



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Where the Bread Ends
2. Waiting for Mashiach



Binyomin S Altman <bsalt1@penfold.cc.monash.edu.au> wrote:

Hi there, I was told by more than 1 person about some kind of a minhag [custom] people have regarding eating the ends of bread. The basic reasoning being that eating the end causes forgetfulness. Later, I found no source for this and when I asked my uncle about this he showed me a footnote in a sefer that quoted a renowned Rabbi as saying that he has always done it (avoided eating the ends) but that there is no clear source for it. So, should one avoid eating ends of bread?

Dear Binyomin,

The Talmud lists ten things which are detrimental to one's understanding of the Torah. One of them is eating bread not completely baked. This can be understood as follows:

Someone who rushes to eat the bread before it is fully baked will approach Torah study with the same lack of patience. He'll rush through each subject without taking time to clarify all the details and reasons. The result will be an unsatisfying, 'half-baked' grasp of the matter.

The custom to avoid bread-ends apparently started in the days when many people were too poor to afford their own oven, and townspeople would bring their dough to a large communal oven to bake. In order to conserve space, they placed the doughs end to end, and often the bread stuck together. As a result the end part was not well-baked and therefore not eaten.

Commercial bakeries today often bake in the same way, and if you notice you can see where the loaves were pulled apart. Some bakeries put doughs side by side and they stick together on the sides. It would follow, then, that the *side* should not be eaten. The reality is that both the ends and the sides are almost always completely baked, and there's no need to protest if someone eats them. As a boy, I remember my father referring to the end piece as the 'krychik' — it was the prized morsel in our family because it was the crispiest piece!

Sources:

- Talmud Tractate Horiyot 13b

Uri Marcus <RPRSAM2@TECHNION.TECHNION.AC.IL> wrote:

Is there a year in particular that we should be expecting "Mashiach" or the "Messianic Age", whatever that is? I've heard that this should be around the year 6000 [from Creation], but if that's true then we have another 240 years or so to go. What's all the fuss about Mashiach, if we have another two centuries before he shows up on the scene?

Dear Uri,

The Mashiach is a king descended from David who will eventually restore Davidic rule. Among other things, he will gather the Jewish people, teach them **all** to follow the ways of Torah, and build the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple).

As far as the actual day of Mashiach's arrival, it's been a shrouded secret since time immemorial. Jacob knew prophetically, but when he sought to reveal it to his 12 sons, he was mysteriously unable. Daniel knew, and encoded it into the Book of Daniel for only the wisest.

Someone once asked Rabbi Velvul Soveitchick — the 'Brisker Rav' — the following:

"In the daily prayers we say, 'I believe with total conviction in the coming of Mashiach; and though he delay, nevertheless, I wait **every day** for him to come.' That means Mashiach can arrive **any** day. But according to the Midrash, three days beforehand Elijah the Prophet will announce the Mashiach's arrival! How, then, can we possibly anticipate the Mashiach **every single day**? Isn't it a prerequisite that Eliyahu HaNavi will come three days in advance of the Mashiach??

"When Mashiach comes," the Brisker Rav said, "He will answer that question.

As far as the year 6000 is concerned, it is simply an upper limit -- i.e., by the year 6000 the Mashiach will **already** be here. But that's not to say that it can't happen sooner.

In these matters, says the Rambam, no one knows exactly what will happen until it happens. The Rambam cautions against being preoccupied with *Midrashim* about Mashiach, since ultimately such things add nothing to one's love and awe of Hashem.

Sources:

- Rambam Hilchot Melachim 11:1,4 12:2

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