

# HALOCHOSCOPE



**This week's question:**

**Someone separated *challah* from a batch of dough and burned it in a toaster oven, directly on the rack. Should the rack be *kashered*?**

**The issues:**

- A) Challah; chalas Chutz La'aretz**
- B) Taam, raicha and zaia, the flavors and fumes of forbidden foods**
- C) Kashing the oven**

#### **A) Challah**

There is a Scriptural *mitzvah* to tithe dough and give the tithe, called *challah*, to a *kohain*. Before tithing it, the dough is *tevel* and is forbidden. A *zar*, non-*kohain*, may not eat the *challah* tithe just as he may not consume the *terumah* crop-tithe. When the dough is rolled into a uniform 'lump', the obligation applies. One may separate it earlier, as soon as the water is added. The *shiur*, minimum amount of dough requiring separation of *challah*, is an *omer* of flour and yeast ingredient. The other ingredients are added, but do not count towards the main *shiur*. Two ways to measure this volume are given to us: In volume it is slightly more than two *kav*, which is  $42\frac{1}{5}$  eggs; in linear measurements it is  $10 \times 10 \times 3\frac{1}{9}$  cubic finger-widths. These two measurements cannot be reconciled in real life. Partial reconciliations are made, leading to two different minimum *shiurim* for the obligation of *challah*. Furthermore, the modern day equivalents of these *masoretic* measurements are also debated. According to most authorities, a batch of dough made from two and a half pounds of flour satisfies the smaller *shiur*. The larger *shiur* is reached at or before double that amount, or five pounds of flour.

Due to the doubt about the measurements, we are accustomed to separating *challah* from a batch in the smaller *shiur*. However, it might not really reach the minimum *shiur* in absolute terms. If it does not require *challah*, the dough separated is nothing special, the separation is not a *mitzvah*, and no *brocha* is required at all. A *brocha* in vain includes the utterance of the Name of Hashem for no purpose. Therefore, when in doubt, a *brocha* is not recited. The *mitzvah*, if it is required, is still counted without the *brocha*. If the dough is enough to satisfy the larger *shiur*, a *brocha* is indeed recited.

Nowadays, the *challah* is not given to a *kohain*, for two reasons. Firstly, the penalty for a *zar* who eats *challah* is severe. Since the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* we no longer have a reliable system to verify the lineage of *kohanim*. Those known as *kohanim* today are called *kohanei chazakah*, presumed *kohanim*. They must observe the laws pertaining to restricted marriages, restricting their contact with a corpse, and they are honored with the first *aliya* and other honors. However, the severity of a *zar* eating *challah* is too risky to allow *kohanei chazakah* to eat it. What if they are not truly *kohanim*!

Secondly, *challah* has *kedusha*, ritual sanctity. Like *terumah*, if it becomes *tamei*, defiled, it is forbidden to be eaten, and must be burned. We do not practice the laws of *tumah* and *taharah* today, for the most part. In part, this is due to the lack of practical *taharos*, the foods and utensils that are treated specially in these terms. It is also due to the lack of the means with which to cleanse ourselves of the most severe form of *tumah*, that of a corpse. This requires a process including the *parah adumah*, ashes of the red heifer. We are all presumed *temei'ei mais*, defiled by contact with a corpse at some point. All *challah* we separate becomes *tamei*. [The actual recommended way to dispose of the *terumah* in Israel is beyond the scope of this discussion.]

The amount to be separated is not specified Scripturally, according to the standard interpretation. It must be substantial enough to be presentable when given to the *kohain*. Rabbinically, for a private householder it is a 24<sup>th</sup> and for a commercial producer, a 48<sup>th</sup>. Since *challah* is always considered *tamei* nowadays, one should never separate more than the smaller amount. Doing so would amount to defiling *taharos* unnecessarily. Before separation, the dough is *tevel*, rather than *taharos* (*challah*). At the moment of separation, it becomes *challah* and also is already defiled.

The Scriptural obligation of *challah* applies only inside *Eretz Yisroel*, and then, only when all Israel is settled there. This is practically impossible ever since the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were exiled. They comprised a majority of Israel. Even those who maintain that they later returned to be absorbed into the remaining tribes, agree that the terms of the Scriptural provision do not apply until Moshiach arrives. Rabbinically, the obligation was instituted to maintain the *mitzvah*. Moshiach will be here at any moment, and we would like to have been keeping as many of the *mitzvos* as we can on some level.

Inside *Eretz Yisroel* the Rabbinical obligation is strict. Elsewhere in the world, a less stringent institution applies, called *challas Chutz Laaretz*. This is to remind of the real *mitzvah*, lest it become forgotten. A small amount, the size of an olive, is sufficient, regardless of the size of the batch of dough. In *Eretz Yisroel*, all the dough must be placed in one place before the separation. *Chutz Laaretz*, this is only required when combining batches of dough, to separate one piece for a few different batches. Regular *challah* must be *raishis*, the first. It must be separated before anything else is done with the dough. *Chutz Laaretz*, one may, strictly speaking, eat from the bread that has not had *challah* removed from it, and leave over a piece at the end for *challah*.

Inside *Eretz Yisroel*, there are different regions. One region has the full sanctity. In that region, according to the consensus, one *shiyur* of *challah* would be separated and given to the *kohain*. In the second region, two *challahs* were separated. One was a *shiyur*, and that was burned. The second was nominal, and was given to a *kohain*. In the third region, which included areas given status as quasi-holy and *Chutz Laaretz*, two *challahs* were separated. A nominal amount was burned, and a *shiyur* was given to the *kohain*. When *tumah* became prevalent, in the first region the single *challah* is burned. In the second region, nothing changed. In the third region and *Chutz Laaretz*, the rules are relaxed. Only certain types of *tumah* are applied to restrict true *kohanim* from eating it. Thus, young *kohanim* who have never experienced these types of *tumah* could eat a regular *shiyur* of *challah*. However, the practice in most communities *Chutz Laaretz* is not to require a

*shiur*, but an olive-sized piece, and to burn it. Even in EY we have mentioned the issue of *kohanei chazakah* that is accommodated nowadays. Some poskim permit a mixture of *challas Chutz Laaretz* with other permissible foods at a lower proportion than the standard requirements for *bitul*, neutralizing a forbidden ingredient, of *challah* in *Eretz Yisroel*. This plays a role in our case as well. [See Parshas Shelach 15:17-20. Brochos 37a-38a Challah 1:4-6 9 2:2 6-7 3:1 8, Yerushalmi, Eruvin 83b Psachim 37a-b 48b 116b Beitzah 9a Kesuvos 25a Chulin 104a-b Bechoros 27a, Poskim. Ramabm Bikurim 6:12-13. Tur Sh Ar OC 156:1 YD 322 323 324:1 (Ar Hash) 327 329 (AH:15), commentaries. Avnei Nezer YD:413. Chaz Ish Zeraim Likutim 5. Machaze Eliyahu 110.]

### **B) Taam, raicha and zaia**

When foods are forbidden, their mixtures are also forbidden. The forbidden component must be *bateil*, neutralized by a significant amount of the permissible component, to permit the mixture. Even if there is no actual forbidden food present in the permissible food, the *taam*, flavor of the forbidden food can also forbid it. Thus, if forbidden meat was added to a stew, then removed, the stew is forbidden. In addition, the utensils used absorb the *taam*, called *belia* or *balua*, and impart it to kosher food cooked with it later.

*Raicha*, fumes of something forbidden, and *zaia*, steam, can also penetrate another food or utensil, even if they do not touch. For example, steam will rise from a pan of milk cooking under a pan of meat. If there will be no *zaia*, but *raicha* will come from the one food, it is still forbidden to cook, roast or bake them together. However, *bide'eved*, if it was already done, the food is not forbidden, provided that the oven was vented.

There are debates on whether the rules apply to all types of food equally. Grease and greasy flavor penetrate deeply, and presumably completely, as opposed to non-greasy flavor that only penetrates the surface. *Raicha* of greasy food can also be more problematic. We do not consider ourselves expert enough to determine which foods are greasy. However, bread and matzo are considered non-greasy.

Accordingly, the poskim discuss how to burn the *challah*. In former times, ovens had an open fire inside. The *challah* could be burned in the fire. There would be no concern with *raicha*, and the bread would be distant from the *challah*. The *taam* would never stay in the walls of the oven, because the fire would continuously burn it out [see next section]. There could be an issue of *hana'ah*, benefit gained by a non-*kohain*, from the use of the *challah* as fuel. Therefore, the practice was to burn it before baking the bread. When the bread is baked later, there is no longer any benefit from the burned *challah*.

Nowadays, ovens are heated outside or underneath the baking area. The *challah* would not be burned in actual fire. If burned in the broiler, the issues of *balua* in the pan and *raicha lechatchilah* still remain. Therefore, it should be wrapped in foil if one wishes to burn it in the oven. Ideally, it should not touch parts of the oven used to bake bread directly. It should be placed on the oven floor. *Bide'eved* this does not forbid the oven. Then, it may be burned even at the same time as the bread. [See Psachim 76b Avoda Zara 66b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 461:5 YD 92:8 97 105:4-6 108:1-4 322:5, commentaries.]

### **C) Kasherizing the oven**

In our case, the *challah* was burned directly on the oven rack. When a utensil has forbidden *balua*, even if one plans to use enough to neutralize it, the utensil may not be

used as is. It must be purged of the *balua*. A utensil is purged in accordance with the way it is usually used. Thus, if it absorbed through cooking, it is purged through *hag'alah*, boiling the *balua* out through water. If it absorbed through baking, the flavor is locked in too well to come out through boiling. Therefore, *libun*, burning it, is required. This will destroy the *balua*, rather than purge it out. *Libun chamur*, intense *libun* means that the metal gets hot enough to emit a spark. *Libun kal*, moderate *libun* reaches the heat that a dry piece of straw would get singed on the metal. Usually, *libun kal* is relied on for something absorbed indirectly through heat with no liquid medium. It is also used when an item that needs *hag'alah* cannot be cleaned well enough beforehand. *Libun kal* is used to 'cleanse' the area. The rack in our case would normally require *libun chamur*.

Based on the poskim, we may suggest a leniency. Earthen utensils cannot be *kashered*. *Libun* cannot be relied on, because the owner would not let it get hot enough. It could crack. *Hag'alah* does not help. The material gets very saturated, and does not get purged. However, if the *balua* is from a food that is forbidden Rabbinically, with no Scriptural basis, one may *kasher* it three times. The question is why this works. If the *balua* does not leave, why should three times help? The suggested answer is that *hag'alah* does work. It just does not take enough out. Each time, a little more is removed. When enough is removed, anything cooked in the utensil will not be forbidden. The remaining *balua* will not be enough to forbid the mixture. However, cooking then involves *bitul lechatchilah*, intentionally neutralizing. For Scriptural prohibitions, this is forbidden. For totally Rabbinical prohibitions, it is permitted. There are indications that *hag'alah* also purges most of the *balua* from a utensil used with direct heat. *Libun* is only needed for the small amount of remaining *balua*. Accordingly, *hag'alah* would also work on the rack in our case. If this is too difficult to arrange, *libun kal* may be used to substitute for *hag'alah*. It may be heated over an open flame to the point that it will singe a piece of tissue. Alternatively, the oven can be heated to the highest setting for at least twenty minutes, and preferably one hour. [See *Divrei Malkiel III:56*.]

In conclusion, the rack may be *kasheder* with *hag'alah* or *libun kal*.

**On the parsha ...** [The new mother] may not touch **anything** holy ... until the days of her purification [period] are finished. [12:4] Anything holy – including *terumah*; she may not touch – denotes eating. [Rashi] Why does the Torah write touching instead of eating? To teach that touching is forbidden like eating. However, the punishment of excision only applies to one who eats the holy food in defiled state. [Yevamos 75a] All of these *halachos* could have been written more clearly! The commentaries explain that the *halachos* are taught in a progression, from least serious to most serious [see *Malbim etc.*]. This does not fully answer the questions. Moreover, eating defiled *terumah* in a defiled state does not carry the same penalty. Perhaps the Torah wishes to emphasize that point. We might come to treat defiled *terumah* or *challah* lightly, such as nowadays. Therefore, the Torah uses extreme language, forbidding even touching and even something defiled as though it is the flesh of a holy offering.

**Sponsored by in honor of the 35<sup>th</sup> birthday of Moshe Isaacson on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Iyyar, and of Rivka Nechama's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Iyyar.**