

Class #25 & 26 - Separating Challah:

1. Introduction:

1. When a person prepares a large quantity of dough for baking, he is obligated to perform the mitzvah of separating a small piece of dough and sanctifying it. This piece is called challah.
2. Challah must be separated from any type of baked food made from certain types of flour, if a sufficiently large quantity is prepared. This includes cakes, cookies, biscuits, matzo, etc.
3. If this mitzvah is performed, the grains will grow in abundance and one's house will be blessed. If challah is not separated when required, the grains are cursed and there is a shortage of food.
4. Although the main obligation to do this mitzvah is on the owner of the dough, i.e. the husband, the rabbis gave the privilege of performing this mitzvah to the woman, as an atonement for Chava's sin of causing Adam to sin of eating the forbidden fruit.
5. Presently, this mitzvah is rabbinic in nature, both in Eretz Yisroel and outside of Israel.
6. However, there are some leniencies for this mitzvah when done outside of Israel.
7. Originally, the challah was given as a gift to a Cohen, who would eat it in a state of ritual purity. Today, the challah is destroyed.
8. Even a Cohen or his wife are obligated to separate challah.
9. In Eretz Yisroel, it is forbidden to taste the dough before separating challah. Outside of Israel, it is usually permitted.
10. It is praiseworthy to bake challos on Erev Shabbos / Erev Yom Tov in order to do this mitzvah. Some women try to perform this mitzvah when nearing the time of childbirth. Some women try to perform this mitzvah during the Ten Days of Teshuva.
11. It is preferable to make a large enough quantity from which challah must be separated, bake **all** the dough (or enough of the required amount necessary to separate challah), and give away or freeze the extra challos. There are opinions who allow you to freeze the remaining dough and not bake all the challos.
12. The mitzvah of separating challah may be performed on any weekday, and women should do it when it is convenient. The baked challos can be frozen earlier in the week until Erev Shabbos. However, it is greater mitzvah to bake the challos on Erev Shabbos.

2. Types of Flour:

1. The mitzvah applies only to dough made from wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye; or any combination thereof.
2. A mixture of five grains flour with most other non - grain flours (e.g. potato flour) is still obligated in the mitzvah if:
 - A. The majority is a five grain flour
 - B. The mixture tastes like the five grain flour.
 - C. There is the required quantity of the five grain flour alone.
3. A mixture of wheat flour with rice flour is still obligated in the mitzvah even if you only have:
 - A. The mixture tastes like wheat

- B. There is a required quantity of wheat only [Even if the majority is rice flour.] (if the required quantity is only with the combination of flours, no blessing is said)
4. Oat flakes do combine with wheat flour just like non-grain flours do.

3. Types of Dough:

1. Challah may only be recited **with a bracha** if, besides the required amount of flour, there is at least one of the following primary ingredients: water, wine or grape juice, olive oil, honey, or milk.
2. If none of these ingredients are used, challah is separated without a bracha. Therefore, it is preferable to add one of these ingredients.
3. NOTE: many fruit juices contain water, even if they claim to be 100% pure.
4. One drop of water is sufficient to qualify as a primary ingredient.
5. If another of the above liquids are used, they must constitute the majority of all the liquid ingredients.
6. You must separate challah from a food baked from a batter (a mixture that is thin enough to pour) that is commonly used in cake recipes.
7. In this case, challah should be separated after the food has been baked.
8. If challah was erroneously separated from a batter, it should be separated again after the baking, but with no bracha.
9. In order to recite a bracha, the mixture must be **baked**. This applies both to doughs and batters.
10. Doughs that are boiled or fried (doughnuts) , require separation without a bracha.
11. Batters that are boiled or fried (blintzes, pancakes) , are exempt from the mitzva.
12. Doughs that are first boiled and then baked (bagels) requires separation with a bracha.
13. Dough that is even baked in a pot on the stove, with very little liquid (just enough to prevent burning), is considered like baking.
14. Challah is not separated from lukshen kugel.
15. A jew who bakes his own dough for a non-jew is obligated in the mitzva.
16. A jew who bakes dough owned by a non-jew is not obligated in the mitzva.

4 - The Baking:

1. After separating Challah, the dough may be stored in the fridge or freezer until one wishes to bake it.
2. According to some opinions, a sufficiently large quantity must be baked at one time in order to require a bracha after separating the dough. Others allow a bracha to be made even if the adequate quantity is not baked in one session.
3. In it is not necessary to bake all the dough at once. (e.g. you own a small stove.) As long as the dough is baked in one session, one may bake small portions in the oven in succession.
4. You may give away some or all of the food that you bake.
5. If an amount of dough is given away to others, and the person making the dough no longer has a sufficient quantity for herself left over, there is no mitzvah of challah, (e.g. challah demonstration.)

6. You may use the same dough for different types of bread when doing this Mitzvah. However, one part must have the sufficient quantity on its own in order for you to make the bracha. The same applies to different flavoured cakes.

5- Quantities:

1. The dough must have the **volume** of 43 and 1/5 eggs, which is hinted to in the Gematriya of the word חלה.
2. There is considerable halachik disagreement regarding the size of an egg, resulting in different opinions of the sufficient amount of quantity of flour required. The custom is to use the smaller measure for separating the challah without a bracha, and the larger measure for separating the Challah with a bracha.
3. Regular wheat flour requires 1.2 kilo (2 lb., 10 oz.) of flour in order to separate challah without a bracha. You need 1.67 kilo (3 lb., 10 oz.) in order to make a bracha.
4. It is ideal to weigh the flour and not use cups for measurement. A standard American 8 oz. cup can hold between 4.2-5.3 oz. of white flour.
5. If one insists on measuring with cups, should separate without a bracha when using 8 cups; and make a bracha when using 14 cups.
6. The measurements for whole wheat flour are 1.16 kilo (2lb., 2 oz.) to separate without a bracha. You need 1.4 kilo (3 lb., 2 oz.) in order to make a bracha. (As bran is lighter than flour)
7. Barley, spelt, oats, and rye are lighter than wheat flour. The measurements are 1 kilo (2 lb., 2 oz.) without a bracha, and 1.4 kilo (3 lb., 2 oz.) with a bracha.
8. Generally speaking, one not be concerned in calculating the small amount of flour added while kneading or rolling the dough.
9. Generally speaking, after separating the challah, you need not be concerned if a bit more flour is added afterwards.
10. There is absolutely no Mitzvah to separate challah from less than the minimum quantity. Even if you did separate challah, the piece of dough does not become challah.
11. It is a greater Mitzvah to separate challah less frequently with a quantity requiring a bracha, than more frequently with a quantity that does not require a bracha. However, it is better to bake a smaller quantity each week if the family prefers freshly baked challis over frozen and defrosted ones. The Mitzvah of honouring the Shabbos would take priority.
12. Two or more doughs containing less than the minimum quantity can be combined to create a mitzvah of separating without a bracha.
13. Two or more doughs containing less than the larger quantity can be combined to create a mitzvah of separating with a bracha.
14. One may combine different tasting doughs if one does not mind merging them into one dough. They can not be combined if you do not want them merged into one dough.
15. Baked foods can be combined if they have similar tastes. (i.e. you would not have minded to mix the doughs together before you baked them.)

16. Doughs can be combined by either bringing the doughs together, sticking to each other to the extent that one tears dough from the other when pulled apart; or by putting the doughs or baked goods into one container.
17. The container should have enough depth that every food is at least partially inside. No food should be completely above the rim of the container.
18. The foods can be combined by putting them all inside a large plastic bag or paper bag. A large cardboard box can be used.
19. It is preferable - but not absolutely necessary - that the doughs or foods touch each other inside the container.
20. If one does not have a sufficiently deep container, the foods can be placed in the container and covered with a large cloth.
21. One may also spread a large cloth on a table, place the dough / foods on it, and fold the corners of the cloth above the foods. In this way, the cloth is considered to be a large container and the foods are combined. This method is effective even if some of the food is exposed in the center. However, each item of food must be at least partially within the cloth.
22. The dough / foods need only remain combined for one moment. Once the foods have been combined, challah must be separated even if the foods are immediately separated from each other.
23. After the foods have been combined, challah need not be separated from each dough. Challah should be separated from any one of them.

6 - Who Separates Challah:

1. Although the main obligation is on the owner of the dough, (often that is the husband) the rabbis gave the woman the privilege of performing this Mitzvah.
2. A husband may separate Challah, but only after receiving permission from his wife.
3. The wife may honor another woman to do this Mitzvah, and does not need to ask permission from her husband.
4. The husband may honor another person to do this Mitzvah, but only after receiving permission from his wife.
5. A child below bar/bas mitzvah may not separate Challah.
6. If a boy aged twelve or a girl aged eleven separate challah and understands what he /she is doing, the separation is valid.
7. If the child is below this age, the separation is not valid, and must be repeated by an adult.
8. A woman, who is a niddah, may separate Challah.
9. If a guest is concerned that challah may not have been separated by the host from home made challah, cakes, etc., he may do so from his portion. In this situation, it is sufficient to separate the tiniest amount and declare it as Challah. No bracha should be recited.
10. Usually, one may not separate Challah from another person's food without permission. However, in order to save the host from sin, a guest may do so without the knowledge of the host. He should take only the tiniest amount of food, and have the intention to acquire it before declaring it as Challah. Alternatively, if he has already received a portion from his host, he can separate Challah from his portion and have in mind that he is exempting his host's food. No bracha should be recited.

7 - When to Separate Challah:

1. The following section has numerous laws that only apply to Challah made outside of Eretz Yisroel.
2. Challah should be separated as soon as one has completely finished making the dough or the batter. Do not wait for the dough to rise.
3. One is permitted to taste the dough, before separating Challah, to see if it needs more flavouring.
4. If one baked the dough before separating Challah, it is preferable to separate challah before eating the food. Even if one has started eating the baked food, one must separate Challah from the baked food as soon as one remembers.
5. If you can not remember whether you separated Challah; if you perform the Mitzvah on a regular basis, you can assume you separated Challah. Nevertheless, it is recommended to separate a tiny piece again without reciting a bracha.

8 - How to Separate Challah:

1. Some have the custom to give Tzedakah before separating Challah.
2. Some have the custom to wash their hands without reciting a bracha.
3. Stand when doing the Mitzvah.
4. Proper procedure for separating Challah: 1) separate a small piece of the dough or food, with your right hand, and place it next to the remaining dough or food; 2) recite the bracha - if required; 3) Declare the separated piece to be Challah; 4) Dispose of the Challah.
5. You may hold the separated piece in your hand (and not place it down) as long as it is near the remaining dough or food.
6. The mitzvah can be fulfilled even by separating a tiny amount. However, the custom is to separate a piece the size of a kezayis – 1.33 fl. oz. (40 ml) – a piece of dough the size of a golf ball. One should not separate a piece larger than this, since it is going to be destroyed.
7. The correct text of the bracha ends with the words “Lehafrish Challah.” Some have the custom to add the words “Min Ha’isa.”
8. You make the same bracha when separating from baked goods, but do not add the words “Min Ha’isa.”
9. Some have a custom to recite the bracha before separating a piece, as follows: one should hold with the right hand a *k’zayis* of the dough (without detaching it) and recite the *bracha*. One should then pull off the dough. At this point, some recite the words “*harei zu Challah*” (one may not say this until the piece has been pulled off)
10. It is preferable not to say a Shehechyanu bracha when performing this Mitzvah for the first time.
11. You declare the separated piece to be challah by saying “ Harei Zoo Challah.”
12. If you forgot to make the bracha after separating the dough and after declaring the dough as Challah, it is too late to recite the bracha.
13. If you made the bracha on the separation, but forgot to say the declaration, the mitzvah has still been fulfilled.

14. If you forgot to say the bracha and the declaration, even though you separated the dough, the Mitzvah has not been fulfilled, and a declaration must be said.
15. It is forbidden to speak after making the bracha until after the declaration. If you did speak before the declaration, then you must repeat the bracha followed by the declaration.
16. It is customary to say the "Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha" (as found at the end of the Amida) after fulfilling this Mitzvah.
17. It is appropriate to pray for righteous and G-d fearing children afterwards.

9 - Disposing of Challah:

1. Presently, the custom is to burn the separated piece of Challah until it turns into ashes. However, there are many Halachik concerns that make this method of disposal difficult and impractical.
2. If one feels that this is difficult, you may wrap it in a plastic bag and throw it into the garbage.
3. If the challah was accidentally eaten, the mitzvah of separating the challah has been fulfilled and need not be repeated. The remaining food may be eaten.
4. If the separated Challah was accidentally mixed in the remaining dough: If the Challah was not thoroughly mixed with the dough and can be removed, one should remove all the challah with a little extra dough if necessary. If the challah was thoroughly mixed, and the remaining dough was at least 100 times the amount of Challah, the entire mixture may be eaten.
5. If the remaining food was less than 100 times the amount of Challah, the food may not be eaten, unless an annulment of vows was made under consultation with your rabbi.

10 - Shabbos & Yom Tov:

1. The following section has numerous laws that only apply to Challah made outside of Eretz Yisroel.
2. Under normal circumstances, one may not separate Challah on Shabbos.
3. If one forgot to separate challah (or does not remember whether or not one did separate Challah) before Shabbos, you may still eat the food, provided that you put aside a portion from which Challah will be separated after shabbos.
4. That portion should be larger than a Kzayis.
5. On Motzei Shabbos, you separate a piece, the size of a kzayis, from the remaining food and declare it as Challah. You must not declare all the remaining food as Challah. No bracha is made on this separation of Challah.
6. If all the food was mistakenly eaten on Shabbos, the Mitzvah of Challah has been lost.
7. If you made food before Yom Tov and forgot to separate Challah, the same laws apply as on Shabbos.
8. If you made food on Yom Tov, Challah may and must be separated on Yom Tov.
9. It is a Mitzvah for a husband to gently ask his wife on Erev Shabbos / Yom Tov, close to the time of candle lighting, whether she remembered to separate Challah.