



# BREAD FOR THE KOHEN

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There is a rather famous expression which I would have done well to remember on a more regular basis in my formative years – “The grass is always greener on the other side”. In so many areas of life, I thought things could just be a bit better; I would just have to be someone else, something else, somewhere else. And this was no less true in spiritual matters. I was born (and remain!) a mere *Yisrael*, and I imagined the life of a *Kohen* to be the ultimate luxury – when *Moshiach* would finally arrive, I would only have to work 2 weeks a year in the *Beis Hamikdash*, I would be a regular on the *pidyon haben* circuit, and I would receive all kinds of food and other goodies (perhaps even some land!) as part of the 24

*matnos kehunah*. Of course, we all know that the grass isn’t always so green...

Nowadays, due to reasons of doubtful lineage and lack of a *Beis Hamikdash*, most of the *matnos kehunah* are not even considered, and even fewer actually make their way to the hands of a *Kohen*. However, we do still have some remnants of some of these *mitzvos*, one of which is mentioned in this week’s *parsha*.

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them: When you come to the land to which I will bring you. And it will be that when you will eat from the bread of the land, you shall separate a gift for Hashem. The first of your dough, *challah*, you shall separate as a gift. Like that which is separated on the threshing floor, so you shall separate it. From the first of your dough you shall give to Hashem, a separation, for the generations.” (Bamidbar 15:17-21)

This is the mitzvah of *challah*, which is not the baking of large, plaited loaves of bread, but rather the separation of a piece of dough from a sufficiently-large batch which would then be given to a *Kohen*. As can be seen from the *pesukim*, this mitzvah applies in *Eretz Yisrael*, although the *Chachamim* extended it *Chutz La’aretz* as well.

A few of the relevant *halachos* (these are just a guide and all details should be confirmed with a qualified posek):

- *Challah* should be separated if a dough is made with at least 1.6kg of flour
- A *bracha* should be made if at least 2.2kg of flour is used
- A *kezayis* of dough should be removed
- Nowadays, instead of giving the *challah* to a *Kohen*, it should be burned
- If one forgot to take *challah* from the dough, it can still be taken from the baked products
- If this situation occurs on *Shabbos*, and *posek* should be consulted

In the professional world of *kashrus*, *challah* is not something we generally need to worry about in factories. This is because there is only a mitzvah of *challah* when the dough is owned by a Jew and most factories are not Jewish owned, and once the product is baked, it can then be sold to a Jew and eaten without the need to take *challah*.

However, *challah* is very much relevant with regards Jewish bakeries, and a *mashgiach* needs to ensure that a good system is in place, especially as few bakeries have a *mashgiach* on site full time, and doughs are being baked around the clock. And this is true, although on a smaller scale, for restaurants as well.

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