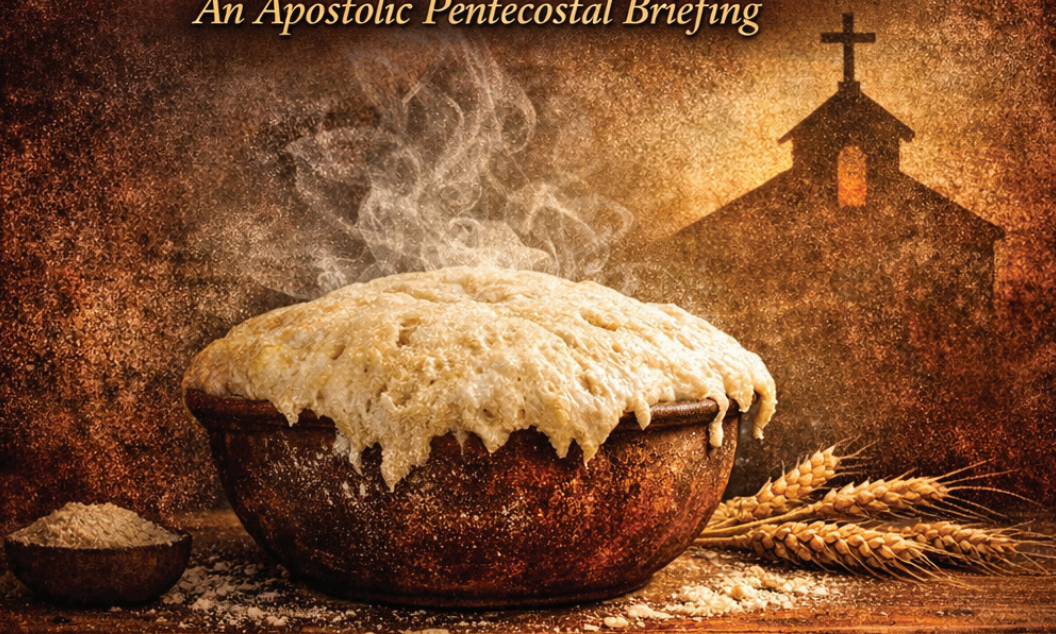




BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN

An Apostolic Pentecostal Briefing



"A Little Leaven Leaveneth the Whole Lump

"Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees..."

Elder Keith Joel Walker

Whpctuttle.com



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Introduction

Leaven (Hebrew: chametz/ se'or) is one of Scripture's most persistent and potent symbols. In the Torah it is ritually excluded from the house of God during Passover; in the prophets and New Testament it stands for hidden, spreading corruption — yet it can also be a neutral or even positive image (the kingdom “like leaven”). For an Apostolic Pentecostal community committed to holiness, unity and spiritual purity, the biblical warning “beware of the leaven” must be taken seriously. This booklet gathers biblical texts, Jewish exegetical insights (including Rashi and later rebbes), New Testament teaching (Jesus and Paul), Hebrew vocabulary and practical pastoral/application guidance for the fivefold ministry.

Key Hebrew terms (word — Hebrew — transliteration — basic meaning)

- Leaven / leavened thing — חֶמֶץ — chametz — fermented, leavened bread; used broadly for leaven.
- Leaven / sourdough — שֵׁאֵר — se'or (se'or) — leaven, yeast, the fermenting agent.
- Covet / covetousness — חָמַד (verb חָמַד) — chamad; noun חֶמְדָּה (chemdanut) — desire to possess what belongs to another; covetousness.
- Lust / strong desire — תַּאֲוָה — ta'avah — craving, physical or sensual desire.

- Greed — תוֹדַמַח / עֲצָבָה תִּיאַת — chemdanut / ta'avat ha-betzach — craving for gain/profit; in Greek NT pleonexia (πλεονεξία).
- Rebellion / revolt — מֶרִי — meri; מֶרֶד — mered — rebellion, defiance against authority.
- Disobedience — מֶרֶדָּע? (biblical sense often expressed by “וְעַמַּשׁ אֶל” or “עֲשָׂפ”) Use: עֲשָׂפ (peshah) — transgression/rebellion against God’s covenant; also מֶרִי (mari) used for disobedience/rebellion.
- Uprising — תִּימְמוֹקְתָּה — hitkomemut / דְּרָמ — mered — uprising, rebellion.

Notes: Biblical Hebrew often uses concepts (peshah, avon, chet) rather than a single modern label for “disobedience.”

Old Testament Passages on Leaven (selection)

- Exodus 12:15, 12:19, 13:7 — The command to remove chametz for seven days during Passover; chametz must not be eaten or seen in your houses.
- Exodus 12:20 — “In all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”
- Leviticus 2:11 — “No leaven shall be put in offering of grain” (no se’or in certain offerings).
- Deuteronomy 16:3 — Eat unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- Proverbs / Hosea imagery — Hosea 7:4 (KJV “like a cake not turned”): uses become metaphoric of

incomplete, corrupt state.

- Ezekiel and prophetic uses — prophets use bread imagery for moral states (see context).

Rashi and Classical Jewish Commentary (summary)

- Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 11th c.) on the Exodus/Passover laws: Rashi emphasizes both pshat (simple) and moral symbolism: chametz is physically leavened bread but represents moral “puffing up” — pride and haughtiness that must be removed. Removing chametz from the house is therefore both a ritual cleansing and a moral purge of arrogance and ego.
- Ibn Ezra: tends to emphasize pshat — focuses on the legal/ritual meaning (leaven is simply prohibited in offerings and Passover).
- Ramban (Nachmanides): often offers mystical/higher ethical readings — chametz can represent spiritual impurity and influences that defile a person facing God; removal is part of sanctification.
- Sforzo: moral and practical readings, linking ritual removal to inward repentance.
- Kabbalistic tradition (e.g., the Arizal): interprets chametz as spiritualized “impure forces,” aspects that “raise up” and separate the soul from God; metaphysically these are processed during purification.

- Hasidic masters (e.g., Baal Shem Tov lineage, Chabad teachings): chametz symbolizes ego, self-centeredness and desire that “inflates” a person. The Passover search (bedikat chametz) and removal are taught as spiritual practices of inner inspection and uprooting of the ego.

Other Rebbes and Rabbinic Voices (names and themes — brief)

- Ramban (Nachmanides): sanctification and the spiritual meaning of removing leaven.
- Ibn Ezra: literal/grammatical focus.
- Sforno: ethical-moral application.
- The Arizal (Isaac Luria): kabbalistic understanding of chametz as klipot (husks) to be removed.
- Chassidic masters (Baal Shem Tov, Lubavitcher Rebbe): chametz as ego/pride; practical exercises to root out internal chametz.

(These are summaries; for word-for-word citation consult each commentator’s text in translation or original.)

Jesus’ Teaching: “Beware of the Leaven”

- Matthew 16:6,11–12 — Jesus warns “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Later He explains: “Do you not yet understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand,

and how many baskets you gathered?... Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

- Matthew 16:11 uses leaven as a symbol for doctrine/influence that corrupts.
- Luke 12:1 — “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” (Luke ties it specifically to hypocrisy.)
- Note: Jesus also used leaven positively in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:21 to describe the hidden permeating growth of the Kingdom — so the symbol is double-edged: can be corrupting or fruitful depending on the source.

Paul’s Teaching: “A Little Leaven Leaveneth the Whole Lump”

- 1 Corinthians 5:6–8 — “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven... that you may be a new lump... Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast... with sincerity and truth.”
- Paul uses the Passover/unleavened imagery to urge church purity and discipline — even a small tolerated sin (leaven) threatens the entire congregation.
- Galatians 5:9 — “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Paul applies the aphorism to false teaching and

corruption of the Gospel.

- 2 Timothy / Romans contexts: Paul warns against false teachers whose corrupting influence spreads.

Leaven as Metaphor — Spiritual Insights and Meanings

- Small influence, big effect: leaven is a minute starting agent that permeates an entire lump.
Spiritually: small tolerated sins, false doctrine, pride or hypocrisy will spread and infect the whole congregation.
- Hidden growth: leaven works from within; it is often unseen until it has altered the whole dough — sin's growth is gradual and internal.
- Puffing up: fermentation expands and “puffs up” the dough — metaphor for pride, arrogance, self-exaltation, puffed-up spirituality.
- Corrupting fermentation: biological process that changes substance into something else — morally, the leaven stands for corruptive power that changes the character of the community.
- Double-edged image: as Jesus used the image for the Kingdom, leaven can also describe God's hidden power to transform and enlarge the Kingdom from small beginnings — discernment required about the source.
- Ritual cleansing: Jewish tradition's bedikat chametz (search for leaven) as spiritual discipline: confession,

examining the house (heart), thorough removal, disposal — model for pastoral and personal holiness.

Leaven and specific sins the church must confront (Apostolic Pentecostal focus)

- Pride / arrogance / ego: commonly equated with chametz (the “puffed up” heart). Hebrew association: הָאָג / הוּאָג — ga’avah (pride).
- Hypocrisy: Luke 12:1 equates Pharisaic “leaven” with hypocrisy — outwards religion, inward rot.
- Lust / sexual immorality: הַאָוֶה — ta’avah. Leaven of lust can spread and destroy marriages and ministry integrity.
- Greed / covetousness: תוֹנְדָמַח / דְּמָח — chemdanut / chamad. Paul warns against covetousness (colossians/ephesians warnings on greed).
- False doctrine / legalism: the “leaven” of false teaching that changes the Gospel (Galatians, Matthew).
- Rebellion / disobedience: מֵרֵד / מֵרִי — mered / meri; and עֲשָׂפָה — peshah (transgression). Leavened attitudes produce defiance against God and leadership, undermining authority and unity.

“Leaven causes uprising — disobedience and rebellion” (Hebrew words)

- Rebellion: מֵרֵד (mered) / מֵרִי (meri) — revolt,

disobedience.

- Uprising: תִּמְמוֹתָהּ (hitkomemut) — rising up, uprising.
- Transgression/Rebellion (biblical term): עֲשָׂפ (pesha) — transgression, rebellion against covenant.
- Disobedience: תוֹיֵצ־יָא (modern transliteration: e'i-tsiyut) or the biblical sense of “ועמש אל” — they did not hear/listen; connected to ירמ and העישפ.

Folklore, Tales and Practical Illustrations

- Jewish Passover practice: early morning “search for chametz” and burning what is found symbolizes painstaking self-examination, disciplined removal of hidden sin.
- Traditional homilies: the small speck of yeast as an image for secret lust or gossip that later destroys family or church; elders tell stories of a single compromise that created a culture of compromise.
- Christian folklore: “the little sermon that destroyed the church” — a little tolerated false teaching grows to redefine the community.
- Personal tale (parabolic): one loaf with a speck of ferment that, left in dough, makes the whole batch sour — used in preaching to illustrate the need for early correction.
- Cultural practice: many spiritual leaders encourage periodic “house cleaning” seasons in the church calendar: repentance services, accountability

commitments, doctrinal review.

Pastoral Application: How the Fivefold Ministry Must Deal with Leaven

(Reference: Ephesians 4:11 — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/shepherds, teachers)

- Apostles: guard doctrinal purity and church planting practices; call out systemic leaven (false teaching, covetous models) and establish corrective measures.
- Prophets: expose hidden leaven (hypocrisy, secret sin) by calling the church to repentance; provide spiritual discernment.
- Evangelists: ensure outreach is gospel-centered, not compromise for numbers; beware of leaven that trades truth for growth.
- Pastors (shepherds): exercise loving but firm pastoral care; institute confession, restoration, and church discipline when necessary (1 Cor 5 model).
- Teachers: ground the flock in Scripture so they can discern leaven; teach the symbolism of Passover/Unleavened Bread and practical holiness.

Practical steps:

- Confession and repentance seasons — corporate and private.
- Structural accountability: clear governance, transparent finances, pastoral integrity.

- Discernment training: equip members to recognize false teaching and the subtle forms of leaven (pride, covetousness, lust).
- Church discipline: biblical, restorative, and loving confrontation when leaven is tolerated.
- Ongoing sanctification: discipleship classes focused on humility, purity, giving, and sexual holiness.
- Ritual remembrance: adopt meaningful observances (e.g., teaching on Passover and unleavened bread) to internalize the removal of chametz.

Short Liturgy/Prayer Outline for “Searching Out the Leaven”

- Opening confession: corporate time of silent/private confession; read 1 Cor 5:6–8 and call for repentance.
- Prayer of removal: ask God to reveal hidden pride, lust, greed, and false doctrine; request power to root out and replace with humility, purity and truth.
- Commitment: corporate pledge to accountability, restored relationships, teaching series.
- Blessing and commissioning: empower leaders to exercise discipline in love.

Conclusion: Two Final Cautions

- Discern source: not every unusual practice or charismatic movement is “leaven.” The test is fruit —

does it exalt Christ, produce holiness, humility and love or does it puff up leaders and divide the body?

- Remember the double edge: God’s kingdom can be like leaven — small beginnings that permeate and bless. Our responsibility is to discern and remove the corrupting leaven while fostering the true leaven of the Spirit: humility, love, and Gospel power.

Selected Scripture References

(to look up and study)

- OT: Exodus 12:15, 12:19–20; Exodus 13:7; Leviticus 2:11; Deuteronomy 16:3; Hosea 7:4.
- Jesus: Matthew 16:6, 11–12; Matthew 13:33; Luke 12:1; Luke 13:20–21.
- Paul: 1 Corinthians 5:6–8; Galatians 5:9; Colossians 3 (warnings on greed, idolatry).
- Additional: Hebrews on holiness, Ephesians 4 on the fivefold ministry.

Suggested Further Reading

(study leads)

- Rashi’s commentary on Exodus 12 and related sections (for classic Jewish interpretation).
- Ramban’s commentary on Exodus & Leviticus (for spiritual dimensions).
- Paul’s letters, especially 1 Corinthians and Galatians (for pastoral discipline and doctrine).

- Contemporary Pentecostal resources on holiness, church discipline, and leadership accountability.

Closing Exhortation (Apostolic Pentecostal frame)

Beware of the leaven — not only false doctrine but the quiet growth of pride, lust, covetousness and rebellion. The fivefold ministry is called to lead in cleansing, teaching and restoring the house of God. Let us be disciplined in soul-searching, courageous in pastoral correction, humble in repentance, and generous in grace so that the true leaven — the power of the Kingdom — may transform us without the corrupting puff of the world.

Leaven

- חֶמֶץ — chametz — fermented/leavened bread; symbolic of pride, corruption (Biblical/ritual term).
- שֶׁ'וֹר — se'or — leaven/yeast (another Biblical term).

Marriage / marriages

- נִשּׁוּ'ין — nissu'in — marriages (formal/modern Biblical style).
- נְשׂוּ'ים — nesu'im — married (pl. adjective); נִשְׂוּיָנִים / נִשְׂוּיָנִים common variants.

Home / house / houses

- תַּיִב — bayit — house, home.
- מִיֵּתָב — batim — houses (pl.).

House(s) of idolatry / house of idols

- הַרְז הַדּוֹבֵעַ תַּיִב — beit avodah zarah — house of idolatrous worship.
- מִיֵּלִילָא תַדְבַּע תַּיִב — beit avodat elilim — house of idol worship (alternative phrasing).

Idolatry / pagan worship / paganism

- הַרְז הַדּוֹבֵעַ — avodah zarah — idolatry, foreign/false worship (Biblical term).
- מְזִינָגַפּ (or simply הַרְז הַדּוֹבֵעַ) — paganism (modern usage often uses הַרְז הַדּוֹבֵעַ).

Witchcraft / sorcery / magic

- קִישׁוּף — kishuf — sorcery, witchcraft (modern/Biblical-root form).
- הַפֵּשֶׁכָּמ (f) / הַפֵּשֶׁכָּמ (m) — mekhashefa / mekhashef — witch, sorcerer (Biblical/modern).
- כֶּסֶם — kesem — enchantment, divination, sorcery (Biblical word used for magic/occult).

TV (television)

- הִיזִיוֹלָט — televiziyah — television (modern Hebrew).
- הִיזִיוֹלָט/הִיזִיוֹלָט often spelled היזיוולט.

Movies / films

- סרטים — sratim — films, movies (modern).
- סרט — seret — a movie/film.

Books

- ספרים — sefarim — books.

Magazines

- מגזין / מיניזג'מ — magazin / magazinim — magazines (modern loanword).
- מיתע / תע-בתכ / תע-בתכ (תע-בתכ) — ktav-et / ot — periodical / journal (more formal).

Pornography

- היפרגונרופ — pornographya — pornography (modern loanword).
- תזזח תודמח / הזזב וימ תנכות — (less common) phrases describing obscene/sexual content (contextual usage).
- Note: modern Hebrew most commonly uses היפרגונרופ.

Strife (in marriages) / quarrelling / marital strife

- מריבה — merivah — strife, quarrel, dispute.
- מריבות נישוני — merivot b'nissu'in — quarrels/strife in marriages.
- ריב — riv — dispute, contention.

Division / schism / discord

- גּוּלֵּף — pilug — division, schism (can be used for church/political split).
- הַדְּוּחָה — perudah — separation, divorce (contextual).
- הַמְּזִיזָה — skizma — schism (loanword used sometimes; pilug is more common).

Worldly music / secular music

- תִּינוּלִיחַ הַקְּיִזּוּמַ — muzika chilonit — secular (worldly) music.
- שִׁירֵי הָעוֹלָם — shirei ha-olam — (literal) songs of the world; not standard but understandable.

Lust

- תַּוָּאָה — ta'avah — desire, craving; used for sexual lust in many Biblical contexts.

Greed

- תַּוּדְמָה / תּוֹדְמָה — chamad / chemdanut — to covet / covetousness (greed).
- תַּוָּאָה תְּבִצָּחַ — ta'avat ha-betzach — desire for gain/profit; greed.

Covetousness (specific)

- תַּמָּה — chamad — to covet (verb).
- תּוֹדְמָה — chemdanut — covetousness (noun).

Rebellion / uprising / disobedience

- מֶרֶד — mered — rebellion, revolt.
- מֵרִי — meri — defiance, disobedience.
- עֲשָׂפ — pasha — transgression/rebellion (Biblical covenantal term).
- תּוֹמָמוּתָהּ — hitkomemut — uprising, rising up.

Notes and Usage Guidance:

- For many modern items (TV, movies, magazines, pornography, secular music) contemporary Hebrew commonly uses loanwords (היזיוולט, מיטרס, מיניזגמ, היפרגונרופ, תינוליח הקיזומ, היפרגונרופ).
- For spiritual/moral concepts (idolatry, witchcraft, covetousness, rebellion, strife, division) Biblical terms are often used and carry theological weight (גוליפ, הבירמ, דרמ/ירמ, תונדמח, מסק/ףושיכ, הרז הדובע).
- “House(s) of idolatry” can be phrased as הדובע יתב הרז (batei avodah zarah) or מילילא תדובע יתב (batei avodat elilim) depending on tone and context.

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