

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה ראשית עריסותיכם תשכ"ח

Published for Sedra Shelach Lecha (Diaspora)
26 Sivan 5782, 25 June 2022¹

CHALLAH AND THE WORLD

THE SEDRA INTRODUCES US TO THE CONCEPT OF CHALLAH: “THE FIRST OF YOUR KNEADING BOWL YOU SHOULD give as an offering” (Num.15:20)². This Mitzva is also mentioned in a verse in Ezekiel (44:30), which adds that separating Challah will have the effect of ‘bringing blessing to your home’. In which way does the Mitzva of Challah bring blessing to one’s home?

Another interesting point, is that this Mitzvah is one of the very first Mitzvot which took effect at the moment that the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel, as the Torah states, introducing the Mitzva of Challah: “When you come to the Land... and eat of its bread, you should give an offering for G-d..” (Num.15:18-19), namely the dough offering of Challah. What is the significance of this detail?

First let us consider the meaning of entering the Land of Israel. The ultimate purpose in Creation is to make a Dwelling for the Divine in this world. The Land of Israel has an innate sacred quality which makes it particularly suitable for this. The achievement of such a dwelling for the Divine turns the world back to the wonderful situation of the beginning of Creation, when Adam and Eve

¹ *Reshit Arisoteichem* 5728, published in *Dvarmalchut Shelach* 5775. The Hebrew text was not edited by the Rebbe.

² The dough offering used to be a sizable amount and would be given to the Cohen; now, when the Cohen is considered ritually impure, and therefore unable to eat the sacred Challah, only an olive size (1 oz) is separated as Challah, and this is burnt. One only takes Challah from a dough weighing at least 1.23 kg. If it weighs at least 1.66 kg, a blessing is made before separating the Challah. The term Challah is generally applied to the Shabbat loaves, which have generally had the Challah dough offering separated.

were together with the Divine Presence in the Garden of Eden. The goal of existence is to recreate that atmosphere.

The problem was that Adam and Eve sinned, and this was followed by other sins, which led to a coarsening of the Jewish people and a hiding of the Divine Presence. Then came the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which was an intense Divine revelation through which the Jewish people were purified. But the making of the Golden Calf, and later (in this week's Sedra) the sin of the Spies, again meant that a long purification process was needed. This took place during the forty years in the Wilderness.

Then, at last, the Jewish people entered the Land. At this moment they achieved an important stage in the achievement of the goal of Creation. This is also why at that point the Mitzvah of Challah began to apply. Because entering the Land of Israel together with the Mitzva of Challah express the repair of the error which took place in the Garden of Eden.

When G-d formed Adam (who, according to Rashi, included Eve³) the Torah describes this as a kind of 'kneading', forming Adam from the earth. Adam is therefore described as 'the Challah of the world'. Eating from the Tree of Knowledge was the sin which gave Adam and Eve a terrible flaw which led to them being driven out of the Garden, and to all the negative things that followed.

But at the point of the Jewish people entering the Land of Israel, this flaw was reversed. The Mitzvah of Challah which then began to apply, expresses the repair, the Tikkun, of that flaw.

Further, Challah expresses the idea of the sanctification of everyday life. On the one hand, it is a practical Mitzvah which is generally carried out when a woman is working in her kitchen, baking bread⁴. On the other, it has a wider, more general effect.

The Tikkunei Zohar⁵ points out that the word Challah can be read as Chol - Heh. Chol signifies the profane, the unholy. Thus we say in Havdalah 'G-d separates between the sacred and the profane, Kodesh and Chol'. The letter Heh signifies holiness.

We see that in the distinction between the two words Chametz and Matzah, in the context of Pesach. Chometz, leavened food forbidden on Pesach, signifies impurity; Matzah represents purity. But the only difference between the two

³ See Rashi's comment on Genesis 2:21. Adam and Eve were created as one person, back to back. Then G-d separated them into two.

⁴ See n.2 above.

⁵ Tikkun 16.

words is that Chametz has a Chet and Matzah has a Heh. Hence the Heh signifies holiness.

The Talmud⁶ points out that the reason the Heh ה has a gap between the top of the letter and its left foot, is so that those who have sinned can repent: the gap enables them to return 'inside' the realm of holiness. Through this repentance, the holiness of the Heh flows into the Chol, the profane.

The Mitzvah of Challah means that holiness flows into the physical aspects of the daily world, which is the goal of Creation, and also that it repairs the error at the beginning of existence. It thus paves the way for the re-entry into the Land of Israel for the Jewish people as a whole with Moshiach, who will come and redeem us and bring us all back to our holy Land, very soon.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁶ Menachot 29b and Rashi's commentary.