

הקשר היהודי שלך

Your Jewish Connection

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Challah, the Bread of Our Lives

Traditionally, Jewish meals begin by saying a blessing over bread and then sharing the bread together. Some Jews begin every meal this way, and other Jews only do this for festive occasions. We refer to the blessing as *HaMotzi*, and it states “Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”



There is much symbolism surrounding *challah*. According to [A Brief History of Challah](#):

- On Shabbat, the two challahs placed on our festive tables represent the double-portion of manna that fell on Friday, the heavenly bread that fed Jewish people during their 40 years in the desert.
- The strands, arms intertwined, symbolize love, truth, peace, creation, freedom, harmony, family connection, unity and justice – following the simultaneous commandments to remember, observe, and guard Shabbat (*Shamor* and *Zachor*).
- Twelve humps recall the miracle of the 12 loaves for the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Round loaves on Rosh Hashanah symbolize continuity.
- Ladder shapes, before the Yom Kippur fast, represents ascending to great heights.
- On Purim, small triangular loaves represent Haman’s ears.
- On Shavuot, two oblongs side by side resemble the Tablets of the Law.



For more on the symbolism, see [What is the significance of Challah?](#) and [What is Challah?](#)

No matter where you are in the world, if you sit at a Jewish table for a meal, there will be bread. The Forward article, [Doughy Ruminations – The Meaning of Bread](#), provides some thoughts on the meaning of bread from a Jewish perspective. It starts with “Bread is life. It symbolizes a multitude of things, from fertility, to plenty, to civilization itself.”

And what about throwing away bread? According to [Rabbi Julian Sinclair](#), “the practice of not throwing away bread expresses a strong sense that bread, and particularly the bread we eat on *Shabbat*, represents G-d’s blessing to us. We want to treasure and show our gratitude for all of it and not waste or disrespect the slightest bit.”



If you’ve ever brought a gift of bread and salt to someone when they move into a new home, you’re in good company. According to [Amy Helfman, Judaica Librarian](#), there are several traditions that place bread and salt together:

1. It is an imitation of Temple ritual, where offerings were prepared with salt.
2. It refers to Genesis 3:19, which says “By the sweat of your brow, shall you get bread to eat”; salt is representative of the sweat.
3. Bread and salt are regarded as a natural pair because the Hebrew words *lechem* (bread) and *malach* (salt) are both spelled from the same three letters.

So enjoy *challah* and bread in whatever shape they are and share.

NOTE: If you want to make *challah*, an internet search will list many options.