

HALACHA V'HALICHA... By Rav Chaim Schabes

The Torah tells us that we must separate a portion for the *kohain* from ראשית עריסותיכם, from the “first of your kneading”. The Chasam Sofer says that the Torah is alluding to an important lesson in *chinuch*: that from the time that the baby is in his crib, עריסה, the parents should realize that their children must be separated for the service of Hashem. If we fix this idea in our minds, we will succeed in assuring that our children will remain forever committed to this special assignment in their lives.

Kneading is one of the 39 *melachos* that are prohibited on Shabbos, and its definition is to combine small particles and form them into one body through kneading. Prototypically, flour which is small, separate pieces, and when one adds water and mixes it, it becomes one mass (dough). The *av melacha* is when one takes something that grows from the ground and adds a liquid to it, such that after kneading it will become one mass. However, even if one mixes something that doesn't grow from the ground, like cement, dirt, plaster or even ashes, he will also have transgressed (*toldah*). Some practical applications are that one may not add water to flour, even if the mixing happens by itself (MB 321:3); even if the flour and water were combined from before Shabbos, one is not allowed to knead it on Shabbos. When a substance becomes dissolved in the liquid, like for example, sugar, coffee or instant cocoa powder in water, there is no prohibition of *lishah*. When mixing regular cocoa one must be careful that clumps do not form, and if they do, one should use a *shinuy* in mixing them (as will be discussed later). At the Torah level, there is only a prohibition if the mixture is thick (בליילה עבה), and it becomes one body, but *mid'Rabbanan* it is prohibited even if it is a thinner mixture (בליילה רכה) that could be poured from one utensil to another. Even when this thinner mixture is permitted, one should make sure that all the liquid is poured at once, so that it does not initially start as a thick mixture. One should not pour water into an instant potato mix, or into a jelly or pudding, even if at first they become a thin mixture, since eventually it will become one body (Igros Moshe OC 4:74). It is not permitted to mix butter or margarine with cocoa to create a spread, because it is a thick mix. One is not allowed to mix oil with chopped liver for this same reason. There is a dispute between contemporary Poskim whether mayonnaise is allowed to be mixed with chopped liver or eggs; some hold that mayonnaise is considered a solid, and therefore may be mixed with another solid. Others, however, hold that since it turns into a thick mixture it is therefore not allowed. One should follow the stringent position, unless he received a *psak* from his Rav otherwise. It is permitted to add oil to a vegetable salad, because it doesn't become one cluster. It is also permitted to pour milk into corn flakes or other cold cereals, because the milk doesn't make the parts stick together, and it would be like soaking breadcrumbs or cookie crumbs, that if one doesn't knead them, it is permitted (Bior Halacha 12, L'farer). If it is not possible to prepare baby cereal from before Shabbos, one could prepare it on Shabbos, first by changing the order in which he normally combines the ingredients during the week, meaning, if he normally puts the powder in first, he should put the liquid first on Shabbos; if we don't know what the normal order is we can assume that normally the liquid goes first and then the powder, and therefore inverting this order should be assumed as the *shinuy*. Second, one should stir in a different manner than normal, either with a hand, or by shaking the bowl, or by moving the spoon in a crisscross motion rather than in a circular one. One should also pour all the liquid at once, to prevent a thicker mix; if at all possible, we should make it a soft mix, but if the baby will not eat it, and the cereal is a basic staple for him, then we would allow even a בליילה עבה (thick mixture). If possible, it would be preferable to mix some liquid with the cereal before Shabbos, and then dilute it further on Shabbos, since diluting is the opposite of kneading, and therefore totally permitted. If one wants to combine juice with a banana for a baby, one should first pour the juice into a bowl, then mash the banana with a spoon, not with the tines of a fork, and mix in a non-typical fashion (such as crisscross), and preferably, one should take out the spoon between the vertical and horizontal strokes. Even though this will produce a thick mixture, which we will normally not allow on Shabbos unless it is critically necessary (baby cereal when baby will not eat anything else), these *shinuyim* constitute a permitted method for bringing the ingredients together, since when the liquid is added to the solid, the solid is not yet able to mix and combine with the liquid to become one until we first mash the solid, and it is therefore permitted.

THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARAH ... By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (*Yehoshua 2:1-24*)

When the spies that Yehoshua sent to Yericho were in danger of being captured by the king, Rachav warned them of the threat and helped them escape. But before she actually does that, she elicits a promise from the two that when the Jews attack the city, she and her family would be spared. The spies unhesitatingly acquiesce and she lets them down the rope out of the city. But then a puzzling thing occurs. Instead of running for their lives, the two turn around and tell her, “We are absolved from this oath of yours!” and engage in a lengthy discussion. The Mefarshim ask two questions. First, on what basis did they feel they were permitted to ignore a *sh'vuah* that they had just made? Second, if they had something to discuss with her, should they not have done it in the relative safety of the attic, instead of when they were out in the open? The Ralbag explains that they were very concerned that the promise they had made to her was a difficult one to keep in the precise manner that Rachav had laid out, and they didn't want to risk the possibility of breaking their *sh'vuah*. Therefore before they left they ‘restructured’ the agreement so as to minimize the possibility of liability. Other Mefarshim explain that Rachav had acted shrewdly and taken advantage of the situation. She knew that when the Jews would attack the city, they would leave no one alive. She figured that they owed her something on the basis of *hakaras hatov* for saving them but that courtesy didn't extend to her family whom she wanted to save. So she decided to use the pressure of the situation to coerce them into swearing to fulfill her wishes. But once they were safe, they let her know in no uncertain terms that Halacha dictates that a *sh'vuah* made under duress is not valid and they have no responsibility to keep their word! But now that they were no longer under any pressure, they were willing to grant her wish, but under a new *sh'vuah* that would be halachically binding. This of course could only be done once they were safely outside the walls of the city and able to leave any time they wanted.

“A GIGANTIC LITTLE SECRET” ... By Rabbi Yosef Schwab

הלה תרימו תרומה - Rashi, citing the Gemara, explains that a dough is not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *challah* unless it contains the volume of 43 eggs. This is an unusual number, but interestingly, הלה in Gematria is 43!

