

## LEAVEN in the Bible analyzed by Roger Walkwitz

Is there leaven in heaven? Are missionaries supposed to carry the "leaven of the Gospel" all over the world until the world is converted? These and other ideas have been given as supposed meanings of **Matthew 13:33**. *Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

"Leaven of Heaven," an online video of a teaching ministry, got my attention recently. They taught that the "kingdom of heaven" referred to heaven, and since there is no sin in heaven, then there must be good and bad leaven. I have read footnotes in Bibles saying the same thing.

My wife and I have been overseas missionaries since 1958, and still at it, "actively retired." Some years back while on home leave, we participated in a Missions Festival at a big independent church in Wisconsin. The featured speaker for the Sunday morning service was a prominent evangelist. His topic was Matthew 13:33, urging the missionaries and the supporting congregation to dedicate themselves anew to "carry the leaven of the Gospel to the ends of the earth until the whole world is evangelized."

We were shocked at this twisting of Scripture, and also shocked by the "leaven of heaven." No Way were we going to carry any "leaven" to the ends of the earth, and No Way is there any leaven in heaven! How do people get such ideas? Surely not from the Bible! They only used the Bible as a basis for their own ideas. We were still "churchy" at the time of the Festival but could clearly see big problems with church teaching. Our reading of the Bible clearly was the opposite of these teachings. We studied the Bible in context with all 66 Books, not using the New Testament only and imagining what the symbols or figures of speech meant. Later on we shifted over to the Messianic Foundation of Torah with all 66 Books of the Bible as one consistent unit, God-breathed into godly Hebrew writers, including Luke the Jew.

So let us study **Leaven** in context and see what Matthew 13:33 really means. God has only **One** meaning for any passage, no double talk. There may be, or not be, any applications, but the meaning or Interpretation is essential before any legitimate applications can be made.

At Passover time, we are confronted with the issue of leaven vs unleavened bread. From the 14th of Nisan to the 22nd of Nisan, we do not eat anything with leaven in it or had been prepared with leaven. Exodus 12 and 13 are very dogmatic about not allowing any leaven during this Memorial week of the Passover. Why? We eat leavened bread every day, except Passover time, God's Appointed Time of Unleavened Bread. Is there something wrong with leaven itself? If so, we should never eat it or anything made using it!

The Bible is full of symbols, items used as figures of speech. Leaven is one of these. Its literal use is the "sourdough" which contains an enzyme that corrupts starch molecules into carbon dioxide gas to "raise" the dough, and other by-products. When "raised" enough, the baker puts the dough in the oven to bake it, effectively killing the enzyme. Old timers keep some of the original dough to add to flour for the next time. Years ago I ate at a restaurant in the middle of Alaska that claimed their "sourdough pancakes" were "descendents" of the original sourdough of early pioneering years. Their pancakes were delicious!

The figurative use of leaven in the Bible is uniformly bad, evil, sinful, illustrated in many passages, such as **Exodus 12:19**. *Seven days shall there be **no leaven** found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be **cut off from the congregation of Israel**, whether he be a stranger (the God-Fearer Gentile Believer), or born in the land.* With this kind of serious punishment, the obvious intent is that the figurative use of leaven is bad, evil, sinful. This is further emphasized by Yeshua in **Matthew 16:6, 12**. *Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and **beware of the leaven** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees..... Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* Could the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees possibly be

good, if Yeshua warns against it? I do not think so. Through Paul He also said in **1 Corinthians 5:7-8**. *Purge out therefore the old leaven (the known sin in the congregation), that ye may be a new lump, as **ye are unleavened** (declared sinless by the blood of Yeshua). For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* I can see no other symbolic meaning for leaven anywhere that is good. Uniformly it means bad, evil, sinful in the eyes of God. However, I know I will get challenged by the 2 loaves of leavened bread for the **Shavuot celebration**, so lets deal with it here.

When we studied in Jerusalem at the Institute of Holy Land Studies/Jerusalem University College in 1990-91, we had a semester course on Jewish Thought and Practice, taught by a Conservative Rabbi. One day in class I asked him, “Sir, for Passover we have unleavened bread. Why are there two loaves of leavened bread brought for Shavuot?” He had no idea, but said he would research it. Several classes later he did report that he still had no idea why there were two loaves of leavened bread for Shavuot. Do you know what the 2 loaves represent? Write your answer here\_\_\_\_\_. Do we have an idea about it? Yes, but first, here is what Dr Hertz says in his **Pentateuch and Haftorahs** on p522. “*baked with leaven.* The loaves were made to represent the common food of the people, and symbolically mark their gratitude to the Provider of their sustenance. They were not offered on the altar but only ‘waved’; they belonged to the priest.” This is a very helpful comment. The leavened loaves represent the “common food of the people and their gratitude to God.” Notice these were not offered on the altar because leaven, sin, was in them, which would pollute the altar.

Now here is my idea. There were only two loaves of leavened bread, no more, no less. Why only two? The nation of Israel was made up of **two parts**: 13 Tribes of Israelis **plus** God-fearing Gentiles, or Ger in Hebrew. Four times this makeup is mentioned in the Psalms. 22:23; 118:2-4; 135:19-20; and here in **Psalms 115:9-13**. *O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, (the God-Fearing Gentiles) trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.*

How were these God-Fearing Gentiles to be treated, from the beginning out of Egypt? There are many passages, but **Leviticus 19:33-34** is adequate. *And if a stranger (the Ger, God-Fearing Gentile) sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him, but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.* This is very plain and blunt!!

My idea is that the 2 loaves of leavened bread at Shavuot, offered to the LORD but not put on the altar, represent the **2 parts of the nation: the Jewish or 13 Tribe part plus the Gentile God-Fearers part**. Both were sinful in their nature and behavior, therefore leavened bread was used to represent them. If they had the faith of Abraham they would be sinless in the eyes of God, but that aspect is not present here. Remember, believing Gentiles have had a place in the Family of God, called ISRAEL, from the beginning. However, Jews and the State of Israel will not accept us today, and even many Messianic Jewish groups allow us only a 2<sup>nd</sup> class or Associate membership, even denying us our Good Olive Tree status! Do as they like, but that will not hinder **Asia Pacific Messianic Fellowship** from fulfilling its biblical role as defined in Scripture: no distinction between Jew and Gentile, ethnic origin or language spoken, and no clergy or titles used!!

With this background, let us find the meaning of Matthew 13:33! Thankfully, Yeshua explained 2 of the 7 Parables by bringing out the fact that every main word was a symbol for something in reality, such as the “fouls of the air” that represent Satan and his ministers, the “field” is the world, and the “servants” are the angels. When the disciples questioned Yeshua as to why He taught in Parables, His answer might have shocked them and you! **Matthew 13:11**.

Because it is given unto you (disciples, insiders) to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them (outsiders) it is not given. Why? Is this not unfair? Does not God “love everyone” as the church teaches? Continuing in Matthew 13: *Therefore speak I to them in parables: **because** they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross (stubborn, hardened), and their ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes they have closed**; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

The exercise of free will early in life has set the pattern, the direction of life from then on, whether open to Bible Truth in context or closed to its meaning and practice. **John 3:18** brings this out clearly. *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is **condemned already, because** he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* He had his chance and rejected “the word of the Kingdom” as the first Parable beings out.

Let us look at the key words again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

These words in bold are what we need to find meanings for, primarily in the Tanakh, because *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.*

**Matthew 13:51.** The disciples understood all 7 on the basis of their knowledge of the Tanakh (OT) and Yeshua’s explanation of the first two. There were no Apostolic Scriptures to refer to.

The unilateral Promise of the Kingdom, a Covenant, was made to King David. This Kingdom will be on earth, as brought out in the so-called Lord’s prayer: *Thy **Kingdom** come, Thy will be done **on earth** as it is in heaven*, as well as the message of John the baptizer, *Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand...* because The King is here on earth!!

So the Kingdom of Heaven is here on earth, and is being described in various ways by the rest of the Kingdom Parables into a comprehensive picture. Leaven is bad, evil, sin which has entered into this Kingdom, represented by the Tares and bad fish in 2 others of these Parables.

Three measures, not 2 or 4, is made clear in **Genesis 18:6.** *And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly **three measures** of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. Read the context. Abraham had three visitors, YHVH and 2 angels, all as males. Three measures is the amount to feed three persons, so three measures refers to three persons. The fine meal characterizes these 3 persons, and is considered holy, sinless.*

**Leviticus 2:1-4.** *"When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of **fine flour**....a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD....it is **a most holy part** of the LORD's food offerings...."When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be **unleavened loaves of fine flour** mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil.*

This Parable is indicating a time sequence, from a beginning when the meal was holy and pure, and then leaven is hidden in the meal, which “did its thing” by leavening or corrupting the whole batch. The three measures of meal are three holy persons in the beginning, as foundations for the Kingdom. **Exodus 3:15** *And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of **Abraham**, the God of **Isaac**, and the God of **Jacob**, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* Also, **Matthew 8:11.** *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with **Abraham**, and **Isaac**, and **Jacob**, in **the kingdom of heaven**.*

To summarize so far: The Kingdom of heaven is here on earth, the pioneers of this Kingdom are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3 measures of fine meal), into which leaven is hidden by a woman. Who is this woman? No guessing, no imagination like so many others! She is not Jezebel, who added to it later. Bible interpretation is accomplished by searching Scripture first. If nothing can be found, then outside sources can be searched, like for Moses’s Ethiopian wife.

There is nothing more in Scripture about her. Do you know who she was? She was not Zipporah, who was a Midianite! Ask me and I will direct you to the answer.....

**The woman** hid the leaven into the pure meal. That means into Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, in the beginning of the Kingdom while it was still pure. Read the context, the whole chapter first, then notice **Genesis 31:34**. Now *Rachel had taken **the images**, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.* The images were from the idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees, Nimrod's original religion, the woman in Revelation 17. Whoever had those images had the title to the wealth of Laban, which is why he wanted them back so badly. Rachel knew it, which is why she stole them. She and Leah considered their father, Laban, as having sold them, like so many animals, and they had nothing, no inheritance for their children. Later, Jacob buried these images under a tree, because he did not want any further contamination. **Genesis 35:4**. *And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.*

Even so, the damage had been done. Jacob/Israel was beset by idolatry from this time on, small in the beginning and getting worse over time. Israel was hidden in Egypt until God brought them out at Passover time. While in the wilderness, some persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf while Moses was up in the mountain with the LORD. Later, because the Leaven had thoroughly corrupted it, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed and hidden in Assyria. Babylon conquered Assyria and then conquered the by-now-thoroughly-corrupt Southern Kingdom, destroying The Temple in Jerusalem, hiding the rest of the Jews in their vast realm, allowing all 13 Tribes to somewhat mix. By this time the term "Jew" became the term for all 13 Tribes, which we find in Esther, scattered all over the 127 Provinces of Persia.

Is this the end for the Kingdom of Heaven? NO! Analyze the rest of these Parables and find God's cleansing of the Kingdom "at the end of the Age." HalleluYah!! It seems "that time" is beginning to unfold now, day by day. Soon Yeshua will be here and His Will will be done on earth like it is in heaven, as He rules with a rod of iron.