

# Bible Food: Physical and Spiritual

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*Psalm 104:15 "...wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts."*

## Grain (Bread)

1. Historical information
  - a. Plowing (Isaiah 2:4): softens the ground to allow seeds to sprout.
  - b. Sowing (Matthew 13:3-9): "broadcasting" seeds over the field.
  - c. Reaping (Mark 4:26-29): stalks are cut with a sickle and bound into sheaves.
  - d. Threshing (Isaiah 41:15): stalks are laid out on a hard surface and run over with a threshing sledge. This separates the kernels from the husks and straw.
  - e. Winnowing (Matthew 3:11-12): throwing the wheat into the air lets the light chaff blow away, while the heavier kernels fall to the ground.
  - f. Sifting (Luke 22:31): a sifter separates out the last foreign matter from the kernels
  - g. Milling (Judges 9:53, Matthew 18:6): the seeds are ground into flour with a millstone, either a small household stone or a large communal stone.
  - h. Baking (1 Kings 19:6): flour is mixed with water and oil, kneaded, and baked in a clay oven or on a flat griddle or hot stones.
2. Spiritual lessons (Positive and negative)
  - a. Jesus used bread to represent his body. This emphasizes his humanity. He ate the same food as every one of them. He was hungry and thirsty just like any man.
    - i. This point is also illustrated when Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread (Luke 4:3-4).
  - b. Bread was the largest source of calories. It is used symbolically to represent food in general, or by extension, the necessities of living.
    - i. Trusting that God will provide for our needs every day, i.e. our daily bread (Matthew 6:9-13)
    - ii. Can also refer to distractions of daily life (Deuteronomy 8:3, Luke 10:38-42)

## Grapes (Wine)

1. Historical information
  - a. Vineyard (Mark 12:1): terraced fields on a hill. Tower was used to guard the fields during harvest when the grapes were ripe.
  - b. Pruning (John 15:1-3): unproductive branches are removed every year so the remaining branches produce more grapes.
  - c. Harvesting (Judges 9:27): grape clusters are cut off with a knife and gathered. The grape harvest was a festive time in the whole community.
  - d. Pressing (Isaiah 63:3): grapes are crushed by foot in a winepress.

- e. Fermenting (Matthew 9:16-17): juice is fermented in jars or skins. The fermenting process would cause the skins to stretch.
  - f. Also eaten fresh or dried to make raisins (1 Samuel 25:18) or made into vinegar (Ruth 2:14)
2. Spiritual lessons
- a. Jesus used wine to represent his blood. Blood and wine are often related, especially in the context of a winepress - a symbol of judgment and wrath (Revelation 19:15).
  - b. The book of Proverbs contains numerous warnings against the dangers of drunkenness, and Paul warns against it as well (Ephesians 5:18), but wine is not always viewed negatively in Scripture. For example it was used medicinally (Luke 10:34, 1 Timothy 5:23).

### **Olives (Oil)**

1. Historical information
- a. Orchards (1 Samuel 8:14-15): trees take years to produce fruit.
  - b. Grafting (Romans 11:24): cultivated olive branches could be grafted onto wild trees so that edible olives could be harvested from a tree that was already mature.
  - c. Harvested by beating branches (Isaiah 17:6) and collected with a cloth laid under the tree.
  - d. Crushing - by foot or rolled stone (Micah 6:15)
  - e. Pressing (Exodus 27:20): the best oil came from being crushed, but more oil could be extracted by mechanical presses. The olive pulp was put in baskets and squeezed by a heavy load.
  - f. Oil was used in food, especially baking (1 Kings 17:11-13)
  - g. Also used to fuel lamps (Matthew 25:1-4, Exodus 27:20)
  - h. Finally, used to anoint prophets, priests, and kings (1 Samuel 16:1-3, Psalm 133) and was also applied to wounds.
2. Spiritual lessons
- a. Olive oil, especially used to anoint, was usually connected to royalty. Jesus was anointed before his burial - not with oil, but with expensive perfume, and not on his head but his feet (Matthew 26:6-13).
  - b. Oil was also connected to light. Only the best oil (beaten, not pressed) was used to light the lamp in the Tabernacle (Exodus 27). Jesus used a parable about oil lamps to encourage us to be ready for his coming; we must be a light to the world until the end (Matthew 25:1-13).

### **Meals**

1. A typical evening meal would consist of:
- a. A pot of stew, mostly vegetables and legumes
  - b. Pieces of bread that were used to eat the stew
  - c. Side dishes, like nuts or fruit (Figs, pomegranates, pistachios, almonds, etc.)
  - d. Wine to drink (cleaner than water)

2. Only wealthy people ate meat regularly; most had it only on holidays or special occasions.
3. Milk products like cheese, yogurt, or curds (like cottage cheese) might also be eaten. Sheep, goats and cattle could all be raised in areas that were too dry to grow crops, and are still the mainstay of nomadic peoples, thousands of years after Abraham.

#### **Today's Menu**

- Lentil Stew (Genesis 25:34)
- Flatbread (leavened)
- Dates (Grow well in arid climates, and are common near Jericho and the Dead Sea)
- Grape Juice (sorry, no wine)
- Yogurt topping (w/ cucumbers and mint)
- Olive oil and balsamic vinegar (Mediterranean if not strictly Biblical)
  - Ruth 2:14 mentions vinegar as a condiment for bread