



## B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

### *Shabbat Shorts*

Perhaps you've seen this just before Hamotzi is recited on Shabbat. The person reciting HaMotzi takes the knife, and touches or makes an indentation or even a slight cut in the challah, and only after that recites the bracha. What is that about, and is it a proper practice?

The idea of making an actual cut in one's bread before reciting HaMotzi, is based upon a Talmudic discussion and is cited by the Shulchan Aruch in the *general discussion* about breaking bread. The practice is motivated by the desire to diminish, as much as possible, the amount of time that will pass between the recitation of the bracha, and the enjoyment of the bread that God has brought forth from the earth. (For the tighter the connection between the two, the more intense is the experience of connecting God to our pleasure of eating.) By beginning to cut even before reciting the bracha, we can reduce the post-bracha lag time.

Ah, then why not just cut the bread all the way through before the bracha?! That would reduce the time even more! So here's the thing: It is always considered preferable (a way of providing greater honor for the bracha) to recite HaMotzi over a whole loaf than over a mere slice of a loaf. And it is this strong preference which compels the Shulchan Aruch to precisely describe the depth of the pre-bracha cut that he is recommending. For if you were to make a deep enough cut such that if you were to pick the loaf up from one end the other end would separate and fall by force of gravity, then you have ALREADY disqualified it from being considered a "full loaf".

The cut therefore needs to be "just right" - deep enough to save you some time after the bracha, but shallow enough so that it

doesn't undermine the loaf's integrity. (The Mishna Brurah and others point out that this practice would only pertain to loaves that are hard to cut. Thin or easily torn loaves need not be pre-cut at all.)

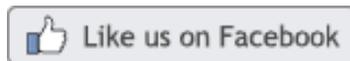
In principle, this same practice *should* pertain to Shabbat as well. However, the Rama is worried. For on Shabbat, the special value we place on having two full loaves in honor of Shabbat, is even higher than the general value we place on having one whole loaf to honor the bracha. The Rama is sufficiently worried about the possibility of accidentally making too deep a cut into the Shabbat loaf, that he advises us to not even try, and to not worry about the post-bracha lag. Aruch HaShulchan affirms that this is the proper practice on Shabbat. The Mishna Brurah appends though, that some who are particularly punctilious will make just a slight indentation in the challah on Shabbat, to save a half-second of lag without at all risking the integrity of the loaf.

So while Shabbat practices around this may vary somewhat, the rule of thumb is certainly "better safe than sorry".

I love feedback!  
ravyosef@bnaidavid.com

B'nai David-Judea 8906 West Pico Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90035  
[director@bnaidavid.com](mailto:director@bnaidavid.com)

See what's happening on our social sites



See what's happening on our social sites



B'nai David-Judea, 8906 W. Pico Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90035

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by [ravyosef@bnaidavid.com](mailto:ravyosef@bnaidavid.com) in collaboration with

**Constant Contact** 

Try it free today