matthew George. “Entry for ‘Leaven’.” [Easton’s Bible Dictionary](http://www.studydrive.net/dic/ebd/view.cgi?number=T2259). <<http://www.studydrive.net/dic/ebd/view.cgi?number=T2259>>. 1897.

⁹ Fausset, Andrew R. “Entry for ‘Leaven’.” [Fausset Bible Dictionary](http://www.studydrive.net/dic/fbd/view.cgi?number=T2250). <<http://www.studydrive.net/dic/fbd/view.cgi?number=T2250>>. 1949.

¹⁰ Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. “Entry for ‘LEAVEN’.” [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](http://www.studydrive.net/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T5462). <<http://www.studydrive.net/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T5462>>. 1915.

¹¹ Smith, William, Dr. “Entry for ‘Leaven’.” [Smith’s Bible Dictionary](http://www.studydrive.net/dic/sbd/view.cgi?number=T2661). <<http://www.studydrive.net/dic/sbd/view.cgi?number=T2661>>. 1901.

was made from bread flour kneaded without salt and kept until it passed into a state of fermentation.”¹²

“A small portion of fermented dough used to ferment other dough and often symbolizing a corruptive influence.”¹³

“Sourdough which is kept over from one baking to another, in order to raise the new dough.”¹⁴

I’d say it is pretty conclusive. And doesn’t it just make sense? Again, think about it, they had no grocery stores and no way of culturing yeast at that time. The only way they could make bread is to allow the naturally occurring yeasts in the air to ferment a flour/water mixture (i.e. dough or batter) and knead the resulting leaven (Hebrew – *seor*) into a larger lump of dough. When scripture speaks of “leaven” it is speaking of *seor*, the lump of fermented dough set aside from the previous baking. When scripture speaks of something being “leavened,” it is saying that it had been mixed with *seor*. And as an additional note, it is extremely unlikely that the ancient Israelites, or any other ancient cultures, had any idea that it was actually a microscopic fungus that was causing their bread to rise. They just knew that if they left a batch of dough sit out long enough it would rise and could be mixed into a larger batch to make it rise as well. The same applies to grapes and wine. Did the ancient cultures know that there were tiny little microscopic creatures on the surface of the grape skins that would, when mixed with the juice, start breaking down the sugars into alcohol? Extremely unlikely.

Matsah: Adjective or Noun?

Now that we have clearly established what yeast is, and what the biblical definition of “leaven” is, we can move on to the scriptures that relate to what is to be removed before the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*.

Exodus 29:1-2 (NASB) – “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, {2} and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour.”

¹² Unger, Merrill F., R. K. Harrison, Howard Frederic Vos, Cyril J. Barber, and Merrill Frederick Unger. “Leaven.” The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody, 2005.

¹³ Butler, Trent C. Editor.. “Entry for ‘LEAVEN’.” Holman Bible Dictionary. <<http://www.studydrive.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T3803>>. 1991.

¹⁴ Rand, W. W. “Entry for ‘LEAVEN’.” American Tract Society Bible Dictionary. <<http://www.studydrive.org/dic/ats/view.cgi?number=T1219>>. 1859.

The Hebrew word for “unleavened,” מֵצָה, *matsah* (Strong’s #H4682), which means “unleavened bread or cake,”¹⁵ is used for each of the bread-like products above. But, does the word *matsah* refer only to a thing (i.e. a kind of bread)? Or, can it be used to describe the state of something as well (i.e. “it is unleavened”)? The truth is, *matsah* is a noun, not an adjective or a verb. By nature a noun (person, place, or thing) is not an adjective (word that modifies a noun). But, as always, let’s examine some scriptures that make this clear.

Exodus 12:39 (NASB) – “They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.”

The phrase “cakes of unleavened bread” in this verse is the Hebrew עֲגֵת מֵצוֹת, *uggot matsot*. The word *matsot* is the plural form of *matsah*. This phrase is what is known as a construct chain. In English is it the same as a compound noun. In other words, it doesn’t say “unleavened (adjective) cakes (noun).” It is best worded as above “cakes of *matsah* (unleavened bread/dough).” It basically states the shape of the unleavened or the method by which it was made; in this case it means it was baked on hot stones¹⁶.

Exodus 29:1-2 (NASB) – “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, {2} and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour.”

Here again, in the phrases “unleavened bread,” “unleavened cakes,” and “unleavened wafers,” are all in the construct form. “Unleavened bread” is saying that לֶחֶם, *lechem* (Strong’s #H3899), the Hebrew word for bread, is a loaf of bread made from unleavened dough. Likewise “unleavened cakes” is saying that חֻלָּה, *challah* (Strong’s #H2471), the Hebrew word for a perforated cake¹⁷, is made from unleavened dough, and רִקְיָק, *raqiyq* (Strong’s #H7550), the Hebrew word for wafer¹⁸, is also made from unleavened dough.

Judges 6:21 (NASB) – “Then the angel of יהוה put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of יהוה vanished from his sight.”

¹⁵ Strong, James. “Entry for מֵצָה.” *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1923.

¹⁶ Gesenius, Wilhelm. “Entry for עֲגֵת.” *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. London, UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Limited, exact publication date unknown.

¹⁷ Gesenius, Wilhelm. “Entry for חֻלָּה.” *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. London, UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Limited, exact publication date unknown.

¹⁸ Gesenius, Wilhelm. “Entry for רִקְיָק.” *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. London, UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Limited, exact publication date unknown.

As in several of the other verses “bread” is not in the Hebrew. Although, it is extremely clear from the context that *matsah* here cannot mean “unleavened” in the sense of an adjective, because an adjective cannot be burnt. This is why the translators place the word *bread* in the text, because the context demands it.

1 Samuel 28:24 (NASB) – “The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread from it.”

It is just as clear here that the *matsah* spoken of cannot possibly be an adjective. You cannot bake an adjective. There are several other scriptures that convey the same message, but it can be confidently said that *matsah* is not an adjective, it is a noun.

If anything, all of the scripture above obviously shows a clear relationship between grain products and leaven. But, this is by no means proof that the leaven spoken of in the Feast of Unleavened *Bread* is solely grain-related. So, we go on.

Exodus 29:23 (NASB) – “...and one cake of bread and one cake of bread *mixed with* oil and one wafer from the basket of unleavened *bread* which is set before יהוה...”

“Bread,” once again, is not in the Hebrew. So, this basket, which contained various types of grain products, is literally called the “basket of unleavened.” Again, this links the word “unleavened” to the grain products in the basket. But, the basket is not called the “basket of unleavened bread” even though only bread was in it. So, does this limit the word “leaven” or “unleavened” to only grain products? Not conclusively.

Leviticus 7:12 (NASB) – “If he offers it by way of thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes *of well* stirred fine flour mixed with oil.”

This is but another scripture showing the relationship between the word “unleavened” and bread products.

Leviticus 8:2 (NASB) – “Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams and the basket of unleavened *bread...*”

Again, “bread” here is not in the original Hebrew and therefore the basket is the “basket of unleavened.” Does that mean it contained samples of everything that they had that was unleavened? Not likely. Does it mean that the basket was only intended to carry unleavened things? Most likely. It is not described further. It is clear, however, that whenever this basket is mentioned it only contains bread products.

Leviticus 8:26 (NASB) – “From the basket of unleavened *bread* that was before יהוה, he took one unleavened cake and one cake of bread *mixed with* oil and one wafer, and placed *them* on the portions of fat and on the right thigh.”

Small, italicized *bread* is once again not in the Hebrew. Again, the “basket of unleavened” is shown to carry bread products. See also [Numbers 6:17](#).

What can clearly be concluded from the scriptures above is that “unleavened” and “bread” can and are related to one another in scripture. We have also established that *matsah* is not an adjective, but a noun. When another noun is added to it *matsah* doesn’t become an adjective even then, but a compound noun, which simply describes the form and/or shape of the bread, or the method by which it was made.

What Needs To Be Removed?

Now, as was mentioned above, some believe that the fermentation process that takes place when wine and/or beer is made also makes that product “leavened,” in the sense that it is not permitted to remain in or be brought into our households during the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*. Any study done on the sacrifices and offerings commanded in scripture will show that there were at times certain drink offerings that were required. These drink offerings were wine. How does this relate to the Feast of Unleavened *Bread* and leavened products? Well, let’s first examine [Exodus 12:15](#).

Exodus 12:15 (NASB) – “Seven days you shall eat unleavened *bread*, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”

What do we see here? All leaven was supposed to be removed from their houses. There was to be no leaven found among them. The word for “houses” here in the Hebrew is בַּיִת, *bayith* (Strong’s #H1004), which is most often translated “house(s),” but is also used when describing the temple later, since it was considered to be the house of יהוה. The same concept is repeated in [Exodus 13:7](#).

Exodus 13:7 (NASB) – “Unleavened *bread* shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders.”

This verse seems to be even more expansive. יהוה makes it very clear. Absolutely no leaven was to be found within the borders of Israel...period. The following verse clearly shows that the Israelites did not consider wine to be amongst the products that were required to be removed.

Leviticus 23:13 (NASB) – “Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to יהוה for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine.”

Now...there is something very intriguing about this verse. Guess when it was offered? It was offered on the day that the sheaf of the first fruits was waved, which was during the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*. The important word is the Hebrew יַיִן, *yayin* (Strong’s #H3196), so let’s examine it a little more closely.

“From an unused root meaning to effervesce; wine (as fermented); by implication intoxication: - banqueting, wine, wine [-bibber].”¹⁹

“(1) *wine*, perhaps so called from bubbling up and fermenting; (2) meton. Effect of wine, *intoxication*.”²⁰

It is clear from the definitions of these two lexicons that the Hebrew word *yayin* used in [Leviticus 23:13](#) above means wine as produced through fermentation. Why does this matter? Well, it seems very strange that the offering to be given unto יהוה during the Feast of Unleavened (or, Un-fermentation, as some believe) contains something that is leavened (or, fermented; i.e. wine). According to [Exodus 12:15](#) above, all leavened (or fermented) things were to be removed by the first day of the Feast. This restriction is expanded even more in [Exodus 13:7](#) above, where it says no leaven was to be found within any of their borders. So, if all of the wine, a fermented/leavened product, was removed, where did they keep the wine for the required offering? Where is the commandment which tells the priests to withhold some fermented wine away in the tabernacle, or elsewhere, for those offerings? Where is it mentioned that this particular leavened product was permitted, whilst everything else was utterly forbidden? It seems that the inclusion of a fermented product in an offering during a feast where all fermented products were to be removed is pretty significant. It seems that the wine, or fermented drink, that was used in the offering was not considered “leaven” (*seor*) as scripture defines it and need not be removed. No tie is ever made between *matsah* and wine or other fermented drink.

It is also worth noting that several other food products contemporary to that time, such as curds and whey, are “soured” or “fermented” products, but were never mentioned as being prohibited. There is also no tie made between *matsah* and any dairy product. Again, can we really think that the ancient Hebrews, or other cultures, had any knowledge of the tiny little bacteria that were fermenting or souring their dairy? “Unleavened (*matsah*)” must remain related to what makes it so – the lack of leaven (*seor*), a lump of leavened dough.

¹⁹ Strong, James. “Entry for יַיִן.” [The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible](#). New York, US: Eaton & Mains, 1890.

²⁰ Gesenius, Wilhelm. “Entry for יַיִן.” [Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures](#). London, UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Limited, exact publication date unknown.

Deuteronomy 16:2-3 (NASB) – “You shall sacrifice the Passover to יהוה your Elohim from the flock and the herd, in the place where יהוה chooses to establish His name. {3} You shall not eat leavened *bread* with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened *bread*, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.”

This is also a very revealing scripture. The Hebrew for “leavened” is **חַמֵּץ**, *chamets* (Strong’s #H2557), which means “that which is leavened,”²¹ or “the thing leavened.”²² The Hebrew word for “bread,” in “bread of affliction,” is **לֶחֶם**, *lechem*. The scripture says that we are not to eat any leavened thing (*chamets*) with the Passover. *Chametz* is to *seor* as T-shirt is to thread. *Chametz* is a thing leavened by *seor* and a T-shirt is a thing made by thread. It also says that for seven days we are to eat “unleavened,” again the word “bread” is not in the Hebrew. However, the “unleavened” is then defined – it is the same as the bread of affliction. Now, the word for “bread,” the Hebrew *lechem*, is used in the phrase “bread of affliction.” So, it says “seven days you shall eat with it unleavened (*matsah*), the bread of affliction.” This scripture makes it perfectly clear – unleavened (*matsah*) = bread of affliction. To further clarify, this scripture refers to the fact that they came out of Egypt in haste, which is clearly a reference to the inability to leaven their dough. Again, to clarify even further, the purpose of eating the *matsah* (bread of affliction) is to “remember all the days of your life when you came out of the land of Egypt.” This scripture equates the word “unleavened,” in the context of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*, with the bread of affliction. What is also important here is the fact wine, beer, butter, yogurt, vinegar, soy sauce, cheese, and the like, if also considered to be *chametsim* (leavened things), have absolutely nothing to do with the Exodus. Considering these products to be *chametsim* completely removes it from its context – the fact that they didn’t leaven their dough, not their wine, etc.

It must also be noted that *chamets*, just like *matsah*, is a noun, not an adjective. *Chamets* (Strong’s #2556) on the other hand is a verb meaning “to be leavened, be sour” (when relating to food).

So, to summarize what we have seen thus far:

1. Yeast is most commonly believed to be the same as leaven.
2. Yeast can only become leaven, something that has been through a process of fermentation, after some sort of liquid has been added to it.
3. The biblical definition of leaven is not yeast, a naturally occurring fungus, which, when not being mixed with a liquid, is growing and dividing, not breaking down. The same applies to any other living organism that can be a leavening agent such as the

²¹ The Lockman Foundation. “Entry for **חַמֵּץ**.” New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance. La Habra, CA: Zondervan, 2004.

²² Gesenius, Wilhelm. “Entry for **חַמֵּץ**.” Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures. London, UK: Samuel Bagster & Sons, Limited, exact publication date unknown.

bacterial cultures in butter and cheese. Neither the yeast nor the bacteria are leaven, as scripture defines it. But, yeast can be an ingredient in making scripturally defined leaven.

4. The biblical definition of leaven is *seor*, which is a lump of dough that was allowed to sit in open air for several hours allowing the naturally occurring wild yeasts to begin the fermentation process. It is extremely similar, if not identical, to our sourdough today.
5. The word for “unleavened,” *matsah*, refers to a noun. *Matsah* is not an adjective and therefore cannot modify a noun.
6. The words “unleavened” and “bread” are related together numerous times in scripture.
7. All leaven was to be removed from Israel as far as outside the borders of their land.
8. Wine, a product fermented with yeast, was not only permitted in the borders of Israel during the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*, but was commanded as a part of an offering during the Feast.
9. Unleavened (*matsah*), the word used in the “Feast of Unleavened *Bread*,” is clearly defined as and equated to the “bread (*lechem*) of affliction.”
10. The whole purpose of eating *matsah* during the Feast of Unleavened *Bread* is to remember how, when they were coming out of the land of Egypt, they were unable to leaven their dough. No other product is mentioned and no other fermented product has any relevance to the Exodus from Egypt.

Yeshua & Wine

Now, having seen a lot of evidence from the Old Testament let’s look at what we have in the New. Several people have an issue with an event that took place at the crucifixion of Yeshua. We can read in [Matthew 27:34 & 48](#) that Yeshua was offered sour wine or vinegar twice while on the stake.

[Matthew 27:34 \(LITV\)](#) – “...they gave him vinegar mingled with gall to drink. And having tasted, he would not drink.”

[Matthew 27:48 \(LITV\)](#) – “And at once, one of them running and taking a sponge, and filling *it* with ‘vinegar,’ put *it* on a reed and ‘gave drink to Him.’”

We can see that Yeshua rejected it the first time, presumably because he wanted to take the full brunt of the pain and punishment of sin on our behalf. The gall would have numbed the pain some. The second time he actually requested the wine (see [John 19:29-30](#) below) and received it. Let’s look closely at the word for “wine” in this word. The Greek ὄξος, *oxos*

(Strong's #G3690), means "vinegar, that is, sour wine."²³ Another lexicon defines it as "(1) vinegar; 1a) the mixture of sour wine or vinegar and water the Roman soldiers were accustomed to drink."²⁴ This drink is fermented wine pure and simple.

There is a different phrase that is sometimes translated as "wine," γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, *genematos tes ampelou*, which literally means "fruit of the vine." But, although this can mean wine, it is more likely referring to freshly squeezed grape (or other vine-grown) juice.

Some people have a problem with the fact that Yeshua drank wine while on the stake. This problem only arises when one believes that wine is leaven (*seor*) and/or a leavened thing (*chamets*), as scripture defines those terms. The following verse seems to explain why this would be a problem if indeed this were true.

Matthew 16:6, 12 (LITV) – "And Yeshua said to them, watch and take heed from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees... {12} Then they knew that He did not say to take heed from the leaven of bread, but from the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Here Yeshua makes it very clear that leaven is a representation of false teachings, which obviously aren't good. In the Torah we also see something very similar.

Leviticus 2:11 (NASB) – "No grain offering, which you bring to יהוה, shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to יהוה."

This verse mentions something else that some interpret to be leaven – honey. This word in Hebrew is דְּבַשׁ, *debash* (Strong's #H1706). Although it is true that honey, when left alone long enough, can ferment, it again is not a fermented product that is under the ban during the feast. This honey would be fermented in very much the same way that wine is. The wild yeasts in the air land on the honey and break the sugars in it down into alcohol. Remember, all leaven was to be removed from all their borders. Honey, made naturally by bees, would be impossible to remove from within their borders.

Exodus 12:8, 11 (NASB) – "They shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs...{11} Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste--it is יהוה's Passover."

²³ Strong, James. "Entry for ὄξος." The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1923.

²⁴ Thayer, Joseph Henry. "Entry for ὄξος." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers. [S.l.]: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007.

Deuteronomy 16:2-3 (NASB) – “You shall sacrifice the Passover to יהוה your Elohim from the flock and the herd, in the place where יהוה chooses to establish His name. {3} You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.”

Clearly neither the grain offerings (with the exception of the first fruits offering commanded for the Feast of Weeks) nor the Passover were supposed to contain or be eaten with leaven. Since Yeshua is our Passover you can see how he drinking wine on the stake poses a problem for those who believe wine is also leaven and/or a leavened thing. These people would then try to explain it away by saying that Yeshua never actually drank the second offering of wine either. But, the Greek text of John 19:29-30 shows this explanation to be invalid.

John 19:29-30 – “σκεῦος οὖν ἔκειτο ὄξους μεστόν· οἱ δὲ πλήσαντες σπόγγον ὄξους καὶ ὑσώπῳ περιθέντες προσήνεγκαν αὐτοῦ τῷ στόματι. ὅτε οὖν ἔλαβε τὸ ὄξος ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπε· τετέλεσται· καὶ κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα.”

The underlined word is from the Greek λαμβάνω, *lambano* (Strong's #G2983), which means “to take, receive.”²⁵ It is translated several times as receive, received, take, took, and other variations/tenses of the same. The verse right before this also aids in this understanding.

John 19:28 (NASB) – “After this, knowing that all things have now been finished that the Scripture be completed, Yeshua said, ‘I thirst.’”

Yeshua himself requested this drink. There is no doubt that Yeshua received this wine. It would seem pretty clear from this that he did not believe that wine was leaven and/or leavened, as scripture defines those terms. If Yeshua, the blameless lamb of יהוה, had believed that wine was leaven and/or leavened he would have most definitely refused it. It is therefore clear that wine was not one of the fermented products that were under the removal of leaven command.

There is also an awesome insight into this whole issue that can be found in the book of James (or more properly, Jacob).

James 1:13-15 (LITV) – “Let no one being tempted say, I am tempted from Elohim. For Elohim is not tempted by evil, and He tempts no one. {14} But each one is tempted by his own lusts, being drawn out and being seduced by them. {15} Then having conceived lust brings forth sin. And sin being fully formed brings forth death.”

²⁵ The Lockman Foundation. “Entry for λαμβάνω.” New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance. La Habra, CA: Zondervan, 2004.

Temptation can be looked at as a type of yeast. It in itself is not sin and there is no sin imparted when one is tempted, otherwise Yeshua himself would not have been blameless (see [Hebrews 2:18 & 4:15](#)). It is when we let this temptation take hold of us that it gives birth to sin. We blend our flour/water mixture together with the yeast of temptation and sin (i.e. leavened dough) is what is produced. If we let that mixture stand by itself it will become sour and rotten and result in a useless lump of dough. This is exactly what the enemy attempts to do. He continues to tempt us in order to keep us in that corrupt and sour state so that in the end all of our work was for nothing. Do we have a weapon against this? Yes.

Yeshua is our perfect example. **יהוה** gives us the true bread from heaven through him ([John 6:31-35](#)). Yeshua is the bread of life from heaven ([John 6:38](#)). If we eat of this bread we will live forever ([John 6:50-51](#)). His flesh is the bread, which he gives to us ([John 6:51](#)). If we eat of this bread Yeshua abides in us ([John 6:56](#)). It seems clear to me that the more we eat of this bread the more we taste the kingdom of heaven and the more we know what perfect bread tastes like. **יהוה**, in His infinite power, love, and mercy, has given us the ability through Yeshua to purge and clean out all of the leaven in us that he may bake us in to perfect unleavened bread. The more perfect, unleavened bread from heaven (the Word) we “ingest” (spiritually speaking) the more unleavened we become.

There are a couple final notes that need to be made before the study is concluded. First, according to ancient Jewish oral tradition (not that I endorse all of it) still in practice today the “leaven” that is searched for to throw out/burn are pieces/crumbs of bread, not yeast. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover#Spring_cleaning. They went into detail as far as using a candle with a feather brush and a wooden spoon to get the last piece of “leaven.” But, this would be impossible with yeast since it is naturally occurring and they are breathing it in and out as they search. The same applies to us. There is no requirement to remove yeast or other leavening agents because they in themselves are not leaven or leavened, as scripture defines them. Second, the Jews today still believe that anything made from five main grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) are things which need to be removed. There is no mention of any other products such as grape, honey, or dairy products.

So, what can we confidently conclude from this study? We can conclude that there is a valid and clear definition of what leaven is, as it pertains to the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*. It is *seor*, a lump of leavened dough set aside between each baking. We can also conclude that *matsah* is indeed a noun and not an adjective. It is the bread of affliction. It is eaten to call to our mind the Exodus from Egypt and how the ancient Hebrews were unable to leaven their dough. No other fermented product has any relevance to this historical event. We can conclude that wine, honey, yogurt, cheese, vinegar, butter, and the like are not leaven, as scripture defines it. They are also not leavened, as scripture defines it, otherwise it would have not been allowed on any offerings and Yeshua wouldn't have drunk it. The scriptural definition of “leavened” (*chamets*) is something that is mixed with leaven (*seor*). Nothing other than bread/dough-based products are mixed with *seor*. We are instructed to purge our homes, our land, and most importantly our hearts of all leaven. We can rightly determine what exactly this leaven is, with no speculation or confusion, from the plain and simple text of scripture, and we can conclude that

the translators indeed have much justification in inserting “Bread” into the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*.

There is no need to throw away food that is perfectly acceptable when it is not truly what scripture defines as “leaven” or “leavened.” Instead, can the cost of those goods that were once thrown away not be used to feed the hungry or cloth the homeless? Let us all be diligent to observe the commandments as they are outlined in scripture and careful to not go beyond.

May יהוה Almighty and Messiah Yeshua His Son bless and strengthen all those who read this study!

HalleluYAH!