



The Blessing of Challah

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

Every week I have the privilege to “take challah” in our kosher kitchen at the Challah Factory. When I used to bake my weekly Shabbat challah at home, I didn’t always have this opportunity as there are requirements about how much dough there needs to be made to fulfill this mitzvah. And I only have so much freezer space.

The Mitzvah

According to Chabad.org, “The mitzvah of separating challah applies to every Jew, man or woman. Traditionally, however, this has been one of the special mitzvot entrusted to the Jewish woman. In her role as the *akeret habayit* (foundation of the home), the woman is entrusted with mitzvot that uplift and sanctify mundane activities, and nourish her family physically and spiritually.”

In the story, *She Kneads Her Needs Away*, author Devorah Leah Mishulovin, at theJewishWoman.org, describes the meaning.

“This mitzvah has the unique ability to bring G-d's blessings into the Jewish home, and is a propitious time to ask G-d for whatever you want. G-d knows I have plenty to pray for, so there I was — with my ingredients on the table and troubles in my heart.

I glanced at my Kitchen-Aid, eyed the dough hook and thought, “Ah, such a special mitzvah, I will knead my dough by hand.”

There is something special about doing it on my own. It reminded me of the story of the angels coming to visit Abraham. He was so overjoyed to have guests, and out of tremendous love for the mitzvah of welcoming them, he went himself and slaughtered the animals for the meat to serve them, even though he had servants who could have done it for him. The making of bread, however, he left to his wife, Sarah, because that mitzvah belonged to her. This is actually the first time the mitzvah of challah is referred to in the Torah.”

The Blessings

This is one opportunity that we can ask for blessings for health, safety, success, among other good things. I look forward to this time each week to ask for blessings for those I love. Since Oct. 7, I include the hostages in these blessings. It is a time for me to talk with G-d, asking for what we need and what we want; send courage to the hostages, provide them with resilience, and send them home.



Connection

This mitzvah connects me with the *imahot*, the matriarchs of the Torah. Most specifically Sarah, the first ima in the Torah. I am named for her (as well as my great grandmother, of blessed memory). It links me to my children as I whisper their Hebrew names, Naomi R'Uda bat Sara, Chana Yocheved bat Sara, Eliana Chaya bat Sara, murmuring pleas for safety, security, patience, courage, and on and on. Asking for health for my mom, my Muchutonim (in-laws), my sister, my nieces and nephews, and my brothers-in-law and sister-in-law.

Truly Blessed

I feel truly blessed to have this opportunity. To have this obligation from G-d, feels special and carries with it great responsibility.

To know that I have the ability to bring physical and spiritual well-being into my house; to know that I have that power, what an awesome privilege.

And I feel that now, more than ever, it is so important for me to use this power to bring blessings, not only to my home and loved ones, but also to those who can't. I can't rescue the hostages physically, but maybe, by taking challah, I can bring blessings to them spiritually.

#Shabbat Shalom