

CHAIM TIMES

The Newsletter of CHAIM, CHristians Announcing Israel's Messiah

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Bedikat Chametz (The Search for Leaven)

You should receive this newsletter during the Passover season. Familiarity with Jewish holy days is important in understanding our Jewish friends and relating to them the grace of God in the Messiah. The overwhelming majority of our Jewish friends, about 85%, celebrate Passover. Those who do not celebrate themselves are still very aware of the holiday. The ancient feast has many elements that find their fulfillment in what Jesus did for us as our Passover Lamb.

The Israelites were commanded to refrain from eating leavened bread for the week-long observance and were to remove all leaven from their homes.

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.” (Exodus 12:15)

Traditionally, before Passover the mother of the family has gotten out dishes, silverware, pots, and pans that have never touched leaven. She has thoroughly cleaned her kitchen. If she is very observant she may cover her counters with foil and even use a blow-torch to clean the cracks and crevices in the oven! Now *that* is some serious “spring cleaning!” All products with leaven are either removed from the home or sealed in a cabinet. The contents are sold to a gentile for the duration of the feast and bought back afterward.

The father's role in preparation for the Passover is the Bedikat Chametz, the search for leaven conducted on the night before the holiday. He takes a candle, a feather, and a wooden spoon and

with the children finds some crumbs purposely left out in a conspicuous place, and sweeps them into a napkin to be put with the other removed leaven or burned. He then declares he has rid his home of leaven! Talk about light housekeeping! Ladies, men are the same everywhere. They like to take all the credit!

You may notice two Hebrew words pictured on this page appearing on Coke cans and other products during this season. They say “Passover Kosher.” Go ahead and impress your friends!

פסח
כשר

Why all this fuss about leaven? It was to remind the Israelites of the haste in which they were to leave Egypt. There was not enough time for the bread to rise before they left. In Jewish tradition leaven was seen as symbolic of sin. Paul picked up on this:

“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

We may think it is a clever “work-around” to not really remove leaven from the home but rather to sell it to a non-Jew for the duration of the feast. Isn't that really a picture of us all? Isn't it characteristic of the sinful human condition? We find it easy to rationalize our sin or not to make a clean break with it. People are all the same!

This Passover let's recommit to removing the leaven of sin from our lives, praying for our Jewish friends, and telling them about the Passover “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” —FK

CHAIM UPDATES

From Director Fred Klett

Friendship Evangelism Must Involve Real Friendships!

More Jewish people come to faith through the witness of a Christian friend than through any other means. The CHAIM ministry has been involved in almost every sort of outreach ministry we can think of over the years, such as street evangelism using pamphlets, questionnaires, street drama, door-to-door work, special concerts and holiday programs, mass mailings, advertisement in local newspapers, book tables at local fairs, evangelism in boardwalk t-shirt shops, English teaching, practical help, congregational planting, and internet witness, to name many of the approaches we have tried. All have some value and opportunities to share the gospel have come out of all of these approaches, and we have seen people come to faith. All that being said, a personal friendship developed through such methods is what we always hope for. Gospel fruit comes out of friendships and even on the street we hope for at least brief friendships. Friendship evangelism is a very effective thing.

There are, however, two dangers of "Friendship Evangelism." One danger is that we are so concerned about potentially offending a non-believing friend that we never speak to them about the Good News that God sent the Messiah to bring reconciliation through his atoning sacrifice on the cross. The friendship itself, while of great value, becomes an idol and we never tell our friends about Jesus. Of course, we should pray for an opening and an opportunity and we don't want to be pests who constantly harangue people. But all too often we are timid and never share the truth about salvation.

On the other hand, we must be genuine in our friendships. Jesus ate with and was friends with "publicans and sinners." (Matthew 9:11; 11:19). I fear many of us associate only with Republicans! If we desire to reach people with the Good News we need to spend time with them. Of course we cannot go to places that in themselves are sinful. Opium dens and strip clubs are out! But we need to be with people as genuine friends and spend time with them in every day life if we are to have a loving witness. Friendships must be real friendships, not just friendships for the sake of a gospel witness. The gospel must always be in our minds, true, and we must always:

"...exalt the Messiah as Lord in your lives. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you to explain the hope you have. But do this gently and respectfully, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak evil of your good conduct in the Messiah will be ashamed of slandering you." (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Like you, we who are involved in Jewish ministry as a "profession" also have dear friends and family members who we pray will come to faith. Wonderfully, we have Jewish and Gentile friends who know exactly what we do, who we are, and our desire for them to trust in Jesus and they still want to be our friends! Yes, some people may reject you because of your faith and your witness, but

many will also recognize true loving friendship and value that. People tend to appreciate someone who is genuine. So let our friendship evangelism be true friendship without either neglecting evangelism or being obnoxious about the gospel. We need to pray for wisdom to keep a balance between two extremes and to be honest in all we do. We are to shun all subterfuge and deceit.

"Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Messiah Jesus as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah Jesus." (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

Please pray for our Jewish friends and we will pray for yours. If we can be of help in your witness, do let us know. We are happy to supply Bibles and gospel literature in several languages. CHAIM staff are available to come to your church to teach on evangelism to Jewish friends and how the Jewish Holidays point to Jesus. Pamphlets and bulletin inserts are also available.

As this newsletter goes out a meeting is planned for a few of us from different ministries to get together to discuss bringing the Good News to strict Orthodox Jews. I am hopeful this results in a successful effort. I've done a lot of study in that area and I would love to put it into use.

You can find helpful articles and materials online at www.chaim.org and a link to support our work.



Friends at one of our Passover Seders. Some are believers in Messiah Jesus, some are not yet!