

a simple level we note four points of correspondence in the butler and baker episode:

- (a) Joseph was consigned to prison, as was Jesus to the prison house of the grave.
- (b) He suffered with two others, the butler and the baker, whose fates are predicted, just as Jesus suffered with two criminals.
- (c) There is a connection with bread and wine in each case.
- (d) A three-day period is also involved. It seems reasonable to suppose that other points of significance will be found when the episode is examined more closely.

The chief butler and chief baker were in prison because of sin. Joseph came in the morning, just as the Lord will return in the morning of a new day for his people. There will be two classes at the judgement seat, the accepted and the rejected, matching the reinstatement of the butler and the rejection of the baker. The blossoming vine is

a symbol of resurrection to immortality, so the chief butler represents those who will be raised to eternal life and blessed by being given positions of dedicated service and great honour in the Kingdom of God (compare the high position held by Nehemiah).

We conclude that the dreams of the butler and baker were remarkable prophecies of the Son of God and the salvation he would bring. It is suggested that the chief butler first of all represents Joseph, who then becomes a type of Christ. In the first place, the butler's dream points to the release of Joseph from prison, but then, with Joseph being a type of Christ, prefigures the resurrection of Christ. These ideas are set out in [Table 2](#).

At another level, we can also see in the butler's dream a prophecy of the release of natural Israel from Egypt, which then prefigures the release of spiritual Israel from the bondage of sin and death. This comparison is set out in [Table 3](#).

(To be continued)

The shewbread— the bread of faces and Hosea 7

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The shewbread was placed in the presence of God—before His face. In this article Hosea's use of this idea is considered, and the lessons for Israel and for believers today are developed.

WE READ OF the shewbread in Leviticus 24:5-9: "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD [Yahweh]. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD [Yahweh]. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD [Yahweh] continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD [Yahweh] made by fire

by a perpetual statute". These twelve loaves of bread undoubtedly symbolised the twelve tribes of Israel, and for the flour from which they were made to be of sufficient fineness it needed

to be sifted of all its impurities—a reminder that Israel had come out of slavery and been 'sifted' of all the corrupting influences of Egypt.

The frankincense with which the two rows or piles of shewbread were sprinkled was associated with the meal offering, regarding which we read that Aaron had to take a handful of flour and oil with frankincense and burn it upon the altar "for a sweet savour . . . unto the LORD [Yahweh]" (6:15). The shewbread had been baked in an oven by fire, therefore the whole process of its manufacture with the frankincense was regarded as an offering made by fire to God. It was to be eaten in the holy place, for "it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD [Yahweh] made by fire by a perpetual statute" (24:9).

The shewbread rested on its own table in the holy place in the presence of Yahweh—before His face, as it were—hence its literal meaning, ‘the bread of faces’. Thus it should have reminded Israel that they too were constantly in the presence of God, and that their lives should have been lives of sacrifice, rising to Him as a sweet-smelling savour. But they forgot this principle and turned away their faces from Him.

Israel’s failure in the days of Hosea

This failure is described in Hosea 7 using particular terminology. Hosea addressed his words particularly to the kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes also known as Ephraim, a name occurring thirty-seven times in this prophecy. Although Israel had turned their faces from God, He was still willing to forgive them, and the prophets Hosea and Amos were sent to turn them back again. Amos gave warning to both Judah and Israel in chapters 2–9, prophesying against King Jeroboam II, but the king’s response was to send one of the false prophets of Bethel, Amaziah, telling Amos to flee and “prophesy not again any more at Beth-el” (Amos 7:13). Thus when the ten tribes were taken into captivity, we are told:

“Yet the LORD [Yahweh] testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD [Yahweh] their God” (2 Kgs. 17:13,14).

Truly Yahweh would have healed them, but they were not willing.

Regarding the words of Hosea 7, then, “the iniquity of Ephraim” (v. 1) dated from the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, when the ten northern tribes separated from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. King Jeroboam made two golden calves, setting up one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and “an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi” (1 Kgs. 12:31). So we read that “this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan” (v. 30).

The “wickedness of Samaria” (Hos. 7:1) takes us back to the time of Ahab, who reigned in Samaria, and of whom we read:

“as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat . . . he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD [Yahweh] God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kgs. 16:31-33).

Clearly Israel and her kings had forgotten the significance of the shewbread, that all they did was before the face of Yahweh; hence the words of Hosea 7:2,3: “they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; *they are before My face*. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies”. Note, the king was made glad, but not Yahweh. Hosea continues by introducing the language of bread-making in verse 4: “They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened”. The margin renders the second half of his verse, “the raiser will cease from waking”, which corresponds to the words of verse 6, “their baker sleepeth all the night”.

If we understand this baker to allude to the rulers of the day, Israel’s leaders were asleep. They were not wakeful and vigilant, watching over their own spirituality and the spiritual welfare of the nation. The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:5-8). How important it is that we are wakeful and watchful about our own spiritual welfare and that of the ecclesia!

The importance of spiritual preparation

It is worth giving thought to how the shewbread was made. Edersheim describes it thus: “The ‘shewbread’ was made of the finest wheaten flour, that had been passed through eleven sieves. There were twelve of these cakes, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, ranged into two piles, each of six cakes . . . The preparation of the shewbread seems to have been hereditarily

preserved as a secret family tradition in the 'house of Garmu', a family of the Kohathites".¹ In the same work he adds the following comment: "The Rabbis are at pains to explain the particular care with which it was made and baked, so that in appearance and colour the lower should be exactly the same as the upper part of it". These traditions of the rabbis may not be Scripturally relevant, but they do suggest that great care was taken in preparing the shewbread. So the leaders of Israel should have taken care in the preparation of the hearts of the people, endeavouring to remind them that they were at all times in the presence of Yahweh.

But the work was not done, as Hosea testifies using familiar language: "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire" (7:6). Instead of taking time preparing their relationship with God, their efforts had gone into preparing their own hearts to do evil. The RSV renders verse 6: "For like an oven their hearts burn with intrigue; all night their anger smoulders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire". The words of James in his epistle are apposite: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (4:8; see also 3:5,6).

If Israel had remembered the significance of the shewbread, they would have taken the opportunity God was giving them and drawn close to Him by cleansing their hearts of evil. Rather, their ways had become destructive and corrupt: "They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto Me" (Hos. 7:7). God could say of them, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (4:6).

From these days of King Jeroboam, no one in the same direct royal line reigned over Israel. Instead there was a period of trouble amongst the ten tribes, during which one rival after another conspired to take the throne (see 2 Kgs. 15). In this way Israel's judges were devoured and their kings fell, King Hoshea being the last king to fall. Why? Because "there is none among them that calleth unto Me".

Once again, Hosea's condemnation of Ephraim uses the language of the bakery:

"Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD [Yahweh] their God, nor seek Him for all this" (7:8-10).

The reference to pride suggests that, although Israel ultimately knew that all they did was in the presence of God, they brazenly followed their own ways and would not repent. Their conduct is explained in verse 11: "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart". They were a "cake not turned", half-baked; in the words of James, double-minded. We recall how particular the rabbis were to bake the shewbread evenly on both sides, perhaps with the words in Hosea 7:8 in mind; but it was more important that such care should be shown in the lives of the children of Israel. But their double-mindedness led to their destruction, being on one hand outwardly respectable, but on the other firmly in the world.

Spiritual lessons

The prophet Hosea's name means 'deliverer' or 'saviour', being connected with the name Joshua; and in his efforts to turn Israel back to God we can see him as a type of Christ. Ironically, the name of the last king of the ten tribes, Hoshea, is almost identical, but instead of him being a deliverer or saviour of Israel, he was spiritually asleep and allowed his people to burn like an oven, as we have seen. For all their sins, "the LORD [Yahweh] was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only" (2 Kgs. 17:18). The exhortation that comes from all this is the importance of conducting our lives with the remembrance that we are at all times in the presence of our heavenly Father. As the frankincense was on the shewbread for a memorial before Him, may our lives arise as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2).

The word used to describe the shewbread in the New Testament indicates that the loaves were 'set forth', which seems to correspond to the Old Testament idea we have seen of them being in God's presence. According to Bullinger, this word actually denotes "what one sets before his mind,

1. A. Edersheim, *The Temple—its ministry and services as they were at the time of Christ*.

proposes to himself, purpose, deliberate resolution",² and it is generally translated 'purpose'.

One instance of its use in this way is the case of Barnabas, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with *purpose* of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). Similarly the Apostle Paul, using the same word, could say of himself to Timothy, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, *purpose*, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). Men like Barnabas

and Paul conducted themselves with spiritual purposefulness, conscious that they were at all times in the presence of the Almighty, the lesson of the shewbread. May we too live our lives as in the presence of our heavenly Father, that by His grace we may receive a crown of life at the appearing of the Master.

2. E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English Bible*.