



Clear Your Homes of All Leaven

A couple of weeks ago at our Shabbat table we had a discussion about sour dough bread. Most of the people at the table, including myself, did not know much about baking sourdough. I myself am not such a fan of sourdough so I never make it - but after that discussion I decided I should learn more about it. That's why the verse in our portion commanding us to remove all leaven from our house and prohibiting eating it on Pesach caught my eye - ...ACH BAYOM HARISHON TASHBITO SE'OR MIBATECHEM, KI KOL OCHEL CHAMETZ... (12:15)

The verse uses both the word SE'OR and CHAMETZ to refer to leaven. SE'OR is a sour dough that has fermented and can be added to other doughs to make them become leaven. Possibly the name comes from the fact that it is SHE'EIRIT SHENISHAR - what is left over from the dough (Daat Mikra 2:11). Rav Hirsch says that SE'OR is related to the word SA'AR - storm and indicates the agent that causes a strong fermenting action, which is exactly what it does.

SE'OR has less flour and more bacteria than CHAMETZ. Bread production relied on the use of sourdough as a leavening agent for most of human history. The use of baker's yeast as a leavening agent, that we all are familiar with is only about 150 years old.

On four occasions the Torah tells us to teach our children and instruct them in the path of Judaism. Each of the four passages involved has a direct connection to Pesach. Three occur in our portion (12:26-27, 13:8, 13:4). Every year at the seder we work hard transmitting the Pesach story to the next generation.

When reading about sourdough I kept thinking how it is so related to Pesach. Before each baking, some of the dough is saved and treasured to ensure tomorrow's bread. That is the LECHEM ONI, poor man's bread who worries where he will get his next meal. But sourdough is also like our teaching our children about the Exodus from Egypt, sourdough starters are passed from generation to generation.

SOUR DOUGH BISCUITS

2 cups lukewarm water from
cooked potatoes
2 cups flour
1 Tbsp sugar

Mix the potato water, flour and sugar into a smooth paste. Set in a warm place until starter mixture rises to double its original size. Whenever a cup of starter is taken out to bake something add 1 cup water, 1/2 cup flour and 1

tablespoon sugar to starter to
refeed the starter.

BISCUITS:

1 cup starter

1/4 cup oil

1/2 tsp salt

3/4 tsp baking soda

1 cup flour

Mix ingredients for rolls. Roll 1/2
inch thickness on floured board. Cut
and place on greased baking sheet.
Bake at 200°C degrees for 20
minutes.