

Kneading G-d in Creation

Numbers, Ch. 15

17. The L-rd spoke to Moses saying:
 18. Speak to the children of Israel and you shall say to them, When you arrive in the Land to which I am bringing you,
 19. And you eat from the bread of the Land, you shall set aside a gift for the L-rd.
 20. The first portion of your dough, you shall separate a loaf for a gift; as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor, so shall you separate it.
 21. From the first portion of your dough you shall give a gift to the L-rd in [all] your generations.

From the bread

Sifre

The term limits the commandment of challah to a dough made of the five main species of grain: wheat, barley, oats, rye and spelt.

The first portion of your dough 15:20

Sifre

The commandment to separate challah goes into effect from the moment the mixture becomes dough, i.e. from when the kneading begins.

Rashi

[From the possessive form of your dough, the Sages derive that] When you knead an amount of dough you are accustomed to kneading in the desert, to whom this verse was originally said, you must take challah. And how much is that? "They measured with an omer" (Exod. 16:18), "an omer per head" (verse 16). You shall separate from its first portion, that is to say, before you eat the first portion from it, you shall separate one loaf as a gift for the sake of the L-rd.

Challah Facts:

Omer=volume of 43.2 eggs.

Minimum requirement of dough to take challah without a blessing: 3 lbs. 11 oz (majority of liquid must be water)

Minimum requirement of dough to take challah with a blessing: 2 lbs 11 oz

The blessing recited: *Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to separate challah.* Transliterated: BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NOI ELO-HAI-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM A-SHER KID-SHA-NU B'MITZ-VO-TAV V'TZI-VA-NU L'HAF-RISH CHAL-LAH

You shall give a gift to the L-rd (15:21)

Rashi

Since no amount is specified for the dough portion, [challah], it says, "you shall give" -the gift should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift.'

Mishnah Challah 2:7

These amounts are 1/24 of the batch of a householder's dough and 1/48 of a batch of commercial dough.

פרק טו

יז. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
 יח. דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
 כְּבָאֲכֹכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה:
 יט. וְהָיָה בְּאֲכֹלְכֶם מִלֶּחֶם הָאָרֶץ תְּרִימוּ תְרוּמָה לַה':
 כ. רֵאשִׁית עֲרֹסְתֶכֶם חֲלֵה תְרִימוּ תְרוּמָה כְּתְרוּמַת גֶּרְחָן בֵּין
 תְּרִימוּ אֹתָהּ:
 כא. מִרֵּאשִׁית עֲרֹסְתֶיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לַה' תְּרוּמָה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם:



Chassidic Masters

Reb Zusya: "I would abstain from eating, but what can I do, since my Creator created me with a mouth? Surely G-d did not create anything in His world unless it can be used exclusively to serve Him. If so, why did He create us with a mouth to eat? In order that we serve Him with our mouths! Everything in this world has a spiritual essence that needs to be elevated to G-d."

Midrash

Why is the law of challah recorded in the Torah adjacent to the law of idolatry? To teach you that whoever upholds the mitzvah of challah is as if he has negated idolatry; and whoever neglects the mitzvah of challah is as if he has affirmed idolatry.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Bread is the most basic staple of human sustenance. It is easy to fall into the trap that the more we work the more we earn. It is easy to feel that G-d is not involved, even if we acknowledge that he set the rules and put them into motion. But this borders on idol worship. Idolatry is the perverted image of an independent self outside of G-d. It is the worship of self-actualization without the acknowledgement of a greater being. Idolatry separates the body from the soul, the physical matter from the spiritual, robbing the corporeality of its inner, deeper connection with its purpose and focus. By separating challah, we are reminded to bring G-d into every aspect of our lives and aspirations. We set aside some of the very first of our dough as a portion for G-d, reaffirming that it is G-d who granted us all that we have and is the source of our sustenance and income.

This explains allegorically why a private person must give a greater share of his dough as challah than a baker. A baker, being a businessman is in a position to observe G-d's constant providence in his daily life and doesn't need so much of a reminder.

Kuntreis Eitz Chaim

The Torah is called "bread" for bread connects and binds the vitality of the soul to the limbs of the body, eliciting additional life energy from the soul. When a person does not eat, the limbs of his body are weakened. By eating, he obtains energy from his soul. Torah also draws down added vitality to the G-dly soul that is encloded in the animal soul and empowers it, enabling it to overcome the material nature of the body.

SUMMARY

- Separating "challah" reminds us that even while kneading together the most base, pedestrian components of our physical lives, we need to suffuse creation with its G-dly mission.
- When a person earns his daily bread it is natural for him to think that market forces control his income not G-d and he may "worship" business acumen as a "foreign god." By separating challah we affirm that our effort is merely a suitable receptacle into which G-d will pour His blessing and sustenance.
- Lechem means to connect or join. Just as bread connects the two basic elements, body and soul, a wife is sometimes referred to as lechem since "the blessing only comes to a man's household for the sake of his wife" (Baba Metzia 59a) who thus connects the spiritual blessing to the physical reality.

