

Shabbat Shalom
from Rabbi Michael Gold

Candle Lighting Time
Fri. 7:35 pm

Services

Thurs. April 30 8:30 am Minyan followed by Bagels and Bible, last one until the Fall
Sat. May 2 9:30 am Shabbat Morning Service

Dear Friends,

Evelyn and I are pleased to announce that our first born, Natan Gold, has become engaged to Elyse Grossman. The wedding will take place in Maryland in 2027. Again, political violence has rocked our country with a third assassination attempt on the President. Thank God he, his wife, cabinet members, and everyone at the Correspondents Dinner are safe. It is time to tone down the angry political rhetoric. We can disagree without spewing hatred. And we continue to pray for peace for the United States, Israel, and throughout the world.

Here is my message for this week.

Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Michael Gold

PARSHAT EMOR
CHALLAH

“You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves, two-tenths of a measure for each loaf. Place them on the pure table before GOD in two rows, six to a row.” (Leviticus 24:5,6)

I have never baked a challah. In fact, I have only baked one thing in my life. When I was twelve-years-old at sleepaway camp, I picked apples and baked an apple pie from scratch. Of course, a counselor supervised what I was doing. It was delicious. I thought about doing it again now, but I am sure I would simply mess up our kitchen.

We buy challah that is already baked to use every Shabbat. I am thrilled that our local Publix carries kosher challah. But I am amazed that Jews are everywhere; the Publix in my daughter’s small town of Clover, SC also carries kosher challah. We eat it on Friday night and my wife makes sandwiches for an entire week. A braided challah is a proud symbol of Jewish ritual. Of course, by not baking our own challah, we miss out on what the Rabbis considered a fundamental woman’s commandment. In ancient times, a bit of dough was separated and given to the priests in the Temple. Today, religious Jews still separate a bit of challah

dough, symbolic of this ancient ritual. (This was traditionally considered one of three women's commandments, along with lighting Sabbath candles and going to the *mikvah* or ritual bath.)

The idea of baking challah for the Sabbath has its roots in this week's portion. Each week the priests would bake twelve challahs and lay them on a table before the altar, two rows of six. It was an offering to God. Of course, it would be tempting to eat it.

Back in the day when I had a lot of children in my synagogue, I used to run a monthly family service. Instead of a sermon, I would sit on the edge of the bimah, gather the children around me, and tell a story. One of my favorite stories was based on this portion. A wealthy American moved to Israel and started going to synagogue. His Hebrew was weak and he did not quite understand the rabbi's sermon. All he understood was "twelve, golden-brown challahs." He went home and told his wife, "The rabbi wants twelve, golden-brown challahs." His wife was the better baker, so she baked the twelve challahs and he brought them to the synagogue. But what should he do with them? He opened the holy ark and put the twelve challahs next to the Torahs.

A bit later a poor beggar came into the synagogue. He stood before the ark and started to pray, "God, the Sabbath day is coming, and I have no money to feed my family. Please help me." The beggar prayed with more and more passion, and at the height of his prayers, he opened the ark. There he saw twelve, golden-brown challahs. "Thank you God for answering my prayers." He took the challahs, kept two for his Sabbath dinner, and sold the other ten for food and wine.

When the rich American saw that the challahs had disappeared, he said to himself, "The rabbi must have needed those challahs. Next week we will bake them again." Again, he put the challahs in the ark and again the beggar prayed and then took them. It went on week after week. The American would put the challahs in the ark, but now the beggar no longer prayed. He simply opened the ark and took the challahs.

One week the rabbi was sitting in the synagogue studying. He saw something very strange. The rich American came in and put twelve challahs in the ark. The poor beggar came in and took the challahs. The rabbi decided he would put a stop to this. He called both the rich American and the poor beggar into his office. Then he opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out. He realized that a wonderful act of charity was taking place and he did not have the heart to stop it. He simply told them both, "Shabbat Shalom."

Maimonides said that one of the highest forms of charity is when the giver does not know the receiver and the receiver does not know the giver. This is precisely what was happening in this story. Enjoy your challah this Shabbat.