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## The Power Of The Beginning

A universally recognized feature of life is the "beginning". The beginning of all existence is the opening theme of the entire Torah. Our Sedra too emphasizes a "beginning" of a different kind. It speaks of establishing a "beginning", during the process of baking loaves of bread.

After kneading the dough, but usually before plaiting it, a portion of the dough is separated. This action is called "taking Challah". It teaches us something about the beginning, not only of baking, but of everything in life.

In Temple times a significant quantity of Challah dough would be given to the priest; today, only a small amount is taken, and it is burned. The law of taking Challah is written in our Sedra: "The first of your kneading bowl you shall donate to G-d as an offering; this applies in all your generations."

Chassidic teachings reveal a wider interpretation of this law, based on a subtle undertone in the wording. The Hebrew term for kneading bowl is "arissa". But "arissa" has a double meaning: it means both a kneading bowl and also a bed, or a child's cradle.

According to the Sages, this double meaning is not by chance. Like everything in the Torah, it is teaching us something. The law of taking Challah is that at the very beginning of the activity of baking bread, one does something to express recognition of G-d. Taking Challah means the dedication of something to the Divine; and this step of dedication takes place right at the start.

The double meaning concealed in the Hebrew tells us not just about the kneading bowl, but about the cradle, the beginning of human life. From the very start there should be a step of dedication. How does one achieve the dedication of a child to Judaism? Through Jewish education. Every moment spent teaching a young child about his or her closeness to G-d, about the beauty of the Torah and of Jewish life, is a precious link with the past and with future. These moments spent at the beginning of life help to ensure that the future years, the "generations" mentioned in the verse, will also be successful, leading towards genuine fulfilment.

This is the global sense. There is also a lesson concerning another kind of "beginning" - the start of every single day. Jewish teaching advises that here too we should begin with a moment of dedication: prayer, "Modeh Ani", the Shema, Tefillin. This is the Challah, given to G-d. Then the rest of the day, the "generations", will be healthy, happy and wholesome, like the warmth of fresh-baked bread...[By Dr. Tali Loewenthal, Director of Chabad Research Unit, London, See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's Likkutei Sichot, vol. 2 p.327, vol.8 p.308. ] - [chabadonline.com](http://chabadonline.com)

Chabad of North Beverly Hills, 409 Foothill Rd. Beverly Hills, 90210

[beverlyhillschabad.com](http://beverlyhillschabad.com)

Rabbi Yosef Shusterman 310-271-9063

**And Moses named Hosea... Joshua (13:16)** The letter yud, which had been removed from Sarai's name (when she was renamed "Sarah"--cf. Genesis 17:15), was soaring and flying before the Divine throne all those years, and saying before G-d: "Because I am the smallest of the letters, I was taken out of the righteous Sarah?" Until she was added to Joshua. (Midrash Rabbah)

**It is a land that consumes its inhabitants (13:32)** What was the reason that the Spies, who were leaders of Israel and men of lofty stature, did not want to enter the Land? The explanation of the matter is as follows:

A great majority of the physical mitzvot can be implemented only in the Land of Israel, especially the agricultural laws and the laws of the offerings brought to the Holy Temple... The Spies, who were on a most lofty spiritual level, did not wish to lower themselves to the level of physical action, preferring to remain in the desert, where they received all their needs from above, and related to G-d by means of the loftier levels of thought and speech (i.e., study of Torah and prayer). They desired to draw down all the Divine emanations into the "Land of Israel" that exists in the realm of Malchut, the world of Divine speech, where there also is a "Jerusalem" and a "Holy Temple." Regarding the physical Land of Israel, they said: "It is a land that consumes its inhabitants"--if the Divine light were to be drawn down into the physical world, our entire existence would be nullified.

But Joshua and Caleb said, "The Land is very, very good." It is specifically in the Land of Israel down below, and specifically by means of the mitzvot implemented by physical action, that the truly infinite light of G-d is drawn down--a light that includes both the spiritual and the material, which is why it is "very, very" good. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

**And the people wept that night (14:1)** On the ninth of Av it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the Promised Land. For we know that the children of Israel decamped from Mount Sinai on the 20th of Iyar (Numbers 10:11), and set forth on a three days' journey (ibid. 10:33), following which they ate the quail for thirty days (ibid. 11:20). That brings us up to the 22nd of Sivan. Then Miriam was secluded outside of the camp for seven days (ibid. 12:15), following which Moses sent the Spies (ibid. 13:1). Thus the Spies went out on the 29th of Sivan. And it is written, "And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days." The month of Tammuz was a "full" month (of 30 days) that year, meaning that they returned on the 8th of Av. And it is further written, "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: That night was the night of the ninth of Av. Said G-d to them: You have wept without cause, therefore I will set aside this day for a weeping throughout the generations to come. (Talmud, Taanit 29b)

Five misfortunes befell our fathers on the ninth of Av: it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the Promised Land, the Temple was destroyed the first and second time, Betar was captured, and the city (Jerusalem) was ploughed up. (Ibid., 26b)

**And you shall see... and you shall remember... and you shall do (15:39)** Sight brings on memory, and memory brings deed. (Talmud, Menachot 43b) - [chabadonline.com](http://chabadonline.com)

**"The Divine Presence rests between them...allots a reward for him" (Pirkei Avos, Mishna 2, Perek 3)** When two individuals study together, the Divine Presence — a level of revelation beyond the grasp of mortals — is drawn down. In contrast, when an individual studies alone, he receives a reward, for he has done a worthy act, but the reward is limited.

What is the difference? When a person communicates with others, he extends himself beyond his individual limits. Therefore, study in such a setting evokes a transcendent revelation of G-dliness. When, by contrast, a person studies alone, his understanding cannot grow beyond the limits of his own thought. Therefore, the reward is also limited. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, *In the Paths of Our Fathers* by Eliyahu Tauger, Kehot) - [www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il)

"A CARE IN A MAN'S HEART, YASH'CHENA." (1) OUR SAGES OFFER (2) TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THAT LAST WORD: "REMOVE THE CARE FROM THE MIND" (3) OR "DISCUSS IT WITH OTHERS." (4) THE TZEMACH TZEDEK COMMENTED: "...WITH OTHERS" WHO ARE "OTHERS" ONLY IN THE BODILY SENSE, BUT ARE COMPLETELY UNITED WITH HIM, FOR THEY EMPATHIZE WITH HIM. FOOTNOTES: 1. MISHLEI 12:25. 2. YOMA 75A.3. READING YASICHENA, FROM THE EXPRESSION YASIACH DA'AT "FORGET" OR "TURN ONE'S MIND AWAY." 4. READING YESICHENA, "TALK," "DISCUSS." (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, SIVAN 25)

***When light pushes away the darkness, eventually another darkness shall come. When the darkness itself is transformed into light, it is a Hlight that no darkness can oppose.***

From: "Bringing Heaven Down to Earth" by Tzvi Freeman