



The Community

12550 Biscayne Boulevard · Suite 310 · North Miami, Florida 33181

(305) 892-1234 · Chabadniami@gmail.com

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Boruch Hashem

Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc

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Rabbi's Article

The Biblical Challah

The Torah tells us (-Numbers 15:19-21) "You eat from the bread of the Land, you shall set aside a gift for G-d The first portion of your dough, you shall separate a challah for a gift; as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor, so shall you separate it. From the first portion of your dough you shall give a gift to G-d in [all] your generations." On the words, "as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor," Rashi comments, "In which (Teruma, "the gift of the threshing floor") no amount is specified, unlike the gift taken from the tithe [given by Levites to kohanim] for which an amount is specified. However, the Sages did specify an amount (for this, "first portion of your dough"), for a householder, one twenty-fourth [of the dough] and for a baker one forty-eighth."

Six Questions: (i) Rashi's rule is (-Genesis 3:8), "I have come only [to teach] the simple meaning of the Scripture." Hence, it makes sense why Rashi teaches us that the Torah is telling us, "as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor," which has no measurement, and not like the other gifts and tithings that are mentioned earlier in the portion. However, why does Rashi have to tell us, "However, the Sages did specify an amount..."? (ii) Even if you say that Rashi wants the child to know that while the Torah gave no measurement, nevertheless, there is a measurement given by the sages, but why does Rashi have to tell the child what the measurements are? (iii) Even if Rashi wanted the child to have some understanding of the measurement, why not just tell us the one that applies to all, without telling us the exception for the professional baker? (iv) More so, by Rashi yes telling us a measurement, he is creating a problem in the child's mind: "as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor (in which there is no measurement), so shall you separate it (with no measurement)," to which Rashi then tells the child, "However, the Sages did specify an amount"?! (v) Even if Rashi is to tell the child of the measurement, it would have fit in better in his comments on the next verse: "you shall give a gift to G-d: Since no amount is specified for the dough portion, (challah), it says, 'you shall give': The gift should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift'"? (vi) On the other hand, being that Rashi does give both measurements, why does he not already explain why the householder gives a larger amount than the baker?

The Explanation: Rashi is dealing with a simple question: Being that the Torah is telling us that this mitzva can be done with just giving a 'something', then why does the verse state, "you shall separate a challah (Rashi: "you shall separate one challah as a gift for the sake of G-d. 'Challah': In old French, *tortel* (a cake. In modern French, *torteau*)") for a gift," when a challah does have a measurement (be it what it may be, but a measurement nonetheless!)?! Hence, Rashi explains to the child, being that (i) the Torah gives "no amount is specified," but (ii) being that the Torah calls it a challah (*tortel*), hence, the sages gave it a measurement.

Now that we know that Rashi is explaining the child that the reason why the sages gave a measurement is because of the verse's "you shall separate a challah (Rashi: "In old French, *tortel* (a cake)"), in which there are different sizes of challah (cakes), hence, Rashi is explaining that the measurement that the sages gave was not a set mitzva measurement for all cakes (as in the set amount of challah given from a sacrifice), rather, the sages gave a measurement relative to the 'cake' at hand: "For a householder, one twenty-fourth [of the dough] and for a baker one forty-eighth." And for this reasoning ("tortel" comes in different sizes) of why Rashi is giving multiple measurements, there is no need for Rashi to give the reason for these different measurements. The child understands that the challah that a householder bakes is larger, and eaten in its entirety by her family, while the baker has to make also smaller ones for poor people to buy, and that his profits are only that of net profits, minus all expenses, hence, the householder gives a larger amount (1/24th), while the baker gives a lesser amount (1/48th).

Discussion: There seems to be a contradiction within Rashi. In our verse, Rashi says, "In which no amount is specified," biblically, while on the verse, "You shall give a gift to G-d," Rashi comments, "should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift'"?

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FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2023 ★ כ"ז סיון תשפ"ג

Shabbat Candle Lighting: 7:56 PM · Kabbalat Shabbat: 7:45 PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 2023 ★ כח סיון תשפ"ג

TORAH READING: Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41) · HAFTORAH: Joshua (2:1-24)

Shabbat Mevorchim · Shacharit: 9:30 AM · Mincha: 7:45 PM · Shabbat Ends: N. Miami: 8:53 PM

MONDAY-TUESDAY, JUNE 19-20, 2023 ★ ל' סיון-א' תמוז תשפ"ג

ROSH CHODESH (TAMMUZ): Recite *Hallel* and *Musaf* services

Resolve to make this month better in Torah-study, prayer, and charity

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2023 ★ ג' תמוז תשפ"ג

YOM HILLULEH OF THE REBBE: (-[LINK](#)) An auspicious day for studying Torah and offering prayers, and helping another with a physical and/or spiritual favor.

This Week...

Answers given by different commentators on Rashi:

The Re'em (Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi -[Link](#)): Rashi's comments on, "you shall give a gift to G-d," that, "should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift'" is Rashi seeing that, "And the verse is a mere support," the sage use for their measurement. However, biblically there is no measurement for *challah*.

The Gur Aryeh (Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, the *Maharal of Prague* -[Link](#)): Rashi holds that the measurement of, "Should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift'," is for the mitzva (the best way to perform the mitzva). However, biblically speaking, the name *challah* is upon even less than this measurement.

The Nodeh BeYehudah (Rabbi Yechezkel Landau -[Link](#)): The mitzvah of *challah* has two separate dimensions to itself:

(i) Removing the dough from the prohibition of *tevel* ((-Maimonides, Laws of Forbidden Foods, 10:19), "Any produce from which one is obligated to separate terumah and tithes is called 'tevel' before one separates these portions") through which it becomes permissible to eat. For this, biblically speaking, there is no measurement, and the slightest "something" suffices to make the dough permissible.

(ii) The main mitzvah is to give the *challah* to the *kohain*. For this, biblically speaking, there is the measurement of $1/24^{\text{th}}$ (or $1/48^{\text{th}}$) of an 'isoron' (lit. 10^{th} . (-Rashi, Exodus 16:36), "One tenth of an ephah': The ephah equals three se'ahs, and the se'ah equals six kavs, and the kav equals four logs, and the log equals six eggs. [Hence, an ephah equals $3 \times 6 \times 4 \times 6 = 432$ eggs. I.e., the space displaced by 432 eggs.] We find that a tenth of an ephah equals forty-three and a fifth [43.2] eggs. This is the amount for challah [the minimum amount of flour that requires the separation of challah].") Therefore, the sages instituted that it be given $1/24^{\text{th}}$ (for householder) or $1/48^{\text{th}}$ (for baker) (not just of an *isoron*, but) of the entire dough.

Therefore, on the verse, "As in the case of the gift of the threshing floor, so shall you separate it," which speaks of, "Making the dough permissible to eat," Rashi states, "No amount is specified... . However, the Sages did specify an amount." While on the verse, "You shall give a gift to G-d," which speaks of given *challah* to the *kohain*, Rashi writes, "Since no amount is specified for the *challah*, it says, 'you shall give,' the gift should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift': Biblically the measurement of $1/24^{\text{th}}$ (for a householder) or $1/48^{\text{th}}$ (for a baker) of an isoron."

In light of this (the two dimensions explained by the *Nodeh BeYehuda*), let us see what is Rashi's opinion, from the standpoint of, "I have come only [to teach] the simple meaning of the Scripture":

- (i) Even the separation of *challah*, biblically speaking, has an obligatory measurement of something important: "*Challah*, (In old French,) *tortel* (cakes)," and not just crumbs.
- (ii) The "Sages gave a measurement," is not connected with giving it to a *kohain*, but rather, is connected to the measurement given by the Torah for the separation.

The reason for this is, according to, "The simple meaning of the Scripture," both verses (unlike how the *Nodeh BeYehudah* sees it): (a) "You shall *Torimu* (set aside) a *Terumah* (gift) for G-d," and (b) "You shall give a *Terumah* (gift) to G-d," are speaking of the essence of the mitzva, separating *challah* for G-d, --and not of the action of giving it to the *kohain*, which, the action of giving it the *kohain* is first discussed in the Torah-portion of *Korach* ((-Rashi, Numbers, 18:8), "Scripture comes and gives him twenty-four 'gifts' of *kehunah*").

Therefore, being that also in the second verse the terminology is, "(you shall give a) Terumah (to G-d)," And the Torah then reverts to the terminology, "(you shall) give (a *Terumah* to G-d)," even though in context this is the meaning of the word, "*Torimu*" ("set aside"; used in the first verse), hence, Rashi sees this as being so only because, "Since no amount is specified for the *challah*, it says, 'you shall give,' the gift should be an amount which can be considered a 'gift'."

This is also in line with the other comment of Rashi on this verse, which begins with, "Why is this stated? Since it says... hence, Scripture teaches us..."

So too, in our comment of Rashi, the, "Since..." is explaining *why* the word "give" is stated: In order to teach us, "The gift should be an amount (Biblically: "*Challah*, *tortel* (cakes)": " $1/24^{\text{th}}$ (for householder) or $1/48^{\text{th}}$ (for baker) of an isoron," to which the Sages then gave the measurement: " $1/24^{\text{th}}$ (for householder) or $1/48^{\text{th}}$ (for baker) (not just of an *isoron*, but) of the entire dough,") which can be considered a 'gift'."