



## B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

### *Shabbat Shorts*

So one last thing before we leave our Challah discussion. We'll address a topic about which there is nothing new or interesting to say.

We all know why we cover the challah. It's in order to not embarrass the challah which, by right, ought to be blessed upon and eaten *before* the wine is blessed upon and drunk. But if that's the case, it's strange that the Shulchan Aruch (271:9) insists that we cover the challah *both* above, *and* (with a tablecloth) below! A cover above would suffice to "hide" the challah during Kiddush. The Shulchan Aruch's "double cover" is based upon an alternative explanation as to why we cover the challah, namely in order to memorialize the manna. The manna, let's recall, was the primary "ritual object" through which our ancestors observed Shabbat in the desert. (They didn't yet have silver Kiddush cups, Shabbat wardrobes, or Havdalah candles). The Friday rituals of collecting a double portion, cooking or baking it for the purposes of the next day, and then actually eating it on the next day (usually all no-no's with the manna!) were the most visible, experiential means through which our ancestors set Shabbat off from the rest of the week.

Accordingly, the manna gets a prominent place in our present-day observance of Shabbat as well. We commemorate the Friday / Shabbat manna through our use of "Lechem Mishna", the "double portion" of challot at Shabbat meals. And we cover these commemorative loaves *both above and below* to remember the way that the manna, according to rabbinic tradition, was covered above and below by dew.

So here's a question: Should we cover our challah at Seudah Shlisheet? On the one hand, there's no wine to embarrass the challah at this meal. But what about the manna idea? The common custom (per the Rama's gloss to 291:4) to recite Hamotzi over *only one loaf* at Seudah Shlisheet is very specifically evocative of the manna!! For here is how that custom was derived: On Fridays in the desert, our ancestors collected two "omers" of manna. Each "omer" was sufficient to produce two loaves (so our rabbis tell us). They ate one loaf at the noontime meal on Friday, leaving three loaves for Shabbat. On Friday night and Shabbat day, our ancestors would have brought two loaves to the table (as we retroject the "Lechem Mishnah" custom upon them), and would have eaten one of them. By the time they would have sat down for Seudah Shlisheet then, there would only have been one loaf left! Thus our one loaf at Seudah Shlisheet custom! The logical extension of this would be that this one loaf SHOULD BE covered!

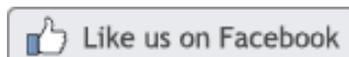
In reality though, I don't think it's too common for people to cover their Seudah Shlisheet bread. Perhaps this is derived from the Shulchan Aruch's opinion that we should preferably have *two loaves* even at Seudah Shlisheet! Why? Because the Shulchan Aruch subscribes to the school of thought that says that we use two loaves on Shabbat not [only] to commemorate the manna, but [also] to elevate the Shabbat meals with a festive demonstration of plentitude. (This is the rationale for having "Lechem Mishneh" on Yom Tov as well, when there is no manna connection whatsoever!) According to the Shulchan Aruch then, by Seudah Shlisheet time we *are done with* our manna commemoration, and thus no need to cover any longer.

Maybe something new :)

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