**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**Deracheha: Women and Mitzvot**

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Shabbat and Yom Tov Meals

What is the nature of the obligation to eat Shabbat and Yom Tov meals? How does it apply to women and affect women making *ha-motzi*? Does it extend to seuda shelishit and melaveh malka?

**By Laurie Novick**

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# Commemorating the Manna

Much of our Shabbat and Yom Tov experience centers on preparing and eating festive meals. In this article, we explore the *halachot* of Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, with an emphasis on how they apply to women:

What are the sources of the obligation? How many meals do we need to eat, and what type of food is required? When is a third meal obligatory, and how do its *halachot* differ from those of the first two? What about the *melaveh malka* after Shabbat? We'll also discuss a central ritual of Shabbat and festive meals: reciting *ha-motzi* over two loaves of bread. Strikingly, many of these *halachot* bear a connection to the manna.

During the forty years in the wilderness, God miraculously sustained *benei Yisrael* with a daily portion of manna (*man*).

*Shemot* 16:22-30

And it was on the sixth day they gathered a double portion of food (*lechem mishneh*), two *omers* per individual, and all the heads of the nation came and told Moshe. And he said to them, “This is what God spoke: tomorrow is a day of rest, a sacred Shabbat for God. Whatever you will bake, bake, and whatever you will cook, cook, and all the excess leave for yourselves in safekeeping till morning.” And they left it till the morning as Moshe commanded and it did not spoil and worms were not in it. And Moshe said, “Eat it today (*ha-yom*), for today (*ha-yom*) is a Shabbat for God, today (*ha-yom*) you will not find it in the field. Six days shall you gather it and on the seventh day, Shabbat, it won’t be in it. And it was on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather and did not find. And God said to Moshe, how far do you refuse to keep My commandments and My teachings. See that God gave you the Shabbat. Therefore, He gives you on the sixth day two days of food, each person should remain in his place, no man should go out from his place on the seventh day. And the people rested on the seventh day.

On the sixth day of the week, *benei Yisrael* would gather a double portion of manna, called "*lechem mishneh*" (doubled food). This double portion did not rot overnight and could be eaten throughout the seventh day. The unique manna on the sixth day and lack of manna on the seventh testified to Shabbat's sanctity as a day of rest.

Although Shabbat has existed from Creation, only later, through the manna*,* did its sanctity become tangibly and miraculously evident. Likely for this reason, our sages identify the manna as a means through which God blesses and sanctifies Shabbat:

Mechilta of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai 20

“Therefore God blessed the Shabbat day and sanctified it.” With what did He bless it? He blessed it with manna and He sanctified it with manna. Every day it says “an *omer* per head,” but on Shabbat it says two *omer*. Every day it says “and it spoiled” but on Shabbat it says “and it didn’t spoil.”

The passage in *Shemot* also becomes the source for two central *halachot* pertaining to meals on Shabbat (and, as we'll see, on Yom Tov). The mitzva to eat three separate meals derives from the three iterations of the word "*ha-yom*" (today, i.e., Shabbat) in 16:24. In light of the primary meaning of the word "*lechem*," "bread," Rabbi Abba expounds the phrase "*lechem mishneh*" as establishing an obligation to have Shabbat meals over two loaves of bread.

*Shabbat* 117b

Rabbi Abba said: On Shabbat a person is obligated to break bread over two loaves, for it is written “*lechem mishneh*…Our rabbis taught, how many meals is a person obligated to eat on Shabbat? Three. Rabbi Chidka says four. Rabbi Yochanan said: And both of them expounded the same verse (*Shemot* 16:21) " And Moshe said, “Eat it today (*ha-yom*), for today (*ha-yom*) is a Shabbat for God, today (*ha-yom*) you will not find it in the field." Rabbi Chidka thought that these three "*ha-yom*"s are aside from the evening, and the rabbis thought that it taught about the one for evening.

According to Tosafot, our custom of covering *challot* prior to reciting *ha-motzi* may also commemorate the manna.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Tosafot *Pesachim* 100b s.v. *She-ein mevi'in*

We are accustomed to spread a cloth [over the *challot*] and to recite kiddush, and the reason is explicit in the *She’iltot*, in order that his Shabbat meal be blessed with honor. And there is he who explains it as a commemoration of the manna that did not descend on Shabbat and Yom Tov, and there was dew above and below and the manna in between.

# Yom Tov Meals and Seuda Shelishit

In the previous source, Tosafot list Yom Tov, together with Shabbat, as a day when manna did not descend. We have seen that the *halachot* of *lechem mishneh* and eating three meals commemorate the manna. Do these *halachot* apply to Yom Tov, or just to Shabbat?

The Torah does not explicitly state whether manna was gathered on Yom Tov. Rabbinic sources seem to conflict. The midrash regarding blessing and sanctifying Shabbat through manna implies that Yom Tov was not thus blessed. But a different midrashic tradition states that there was **no** manna on Yom Tov, implying that *lechem mishneh* was gathered on erev Yom Tov:[[2]](#footnote-2)

Mechilta of Rabbi Yishmael Beshalach, Masechta Va-yisa 4

“Six days shall you gather it,” Rabbi Yehoshua says we learned that it [manna] did not descend on Shabbat. On Yom Tov whence do we know [that it did not descend]? The verse teaches “Shabbat, it won’t be in it.”

The midrash reads the phrase " Shabbat, it won’t be in it " as a reference to Yom Tov, since it, too, is a day of rest. Otherwise, the phrase would be superfluous.

Based on this midrash, we would infer that *halachot* derived from the manna would apply on Yom Tov as on Shabbat.

Indeed, in a responsum, Rav Natronai Gaon affirms that *lechem mishneh* is obligatory on Yom Tov:

Teshuvot Rav Natronai Ga’on - Brody OC 159

And they asked before Rav Natronai: On Yom Tov do we need to break bread over two loaves or not? And he responded thus: You should know that we need to break bread over two loaves on Yom Tov as we need to break bread on Shabbat…

A simple reading of Rambam also suggests that we are obligated to have three Yom Tov meals:

Rambam, Laws of Shabbat 30:9

A person is obligated to eat three meals on Shabbat, one at night and one in the morning and one in the afternoon…And he must establish each meal of the three over wine and break bread over two loaves, and so on Yom Tov.

Having wine on the table for *se’uda shelishit* is typically considered a preferred practice, and not an obligation.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Halachic consensus is to have *lechem mishneh* on Yom Tov, but to require only two Yom Tov meals. Shulchan Aruch summarizes:

Shulchan Aruch OC 529:1

The mitzva of Yom Tov is to split it—half for the study hall, and half for eating and drinking…and one is obligated to break bread over two loaves and to establish every meal over wine…and they did not have the practice of making *seuda shelishit* on it.

It seems odd to distinguish between these two *halachot* on Yom Tov, given their common roots in commemorating the manna. A couple of explanations for this distinction appear in a Tosafistic commentary to the Torah:[[4]](#footnote-4)

Moshav Zekeinim, Shemot 16:26

Regarding the matter of three meals…"ha-yom" was written three times in the verse only about Shabbat…And Rabbeinu Tam suggested that we maintain halacha like Rabbi Yehoshua who said “half for you and half for God.” Now if he was burdening himself with the third [meal] it would all be “for you.”

The second explanation, in the name of Rabbeinu Tam invokes the ideal Yom Tov balance between serving God through learning or prayer and through rejoicing with feasting. Adding another meal, and its preparations, to the day might tip the scale too far in the direction of feasting.

What to Eat at Seuda Shelishit

We have seen that a third meal is not required at all on Yom Tov. Even on Shabbat, the requirements for *seuda shelishit* are somewhat more lenient than those for the first two meals.

*Benei Yisrael* gathered *lechem mishneh* on the morning of Erev Shabbat. Mishna Berura points out that by Shabbat afternoon, they would no longer have had anywhere near a double portion of manna remaining:

Mishna Berura 291:19

Less than one loaf - For on the sixth day the manna descended, two *amarim* for each person, and from each *omer* they made two loaves. Behold, four [loaves] from two *amarim*. He ate one on Erev Shabbat [Friday] and one on the night of Shabbat and one in the morning; behold, only one full [loaf] remained for him for *seuda shelishit*.

Tosafot explain that *seuda shelishit* is considered less fundamental to honoring Shabbat than the first two meals, so that one might be able to fulfil the obligation without eating bread at all:

Tosafot *Pesachim* 101a s.v. *Ta'imu*

…If a variety of delicacies can be effective to complete the three meals of Shabbat? … This is specifically at *seuda shelishit*, but not at the meal of the night or the day, for they are the essence of honoring Shabbat.

In practice, it is best to have *lechem mishneh* at *seuda shelishit*. Still, many follow more lenient opinions, allowing for using just one loaf of bread, or even eating only *mezonot* foods, or just a nice quantity of other delicacies:[[5]](#footnote-5)

Shulchan Aruch OC 291:4-5

One must make it [*seuda shelishit*] with bread. And there are those who say that one can make it with any food made of one of the five species of grain. And there are those who say that one can make it with things that accompany bread, such as meat and fish, but not with fruits. And there are those who say that one can make it even with fruits. And the first line of thinking is the fundamental [halacha], that one must make it with bread unless he is excessively sated.

# Simcha, Oneg, and Kavod

We've seen how the *halachot* of *lechem mishneh* and three meals reflect the link between the manna and Shabbat. Halacha also draws on other sources for the obligation of festive meals on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

According to Rabbi Yehoshua, eating on Yom Tov fulfills the obligation to rejoice on the festival, *simchat Yom Tov*. (See more [here](https://www.deracheha.org/simchat-yom-tov/).)

*Pesachim* 68b

Rabbi Yehoshua [rules] in accordance with his rationale, for he said: Rejoicing on Yom Tov is also a mitzva. For we learn in a Baraita: Rabbi Eliezer says: A person on Yom Tov should either eat and drink, or sit and study. Rabbi Yehoshua says: split it—half for eating and drinking, and half for the *beit midrash*. Rabbi Yochanan said: both of them expounded the same verse[s]. One verse says, “a day of assembly for the Lord your God” and one verse says, “a day of assembly for you.” Rabbi Eliezer thought: Either it is all for God or all for you. Rabbi Yehoshua thought: Split it—half for God and half for you…

This passage provides the basis for Rabbeinu Tam’s observation about why we don’t have *seudah shelishit* on Yom Tov, cited above. Another passage affirms the obligation to eat on both Shabbat and Yom Tov. It stipulates that we repeat [*birkat ha-mazo*](https://www.deracheha.org/birkat-ha-mazon/)*n* if we have omitted either *retzei* on Shabbat or *ya'aleh ve-yavo* on Yom Tov, because both are days on which we are required to eat bread:

*Berachot* 49b

… Shabbat and Yom Tov, as it isn't possible not to eat, so, too, if one erred [with omissions in *birkat ha-mazon*] he repeats it? He said to him: yes.

Similar to the workings of *simchat Yom Tov*, eating on Shabbat fulfills the obligation of taking pleasure in Shabbat, *oneg Shabbat*, learned from the words of Yeshayahu:

*Yeshayahu* 58:13

If you restrain your foot from Shabbat, from pursuing your needs on My holy day, and you call Shabbat an *oneg* [pleasure] and the holy [day] of God honored, and honor it [by refraining] from doing your ways, from seeking your needs and speaking of matters.

Rambam explains that preparing and having special meals are key elements, respectively, of *kevod* (honor of)and *oneg Shabbat*:

Rambam, Laws of Shabbat 30:5-7

…One must set up his home while it is still daytime because of the honor of Shabbat, and there should be a lit candle and a set table and a made bed, for all of these are in honor of Shabbat. Even if a person is very important and he does not normally purchase items from the marketplace or occupy himself with domestic labor, he is obligated to do things necessary for Shabbat himself, for this is its honor. Among the early sages were those…who would cook or salt the meat…and whoever does more of this is praised. What is *oneg*? This is what the sages said that one must prepare the fattest cooked dish and intoxicating drink for Shabbat, everything according to a person’s finances…

Let’s first explore how the *oneg* and *simcha* aspects of the obligation to eat affect those who might wish or need to limit eating, and then take another look at *kevod Shabbat* and meal preparation.

Refraining from eating

Given that eating on Shabbat fulfills the mitzva of *oneg*, it follows that fasting is prohibited:

Talmud Yerushalmi *Ta’anit* 3:11

Rabbi Acha [and] Rabbi Abbahu in the name of Rabbi Yosei son of Chanina: It is prohibited to fast through six halachic hours on Shabbat.

Normative halacha follows this position. However, someone for whom eating food is damaging should not eat, since eating in that case would not be pleasurable. This halacha also applies on Yom Tov.

Shulchan Aruch OC 288:1-2

It is prohibited to fast on Shabbat through the sixth hour…There are those who say that a person for whom eating is harmful, so that his pleasure [*oneg*] is not to eat, should not eat.

Rema OC 529:2

The law of fasting on Yom Tov is like on Shabbat, and see above Siman 288.

Mishna Berura emphasizes that a person should not eat if eating will harm him. Those who cannot eat so much as a *ke-zayit* (an olive's bulk) are exempt from eating and should not force themselves to eat.

Mishna Berura 288:3

“One should not eat” - and eating almost approaches a prohibition since he assesses that it will harm him…and this is if even a *ke-zayit* is difficult for him to eat.

Certainly, then, a person who cannot tolerate even a *ke-zayit* of bread need not eat bread on Shabbat. Someone cannot eat gluten would thus be advised to have gluten-free food for Shabbat meals.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Rav Yehuda Goldfischer, Guidelines for those with Celiac on Shabbat and Festivals, Schlesinger Institute

Since eating gluten harms and even is dangerous for someone with celiac, it is naturally “*oneg*” for him not to eat bread that has gluten in it, and he should fulfill “*oneg Shabbat*” through eating foods suited for him.

What about dieting to lose weight? Rambam mentioned fatty foods as part of fulfilling *oneg Shabbat*. Thus, Rav Ben Tziyyon Abba Shaul argues that someone dieting for weight control shouldn't restrict their eating at Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, because that would hinder their fulfilment of *oneg*. At the same time, someone who enjoys a healthier menu is under no obligation to eat rich and fatty foods.

Responsa *Or Le-Tziyyon*, Laws of Shabbat Meals, 3

One should not avoid eating foods on Shabbat for reasons of weight watching and the like, and this entails some nullification of *oneg Shabbat*. But, in any case, one for whom eating is harmful, is permitted to avoid increasing food on Shabbat. And thus, one who is always accustomed to eating only natural or vegetarian foods is permitted to act thus also on Shabbat, and is not obligated to eat specifically meat and fish.

Others, including Rav Yitzchak Yosef, permit cutting down on one’s eating a bit even on Shabbat or Yom Tov:

*Yalkut Yosef* Shabbat 4, Notes on the Laws of taking Medications on Shabbat 88

There is room for leniency to restrict eating [on Shabbat], as long as one does this in order to preserve his health, even if he nullifies *oneg Shabbat* a bit. For it is explained in Shulchan Aruch (288:2) “that a person for whom eating is harmful, so that his pleasure [*oneg*] is not to eat, should not eat.”

**Quantity of Bread**

How much bread must one really eat at a meal? Anyone who can should eat at least a *ke-beitza* of bread (about 50g, or a slice) at each meal, to establish it as a fixed meal. Some permit eating a *ke-zayit* (about half a slice) as the minimum, because this is still considered an act of eating.

Shulchan Aruch OC 291:1

One should be very careful to fulfill *seuda shelishit*, and even if one is sated he can fulfill it with a *ke-beitza* [egg-volume of food].

Mishna Berura 291:2

There are those who say that even with a *ke-zayit* one discharges the obligation of the meal and it is correct to be stringent from the outset if it is possible for him.

Preparation for Eating

Let’s return to the mitzva of *kevod Shabbat*, as it relates to preparing for eating. Rambam (above) mentioned men fulfilling the mitzva by taking an active role in Shabbat meal preparation. Women have long done so as well, especially baking *lechem mishneh*.

According to the Talmud, Ezra enacted that women should bake early in the morning. The Talmud Yerushalmi limits this enactment to erev Shabbat, to meet the needs of the poor on Shabbat:[[7]](#footnote-7)

*Bava Kama* 82a

Ezra enacted…that a woman arise early and bake…

Talmud Yerushalmi *Megilla* 4:1

Ezra enacted for Israel…that they would bake bread on Fridays, that there be a piece of bread available for the poor.

Note, however, that the Yerushalmi does not specify that **women** would do the baking for Shabbat.

Rema rules that it's praiseworthy to bake enough on Friday morning to be obligated to recite a *beracha* over separating *challa*. (We discuss some of the broader implications of separating *challa*, and women’s precedence in this mitzva, [here](https://www.deracheha.org/three-mitzvot/).)

Rema, Shulchan Aruch OC 242:1

Gloss: We have the custom to knead a sufficient quantity for [separating] *challa* at home, to make from it loaves to break on Shabbat and Yom Tov…and it is from *kevod Shabbat* and Yom Tov, and one should not change [from this practice].

Mishna Berura laments that women of his day (presumed to be the home bakers) purchase bread from bakers. Still, he calls this a breach of custom and loss of opportunity to honor Shabbat rather than a prohibited act:

Beiur Halacha 242:1, s.v. *and it is from kevod* [Shabbat and Yom Tov]

There is a hint to this in the Scripture, “and it will be on the sixth day, prepare that which you will bring,” “that which you will bake, bake” etc. It implies that one should bake on Erev Shabbat to prepare for Shabbat. Also in the time of the Gemara there was a fixed custom for this, as Magen Avraham cites, but in our great iniquities today some women have begun to refrain from this custom and purchase from the baker and they do not do well, for they reduce the honor of Shabbat with this.

One can argue, however, that once bakeries make delicious bread available for Shabbat, buying such bread fulfills the obligation to honor Shabbat:

*Yalkut Yosef* Shabbat I Additions Notes to 242:1

Perhaps one can say that the fundamental rationale is because of *kevod Shabbat*, for this is among the enactments of Ezra the Scribe, and the rationale of separating *challa* comes to strengthen the custom, and since the whole thing is a matter of custom, and as is inferred from Magen Avraham here, and since today in the stores there are *challot* in honor of Shabbat, naturally there is not such a need for this custom.

Carol Ungar describes how baking *challa* strengthened her connection to a grandmother she never met:[[8]](#footnote-8)

Carol Ungar, “Grandma’s Lost Challah, Found.” *Tablet Magazine*, 16.5.12

My mother had always insisted that her mother was an amazing baker, and her challah was second to none. So, when I first started baking challah, I wanted my grandmother’s recipe. But my grandmother wasn’t available for asking. She was dead, murdered by the Nazis. Back in the late 1980s, when I was a new bride, I phoned my mother long distance, from my home in Jerusalem to her home in New York. “I don’t have a recipe,” she told me. “Why potchke? Buy! The bakery makes such good challahs.” But I wanted to bake. I wanted to stretch my muscles, dirty my fingers, and knead my prayers into my dough as I imagined my grandmother had done.

# Women's Obligation

Setting aside the question of who takes part in preparing *lechem mishneh*, are women obligated to partake of it? [Elsewhere](https://www.deracheha.org/kiddush-1-obligation/), we have learned about women’s obligation in kiddush, and the attendant obligation to eat a meal (or at least *mezonot*) in the location where kiddush was recited.

Women are also considered obligated in *kevod* and *oneg* Shabbat. (See more below.) And we’ve learned [here](https://www.deracheha.org/simchat-yom-tov/) that halachic consensus maintains that women are obligated in *simchat Yom Tov*. Does that obligate women in eating festive meals on Shabbat and Yom Tov? Do those meals specifically need to include bread?

Rabbi Akiva Eiger acknowledges both that a woman’s obligation in *oneg Shabbat* would obligate her to eat bread on Shabbat, and that a woman is obligated in *simchat Yom Tov*, and thus should consume meat and wine on Yom Tov. However, in his view, *simchat Yom Tov* does not include eating bread. He thus argues that eating bread on Yom Tov is a positive time-bound commandment from which women are exempt.

Responsa Rabbi Akiva Eiger Mahadura Kama 1

This mitzva should not have an advantage over any positive time-bound mitzva from which women are exempt. And a woman's obligation in the mitzva of Yom Tov is only for the negative [mitzva] of not performing any labor, but not the positive *mitzvot* of Yom Tov…and naturally she is obligated also in the mitzva of *oneg Shabbat* and is prohibited to fast...That she is obligated in *simcha*, in any case, that means that she is forbidden in eulogizing and fasting, and should have *simcha* with drinking wine and with meat. But in any case, it seems that she is not obligated in eating bread, since it seems that eating bread is not based on the obligation of *simcha*, for on Shabbat there is no obligation of *simcha*, but it seems that establishing a meal over bread is due to *kevod Shabbat*.

Centuries earlier, however, Rosh writes that eating bread **is** an element of *simchat Yom Tov*.

Rosh *Berachot* 7:23

Therefore, it seems to Rabbeinu Yehuda that a person is obligated to eat bread on Yom Tov because of *simcha*.

According to that opinion, a woman might well be obligated to eat bread on Yom Tov as part of her fulfillment of *simchat Yom Tov*. Indeed, as we will see, other authorities maintain that women are obligated to eat bread on Yom Tov.

What of women eating three meals with *lechem mishneh*?

In a discussion of a husband's obligation to provide food for his wife's meals while away from her, the Talmud's calculation includes at least three Shabbat meals:

*Ketubot* 64b

Mishna: One who provides food for his wife via a third party should give her no less than two *kabin* of wheat or four *kabin* of barley. Gemara:…If so, these are sixteen [meals per week]. Like whom [is this view]? Like Rabbi Chidka, for he said: A person must eat four meals on Shabbat. You can even say it is our sages’ [view], deduct one [meal] for guests and travelers.

The standard two meals per weekday brings us to twelve, leaving four meals for Shabbat, or three if we allow a meal's worth of food for guests. This passage thus seems to assume that a woman has an obligation in all Shabbat meals.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Two main conceptual arguments have been advanced to support the ruling that women are obligated in all Shabbat meals, including *seuda shelishit*. These arguments have been extended to recognize women's obligation in *lechem mishneh* as well.

**I. Inclusion** Shibbolei Ha-leket cites the Talmudic passage as proof that women are obligated to eat three Shabbat meals. He suggests that women's obligation may commemorate the manna, which was eaten by men and women alike…

Shibbolei Ha-leket, Matter of Shabbat 93

In the fifth chapter of *Ketubot*, where they speak in the Talmud of “one who provides food for his wife,” it proves that women are obligated in three meals [on Shabbat]. And it is surprising, for it is a positive time-bound mitzva, and “all positive time-bound mitzvot—women are exempt.” And it seems to me that it says “Eat it today” etc., about everyone, and both men and women were included in this eating [of manna].

Rabbeinu Tam also bases his argument on women's inclusion in the account of the manna. However, his reasoning appeals to the halachic principle of [*af hen*](https://www.deracheha.org/af-hen/), inclusion in a miracle. Even when a woman would otherwise be exempt from a mitzva, as when it is positive and time bound, *af hen* can sometimes obligate her.

As it was to Shibbolei ha-leket, it is clear to Rabbeinu Tam that women were included in the miracle of the manna. He is the first, however, to apply *af hen* to eating three meals and to *lechem mishneh*.

*Sefer Ha-yashar* of Rabbeinu Tam, Responsa 70:4

It is a simple matter in all of the Talmud that the three meals are presumed to be with bread, but if one comes to fill them out with various delicacies, he has discharged his obligation. And women, [regarding] if they are obligated, it seems that they, too, [*af hen*] were included in that miracle, for a double portion of manna was for everyone. And similarly they [women] are obligated to break bread over two loaves.

Centuries later, in an effort to defend the practice of women who are not careful about *lechem mishneh* (prevalent in circles in which women eat Shabbat meals separately from men), Rav Shlomo Kluger challenges Rabbeinu Tam's logic:

*Ha-elef lecha Shlomo*, OC 114

Why did women not practice *lechem mishneh*? …. Since they [the men of Israel] did not wait and complained about God, therefore He made them a miracle…but the women did not grumble…therefore they [the women] have no cause to give thanks for this and therefore they don’t practice it.

Although Rav Kluger is not alone in questioning Rabbeinu Tam's argument, the contention that women have no part in *lechem mishneh* seems forced, is offered only to justify an existing custom, and has not been widely embraced. This is especially the case because a number of significant early halachic authorities quote the position of Rabbeinu Tam.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**II. General Obligations** Women are obligated in general in all *mitzvot* of Shabbat and Yom Tov, even when these *mitzvot* are considered positive and time bound. This is because all *mitzvot* of Shabbat, positive and negative, are inextricably linked, and women are generally obligated in negative *mitzvot*.[[11]](#footnote-11) (See more [here](https://www.deracheha.org/kiddush-1-obligation/).) This is why women are considered obligated in *kevod* and *oneg Shabbat*.

Based on this argument, Ramban suggests that Rabbeinu Tam's invocation of *af hen* is superfluous:

Ramban *Shabbat* 117b

Rabbeinu Tam says that women are obligated in three meals, for they, too, [*af hen*] were included in the miracle of the manna and they are obligated to break bread over two loaves for this reason. But there is no need, for with all acts of Shabbat man and woman are equivalent.

Ramban does not question women's inclusion in the miracle. He simply views it as irrelevant to this halachic discussion. Although Ramban challenges Rabbeinu Tam's line of argument, he agrees with the conclusion that women should be careful both to eat three Shabbat meals and to have *lechem mishneh* at each meal.

In Practice

Halachic consensus maintains that women are obligated in all three meals on Shabbat and in *lechem mishneh* on Shabbat and on Yom Tov:

Shulchan Aruch OC 291:6

Women are obligated in *seuda shelishit*.

Bei’ur Halacha 291:6

Women are obligated etc.- and also are obligated in the mitzva of *lechem mishneh*.

Mishna Berura 274:1

…On Yom Tov as well, one must break bread over two loaves. And women are also obligated in *lechem mishneh*, for they also were included in the miracle of the manna.

# Ha-motzi

Normative practice at Shabbat and Yom Tov meals is for one person to recite *ha-motzi* over *lechem mishneh* for all present. After everyone has said amen, the one who recited the *beracha* cuts or breaks up the bread, eats from it, and distributes it to those eating. The term "*botzei'a*" can mean breaking or cutting the bread, or can refer more generally to this entire process, or to the person performing it.

*Berachot* 47a

Rav Yehuda son of Rav Shemuel son of Shilat said in the name of Rav: Those who eat are not permitted to eat anything until the *botzei'a* [one breaking it up] tastes it…Rabba bar bar Chana…taught to his son: The *botzei'a* is not permitted to break up [the bread] until those responding finish saying amen.

At Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, it is customary for the head of the household to be the *botzei'a* and recite *ha-motzi* for everyone participating in the meal.

*Berachot* 46a

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: The head of the household breaks the bread and a guest recites *birkat ha-mazon*. The head of the household breaks the bread in order that he break it up generously. And a guest recites *birkat ha-mazon* in order that he bless the head of the household [within it].

The complementary roles of the head of household and others at the table make sense. A guest can add a prayer on the host’s behalf to *birkat ha-mazon*, while the head of the household can distribute the bread unstintingly.

We discuss the halachic mechanism through which one person can recite a *beracha* for others [elsewhere](https://www.deracheha.org/discharging-anothers-obligations/). On Shabbat and Yom Tov, the person reciting *ha-motzi* may play an additional role: helping to discharge the obligation of others present in *lechem mishneh*.

Halachic authorities debate how exactly the obligation of *lechem mishneh* is satisfied. It may be discharged through establishing a meal over two loaves, through reciting a *beracha* over two loaves, or through breaking up and eating from both loaves.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Shulchan Aruch describes two main ways for those at a meal to discharge *lechem mishneh*. *Lechem mishneh* can be fulfilled either through the *ba’al ha-bayit* reciting *ha-motzi* and breaking at least one of the two loaves for all, or with each person having two loaves before them.

Shulchan Aruch OC 274:1, 3

One breaks bread over two [full] loaves, that he holds both of them in his hand and breaks up the bottom one. Rema: and specifically on Shabbat night, but on Shabbat day or on the nights of Yom Tov he breaks up the top one (Kol Bo and Hagahot Maimoniyot). And the reason is kabbalistic…[Shulchan Aruch] Those eating are not permitted to taste until the one *botzei'a* has tasted. But if there is *lechem mishneh* before each of them, they can taste it even though he [the *botzei'a*] hasn’t tasted it…

When there is one, centralized *ha-motzi*, there are a number of different practices regarding how to hold, break up, and distribute the *challot* at each meal. Regardless, as we have seen, women are fully obligated in *lechem mishneh*. Therefore, this additional halachic aspect to being *botzei’a* on Shabbat or Yom Tov should not affect a woman’s ability to recite *ha-motzi* at the table.

Indeed, a woman is sometimes the sole head of her household, *ba’alat ha-bayit.* Historically, even in communities where men would go to a widow's or divorcée’s home to make kiddush for her before dining at home, the woman would typically recite *ha-motzi* herself.

Mordechai *Pesachim* 10:611

Now they have the custom to make kiddush for widows…but to make *birkat ha-motzi* for them [widows], it is clear that it is prohibited, for that is a *beracha* over bread, for he said one should not break up [and recite the *beracha* over] the bread for guests unless he eats bread with them.

It stands to reason that a *ba’alat ha-bayit* would have preference over male guests in reciting *ha-motzi*. In practice, it is permissible for any adult partaking of the meal to act as the *botzei'a*. A woman who feels uncomfortable with the role can choose to delegate the responsibility to a guest, or a son over bar mitzva. Rav Baruch Gigi, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, lays this out clearly:

Rav Baruch Gigi, Response to Deracheha

All Israel have the custom that the head of the household recites the *beracha* and breaks the bread at Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, and distributes it to all at the meal. However, this is not obligatory, and others can also recite the *beracha* and break the bread, with the permission of the head of the household. If a woman is the head of a household, she is permitted to recite the *beracha* and break the bread herself, even when she hosts other families. There are women who do not feel comfortable reciting the *beracha* and breaking the bread (and there are also men like this, when an honored figure is among the guests), and they can authorize others to recite the *beracha* and break the bread. Halachically, it is clear that a married woman is permitted to recite the *beracha* and break the bread herself even when her husband is with her. In practice, this depends on mutual agreement, and *shalom* is the fundamental value.

Still, when a husband and wife or father and daughter eat together, it is customary for the man to recite *ha-motzi*, especially when guests are present. This custom also addresses reservations expressed by some halachic authorities about a woman reciting a *beracha*on a man’s behalf in practice. (L[earn more here](https://www.deracheha.org/discharging-obligations-in-practice/)). In recent years, though, it has become increasingly popular in some circles for the *ba’alat ha-bayit* to recite *ha-motzi* on behalf of all present, including her husband and male guests.

When should a woman recite ha-motzi at the Shabbat table? Does this change when a woman is married?

A woman eating alone should certainly recite ha-motzi. Similarly, when a group of women eat a Shabbat or Yom Tov meal together, one of them recites ha-motzi for the group.

What if a woman is the head of her household (either she is not married, or her husband is not home), and adult men are present at the meal? Halachically, we've seen that she may either make ha-motzi or to ask someone else to. In practice, it depends very much on what the woman and her family and community are comfortable with, both halachically and emotionally. Some women feel entirely comfortable taking on the traditional head-of-household ritual roles traditionally associated with men. Others feel awkward adopting a role that feels masculine, or simply wouldn’t want to deviate from tradition. Especially in the emotionally fraught period following divorce or the loss of a spouse, a woman should be attentive to her own emotional needs. Her choices about how to conduct Shabbat meals on her own should develop in the way that feels right to her.

As for married women, many act intuitively, either embracing traditional roles and enjoying a beloved husband’s kiddush and ha-motzi, or gravitating toward a more egalitarian household paradigm within the framework of Halacha. Others relate to both sides of this issue, and thus see it as less clear cut.

Over two hundred years ago, Perel, the wife of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev prayed that her husband’s ha-motzi be deeply connected to her challa-baking.

Prayer of Perel (wife of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev). From Aliza Lavie, *Tefillat Nashim*, (Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot, 2005) 158.

Master of the world, I ask before you, please help me, that when my Levi Yitzchak recites the *beracha* on Shabbat over these *challot*, he intend in his heart the same intentions that I have in mind at this time when I knead and bake.

This prayer expresses Perel's experience of baking challa as the beginning of a profound spiritual endeavor, which culminates in her husband's recitation of ha-motzi. Outwardly, Rav Levi Yitzchak assumes the role of botzei'a at the Shabbat table. But she sees the potential for a more inner reality, in which they are partners, connecting the acts of preparation and beracha with their shared intentions.

Preparing Shabbat meals can be pleasurable and rewarding. It also demands time and energy. Classic sources exhort men to be directly involved in preparations, to fulfill kevod Shabbat and facilitate oneg Shabbat, and some families split responsibilities evenly. Still, in many families, the work of fulfilling kevod Shabbat with respect to meals–the preparing, serving, and cleaning up–falls disproportionately on women.

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for a woman to recite ha-motzi, especially when a man recites kiddush. One reason for this development might relate to the subtext of Perel’s prayer, a desire for a woman's ritual role at the meal that connect more closely to her efforts in honor of Shabbat.

Granted, there are a number of Shabbat-related ritual opportunities in the home for women: separating challa, lighting candles, giving a devar Torah, or in some cases making zimmun. Many also experience the singing of eshet chayyil as a powerful acknowledgement of women's efforts, and in some homes, a woman recites kiddush. (Learn more about women and kiddush [here](https://www.deracheha.org/kiddush-1-obligation/).)

Still, a woman may find that reciting ha-motzi and distributing the bread herself has special resonance for her, as a ritual expression of her connection to the meal as a whole. In a blog piece, Elise Loterman finds meaning in both practical and ritual aspects of hosting Shabbat meals as a single woman:[[13]](#footnote-13)

Elise Loterman, “Sharing My Shabbat Table.” *JOFA’s Torch*, 8.7.16

Being able to set the menu, shop, cook, and create an invite list that works to bring like minded people together has been an empowering and motivating experience.....Hosting Shabbat meals has transformed my Shabbat experience from the passive role of being a guest and recipient to an active role of being a host, being a leader. It has allowed me to feel like an equal part of the meal and not feel like I am “still a child” because I do not have my own family. It has allowed me to connect more meaningfully with Shabbat and the rituals, especially when it is a meal with all women and I have the opportunity to recite Kiddush (prayer over wine) and Hamotzi (prayer over challah) for those around me.

# Melaveh Malka

A Talmudic passage establishes a parallel between setting the table on Erev Shabbat, before the first meal, and setting the table when Shabbat ends. The passage goes on to discuss a fourth meal, which is eaten after Shabbat.

*Shabbat* 119b

Rabbi Elazar said: A person should always set his table on Erev Shabbat, even though he only needs a *ke-zayit*. And Rabbi Chanina said: A person should always set his table on Motza’ei Shabbat, even though he only needs a *ke-zayit*. Hot water on Motza’ei Shabbat is healing. Hot bread on Motza’ei Shabbat is healing. Rabbi Abbahu would prepare for himself a third calf [a delicacy] on Motza’ei Shabbat. He would eat a kidney from it. When his son, Avimi, grew up, he said to him: Why should you squander so much? Let’s leave over a kidney from before Shabbat. He left one and a lion came and ate it…

Both eating bread and eating generously at the meal following Shabbat receive praise. Yet neither is called an obligation or appears in Rambam or Shulchan Aruch,[[14]](#footnote-14) while setting the table does:

Rambam, Laws of Shabbat 30:5

A person should set his table on Erev Shabbat, even though he only needs a *ke-zayit*, and similarly he should set his table on Motza’ei Shabbat, even though he only needs a *ke-zayit*, in order to honor it [Shabbat] as it enters and as it departs.

Rambam speaks of honoring Shabbat and of parallel obligations when Shabbat begins and ends, much as he speaks elsewhere of the parallels between [kiddush](https://www.deracheha.org/kiddush-1-obligation/) and [havdala](https://www.deracheha.org/havdala/).[[15]](#footnote-15) This ruling on the fourth meal, in conjunction with a parable offered by Shibbolei Ha-leket, can help us make sense of the emphasis on setting the table.

Sefer Shibbolei Ha-leket, Matter of Shabbat, 130

A parable: That we escort the king when he departs as we escort him when he enters. And it is explained in the *siddurim*, there is one limb that a person has, and its name is *naskoy,* and it benefits from eating only on Motza’ei Shabbat.

Shibbolei Ha-leket’s second explanation for this meal is based on a midrash. The midrash states that a specific limb, containing the *luz* bone, forms the physical kernel for *techiyyat ha-metim*,[[16]](#footnote-16) and draws nourishment only on Motza’ei Shabbat, which lends importance to eating at this time.

The popular name for this Motza’ei Shabbat meal, *melaveh malka* (lit. escorting the queen), derives from this tradition recorded in Shibbolei Ha-leket’s first explanation. If the essence of this meal is to honor Shabbat with an escort upon its departure, as befits royalty, then the meal should mirror the ways in which we honor Shabbat at its entrance, which include setting a fine table. The Alter Rebbe explains that similar mirroring accounts for the practices of lighting candles and singing following the conclusion of Shabbat:

Shulchan Aruch Ha-Rav OC 300:1-2

…In any case one should perform preparation in setting the table, such as spreading a cloth and the like as for a full meal, in order to escort the Shabbat when it departs in an honorable way as when it enters as is explained in 262. And therefore, there are those who have the practice to have many candles on Motza’ei Shabbat more than on other weekday nights, and also have the practice to recite liturgical poems and songs after havdala to escort Shabbat after it has departed, as one escorts the king after he has departed from the city.

The Talmud and halachic codes mention eating a minimum of a *ke-zayit*. Halachic authorities debate what one must eat. According to some, including Gera, the meal must include bread:

Bei’ur Ha-Gera OC 300:1

For a *ke-zayit*. As it says in the Gemara. And specifically with bread as on Erev Shabbat as the statements of Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Chanina were said together there on 119b, see there.

Others, however, maintain that it is permissible to eat only fruit, if necessary:

Magen Avraham 300

The Gemara implies that it is proper to cook meat on Motza’ei Shabbat or something else. And see 291. And in our time, when we make *seuda shelishit* so late that we cannot eat on Motza’ei Shabbat, we can fulfill it [*melaveh malka*] with fruits.

This lenient view may reflect a general orientation toward the *melaveh malka* as less obligatory, on the level of *seuda shelishit*:

Mishna Berura 300:2

Know that in any case this meal [*melaveh malka*] is not obligatory upon one like the three meals of Shabbat, for there we connect it to Scripture and this [*melaveh malka*] is a mere mitzva [not a full obligation] …

Indeed, making a distinct *melaveh malka* meal may arguably be unnecessary if *seuda shelishit* stretches past sunset:

Eliya Rabba 300:1

I learned that if *seuda shelishit* is drawn out until after dark, there is no need to eat another fourth meal on Motza’ei Shabbat.

Women and Melaveh Malka

We've seen that women are obligated in *kevod* and *oneg* Shabbat, and specifically in eating the three Shabbat meals. Does this obligation extend to *melaveh malka*?

It’s difficult to know how far to take the Talmudic parallel between the first obligatory meal of Shabbat and the *melaveh malka*. Many authorities suggest that the comparison is meant loosely. This might imply that *melavah malka* is really an obligation of Motza’ei Shabbat, which brings to mind the halachic discussion of women and havdala.

Those who view havdala as fundamentally a mitzva of Motza’ei Shabbat (and not of Shabbat itself) consider it a time-bound positive mitzva from which women are exempt.

Orchot Hayyim I Laws of Havdala

Rash [Rav Shimon of Sens] wrote: “Women do not make havdala for themselves because havdala is not dependent on keeping Shabbat…

One could apply a similar logic to the *melaveh malka*. Peri Meggadim raises this possibility:

Peri Meggadim OC Eshel Avraham 300:1

…It is possible that women are not obligated in this meal, and see siman 296:8, and here [*melaveh malka*] does not belong to Shabbat. And nevertheless, according to what Taz [cited], “There is one limb” etc., it is fitting also for women.

As Peri Meggadim notes, however, the discussion of the special bone nourished only through *melaveh malka* would apply to women as to men.

More fundamentally, if we understand the *melaveh malka* to be more fully parallel to Shabbat meals, then it would stand to reason that women should take care to have it, much as women are obligated in meals on Shabbat. Machatzit Ha-shekel suggests that this is what Magen Avraham’s intended to convey through his mention of Shulchan Aruch OC 291 in his comments on *melaveh malka*:[[17]](#footnote-17)

Machatzit Ha-shekel OC 300

‘See the end of 291.” For Magen Avraham wrote there that for all matters of Shabbat, women are obligated like men, and if so, this is the law for this meal [*melaveh malka*]…

Gera is reported to have been personally particular both to eat bread for *melaveh malka* and for his wife to partake of it:[[18]](#footnote-18)

Tosefet Ma’aseh Rav, Laws of Shabbat 149, note 39

[Gera] was accustomed to eat radish at *melaveh malka*. He also would seek after hot bread…His wife accepted upon herself to fast a continuous fast and stopped eating with *seuda shelishit* and right after havdala lay down to rest. And he found out about it, and he sent her that all of the continuous fasts still could not make amends for losing a single *melaveh malka*. Then she immediately arose and ate.

In practice, women should join in *melaveh malka*, at least by eating fruits at some point in the hours after *havdala*.

Responsa *Yechaveh Da’at* 4:25

Women are also obligated in three meals on Shabbat, and so they are obligated in the fourth meal on Motza’ei Shabbat. And it is a mitzva from the outset to make a fourth meal over bread, and if it is impossible with bread, they should do it with *mezonot*. And if it is impossible with *mezonot*, they should do it with fruits.

In medieval Ashkenaz, women had the custom of drawing water right after Shabbat, based on a tradition that healing waters of Miriam’s well make their return to groundwater on Motza’ei Shabbat:[[19]](#footnote-19)

Orchot Chayyim I Laws of Havdala 32

The reason why women had the custom to draw water on Motza’ei Shabbat immediately upon hearing *barechu* is because we found in the Midrash Aggada that Miryam’s well is hidden in the Sea of Teverya, and every Motza’ei Shabbat [its waters] make the rounds of all the springs and wells, and whoever is sick and comes across this water and drinks, even if his whole body is afflicted with boils, he is immediately healed. A story of one man who was afflicted with boils and his wife went on Motza’ei Shabbat to draw water and was delayed too much, and the well of Miryam came to her and she filled her pitcher from those waters. When she came to her husband he was angry with her, and in his great anger he knocked her pitcher from her shoulder, and the pitcher broke and some drops of the water fell on his flesh and in every place where water splashed the boils were healed. Regarding this, the sages said that one who tends to anger accomplishes nothing other than his anger. And therefore they [women] had the custom to draw water on every Motza’ei Shabbat.

Rema says that the custom is no longer practiced.

Rema Shulchan Aruch OC 299:10

There are those who say to draw water every Motza’ei Shabbat. for the well of Miryam makes the rounds every Motza’ei Shabbat to all the wells and whoever encounters it and drinks from it will be healed from all his illnesses (Kolbo). But I have not seen this custom.

Kaf Ha-chayyim, however, maintains that it is customary to drink water that was drawn from wells or springs on Motza’ei Shabbat:

Kaf Ha-chayyim 32:53

After havdala when one has finished all the verses, one should drink water drawn [just] before or after havdala…and from here is a living reproof not to be angry in any place or at any time even with a matter that merits anger, for anger rests in the lap of fools, and especially on Motza'ei Shabbat…and it seems that aside from the positive property of healing the soul for one who drinks water from Miryam’s well, another extra one is found, that they have the property of opening one's heart to the wisdom of Torah…and if so at the time of drinking the water after havdala, when one is still drinking the water, one should intend in his mind to the verses of *parashat* *Chukat*, “then Israel sang” until “over the Yeshimon” and he is prepared to become wise in Torah with help from God.

Someone choosing to drink water at the *melaveh malka* can thus have in mind Miryam’s legacy, healing, controlling anger, love of learning Torah, and the rich history of women’s customs.

# Further Reading

* Rav David Auerbach, *Halichot Beitah*, ch. 56, 57, 63.
* Rav Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth, *Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilchetah*, ch. 15.
* Rav Binyamin Tabory, “Lechem Mishneh (Two Loaves of Bread).” VBM Shiur. Available [here](https://etzion.org.il/en/halakha/studies-halakha/philosophy-halakha/beshalach-lechem-mishneh-two-loaves-bread).
1. Rema records a similar rationale for a custom to have a filled pastry dish on Shabbat.

Rema, Shulchan Aruch OC 242:1

Gloss:…There are those who wrote that in a few places they had the custom to eat *mulita*, which they call *pashtida*, on Friday night in commemoration of the manna that was covered above and below (Maharil, and I have not seen concern for this.)

Ben Ish Chai describes covering the *challot* as an opportunity to sanctify the Shabbat table:

Ben Ish Chai, Second Year, Vayera 17

When a woman sets the [*challa*] bread on the table, she should take care to place a cloth beneath it and a cloth [cover] above it. And there are a few rationales for this according to the plain text. And after she places the top cloth, she should place both her hands on the table and say the verse "And He said to me: This is the table that is before God" [Yechezkel 41:22], and through this utterance, sanctity will dwell upon the table. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tosafot make both of these points, referring to a second view in Mechilta that also singles out Yom Kippur as a day on which there was no manna in the field:

Tosafot *Beitza* 2b s.v. *Ve-haya*

It is surprising, since here it implies that the manna would not descend on Yom Tov…But it said “He blessed and He sanctified, He blessed it with manna and He sanctified it with manna,” that on Shabbat the manna wouldn’t descend but on Yom Tov it would descend. And one can say that the midrashim conflict, as we have brought in a midrash (Mechilta Beshalach) “Shabbat it won’t be, to include Yom Kippur” “it won’t be in it” to include Yom Tov,” for the manna would not descend on them… [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mishna Berura 291:21

It is good to glorify [the meal] by blessing over wine during the meal. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Available here: https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=20791&st=&pgnum=160 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. There can be other halachic consequences for not eating bread at *seuda shelishit*:

Aruch Ha-shulchan OC 299:3-5

...If he was sitting at his meal [*seuda shelishit*] when it was still daytime and his meal continued even a few hours into the night, he does not need to stop his eating nor his drinking [for *havdala*]...and this is when they sat down for a meal, but...if they eat fruits and delicacies, and it seems to me even if they eat *mezonot*, this is not a fixed meal, for if it were a fixed meal they should have washed hands and recited *ha-motzi*. And since they did not do thus, their eating is snacking and they need to stop [for *havdala*]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Available here:

https://www.celiac.org.il/%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%99%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%A2%D7%9D-%D7%A6%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%90%D7%A7/%D7%A6%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%90%D7%A7-%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%94%D7%9C%D7%9B%D7%94/%D7%94%D7%A0%D7%97%D7%99%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%A6%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%90%D7%A7-%D7%91%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%AA-%D7%95%D7%97%D7%92 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. He also enacted eating garlic on Shabbat night:

Talmud Yerushalmi *Megilla* 4:1

Ezra enacted for Israel…That they should eat garlic on Friday nights for it brings in love and expels desire. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Available here: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/food/articles/grandmas-lost-challah-found> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Alternatively, the husband is obligated to provide women with the opportunity to have *seuda shelishit*, but women are not obligated to eat them:

Kappot Temarim *Sukka* 38b

It is possible…that in truth women are not obligated in three meals, but if she wants, the husband is obligated to give her three meals. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mordechai *Shabbat, Kol Kitvei* 393

Rabbeinu Tam wrote to Rav Moshe of Fontaise that women are obligated in three meals even though it is a positive time bound mitzva, for they, too, were in that miracle of *lechem mishneh* and they [women] are obligated to break bread over two loaves.

Responsa Maharam Rotenberg 4:642

It was already asked of Rabbeinu Tam if women are obligated in three meals on Shabbat and he responded that certainly they are obligated for they, too, were included in the descent of the manna, and the three meals were enacted based on that. See Siman 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In an obscure passage, Orchot Chayyim may intend to make this point, or he may refer to the minority position that women are obligated in rabbinic-level positive time-bound commandments.

Orchot Chayyim, Law of Three Meals, 2

Women are also obligated in three meals because this is a positive rabbinic commandment and all positive rabbinic commandments, even though they are time-bound are equivalent whether for men or women and they [women] are obligated to break bread over two loaves. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This debate goes back to differing interpretations of the continuation of the Talmudic passage that comes after the discussion of *seuda shelishit*.

*Shabbat* 117b

Rav Ashi said: I saw Rav Kahana that he took two [loaves] and broke up one. He said “gather” is written. Rabbi Zeira would break bread up for his entire meal.

According to Rashi, Rav Ashi learns from the verse that only gathering (or holding) requires two loaves, not eating, and Rabbi Zeira broke up only one loaf.

Rashi *Shabbat* 117b

"Gather" is written - Which implies holding, but [regarding] breaking bread, "double" is not written. Break up for his entire meal - One big piece, and this was enough for him for that meal and to honor Shabbat, and he appears as one who treasures the Shabbat meal, to hold and eat a lot.

This might imply that the key subject of Talmudic discussion, and thus of satisfying the obligation of *lechem mishneh*, is reciting the *beracha* over two loaves. In that case, it would be essential for those joining a meal to hear *ha-motzi* recited over two loaves.

Rashba, however, cites an interpretation according to which Rabbi Zeira broke up all the bread.

Rashba *Shabbat* 117b

Rabbi Zeira would break bread up for his entire meal...It seems to me that it is saying that he broke up all the loaves...

Responsa Rashba 7:530

…For "he would break up for the entire meal," Rav Shimon explained: because he expounded *lechem mishneh* that it is even breaking up twice as many [loaves] as on other days of the week.

Perhaps this suggests that breaking bread is the key Talmudic subject, and an essential element of fulfilling *lechem mishneh*. In that case, it would be essential for those joining a meal to partake in bread over which the *beracha* was recited.

Or perhaps the key point is simply that the meal was established with *lechem mishneh* present at its beginning.

Shemirat Shabbat Ke-hilchetah 2:52 note 75

I heard from Rav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach that it makes sense that the fundamental halacha is that the beginning of the meal be with breaking bread over two loaves in commemoration of the manna (and not the *beracha*). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Available here: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/2016/07/08/sharing-my-shabbat-table/> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Shulchan Aruch OC 300:1

A person should always set his table on Motza’ei Shabbat in order to escort Shabbat, even if he only needs a *ke-zayit*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rambam, Laws of Shabbat 29:1

It is a positive mitzva from the Torah to sanctify Shabbat with words, as it is said “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it.” That is to say, remember it [with] a mention of praise and sanctification, and one must remember it as it enters and as it departs, as it enters with *kiddush ha-yom* and as it departs with havdala. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Bereishit Rabba 28:3

Hadrian rubbed out bones. He asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya and said to him: From where does God begin the human for the future to come? He said to him: From the *luz* [bone] of the spine. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Shulchan Aruch OC 291:6

Women are obligated in *seuda shelishit*.

Magen Avraham 291:11

Women are obligated. For in every matter of Shabbat, men and women are equivalent. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Available here: <https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=35342&st=&pgnum=22&hilite=> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The story initially appears in midrash without attribution to Motza’ei Shabbat. Rashi connects it to Motza’ei Shabbat without citing this custom:

Va-yikra Rabba *Acharei Mot* 22

Rav Tanchuma said: God accomplishes His missions even through water. A story of a man afflicted with boils who went down to immerse in the sea in Teverya and the time came and Miryam's well came and healed him. And where is Miryam's well? Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba says: It is written “It looks out over the Yeshimon” (*Bemidbar* 21:20), for anyone who comes up to the top of Mt. Yeshimon and sees a sort of small net in the water of Teverya, this is the well of Miryam.

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A story of a man who was afflicted with boils and his wife went on Motza’ei Shabbat to draw water… [↑](#footnote-ref-19)