

The Jewish exegetical framework of **PaRDeS** (Peshat, Remez, Derash, Sod) offers a progressive lens for unpacking the biblical motif of bread, moving from literal sustenance to cosmic mystery.

Peshat (The Literal / Surface Layer)

At the base level, bread is the ancient world's fundamental means of survival, representing physical life, hospitality, and daily reliance.

- **Absolute Dependence (OT/NT):** The Israelites' reliance on Manna in the wilderness (Exodus) and the petition for "our daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew) literalize humanity's day-to-day dependence on divine provision for sheer survival.
- **Hospitality and Covenant (OT):** When Melchizedek brings bread and wine to Abraham (Genesis), it is a literal diplomatic and hospitable action that establishes peace and mutual recognition.

Remez (The Hint / Allegorical Layer)

Here, the literal object points beyond itself to typological or theological truths.

- **The Face of God (OT):** The *Lechem HaPanim* (Bread of the Presence or Showbread) placed perpetually in the Tabernacle hints at God's constant attention and unceasing provision for the twelve tribes.
- **The Word and The Savior (NT):** Jesus deliberately allegorizes the historical Manna in John 6 ("I am the bread of life"). Just as physical bread sustains the mortal body, the "living bread" is presented as the singular theological mechanism for eternal spiritual life. In the wilderness temptation, the assertion that "man shall not live by bread alone" allegorizes physical food as secondary to the sustaining power of God's Word.

Derash (The Homiletical / Moral Layer)

This layer extracts ethical, moral, and communal instructions from the text.

- **Leaven as Pride and Corruption (OT/NT):** The Passover command to purge all yeast (Exodus) morally represents the removal of the puffed-up ego and the sinful habits of Egypt. Jesus directly applies this derashic logic when warning against the "leaven of the Pharisees," turning yeast into a metaphor for insidious hypocrisy and corrupting influence.
- **The Bread of Affliction (OT):** *Matzah* (unleavened bread) is eaten to remember humility, suffering, and the haste of redemption, stripping away the luxury of time and comfort.
- **Radical Equality (NT):** The act of "breaking bread" in Acts and the Epistles moves from a meal to a moral imperative of fellowship, actively dissolving societal and class divisions within the early church.

Sod (The Mystical / Secret Layer)

The deepest level deals with the esoteric, the cosmic, and the ultimate union between the creator and the created.

- **Elevation of the Material (OT):** In Jewish mysticism, bread represents the ultimate synergy of the cosmos. It requires divine input (sun, rain, soil) and human labor

(harvesting, grinding, baking). Consuming it with intentional blessing elevates the divine "sparks" trapped in the physical world back to their source.

- **Cosmic Union (NT):** At the Last Supper, bread transcends allegory and becomes the mystical vehicle for the Eucharist/Communion. Consuming the bread is framed as a profound, esoteric merging where the believer physically partakes in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, erasing the boundary between the material body and the divine presence.