

Washing the Hands & Hamotzei:

Washing Before Eating Bread:

1. The cup for washing the hands should contain a minimum of 4.42 liquid ounces. The larger the cup - the better. It is preferable that it has two handles.
2. Rings should be removed from your hands before the washing [unless a person **never** takes off their ring.]
3. Take the cup with your right hand, fill it up with water, and then transfer it to your left hand.
4. Pour at least 4.42 ounces of water twice on our right hand. [The more water poured – the better.] The water must cover your whole hand ***until the wrist***, and no part of the hand should be untouched with water. To accomplish this, your fingers should be parted slightly and raised somewhat upward, so that the water reaches the entire length of the fingers, the fingertips, and the circumference of the fingers. This must be done 2 times in a row. Switch the cup to the right hand and do the same procedure to wash the left hand. Raise both hands up toward your face, rub your hands, and then make the blessing “Al Netilas Yodayim.” Then dry your hands ***thoroughly*** with a towel. The laws are the same for left handed person.
5. **One is forbidden to speak and to divert one’s mind from keeping his hands clean, from the drying of the hands until after one has eaten from the Challah.** After your hands have been washed, you should be careful not to touch any other hands that have not been washed. If one did speak, ***thereby diverting his attention*** from keeping his hands clean, he would have to repeat the entire washing procedure and blessing.
6. On Shabbos only, after saying the blessing on washing and before saying the Hamotzei, one is permitted to say Psalm 23 “Hashem is my shepherd I shall not want.” One may also hum a tune at this time.
7. One may talk if it is concerning the upcoming Hamotzei blessing. For example, you may say “Where is the knife,” or “Pass the salt.”

Lechem Mishneh – The Double Loaves:

1. At the start of the Shabbos meal, we make the blessing of Hamotzei over two Challahs, commemorating the double portion of manna that fell each Friday as sustenance for the Jews in the desert.
2. The custom of the Arizal is to arrange twelve Challahs at the Shabbos table, alluding to the twelve Show Loaves that were arranged on the Table in the Sanctuary.
3. Some form braided Challahs out of six rolls of dough, so the two challah loaves contain twelve rolls. Others bale the Challahs in an elongated form, resembling the letter vac, whose numerical value is six. The two challah loaves then correspond to the number twelve.
4. It is customary to bake white Challahs in honor of Shabbos, although any other type of Challah is permitted.
5. It is a Mitzvah to place the salt dish on the table before the Challah is cut. The Mitzvah of preparing the salt is the wife’s responsibility. The salt dish should be filled to the brim.
6. Before saying Hamotzei, it is customary to make a mark with the knife where we want to cut the Challah.
7. Before saying the Hamotzei we should place all ten fingers on the Challahs, alluding to the ten Mitzvos related to bread.
8. There are different customs concerning keeping the Challahs covered while making the blessing.

9. When saying the word “Hamotzei,” we must clearly enunciate the letter “Hei.” There should be a short pause between the words “Lechem” and “Min.”
10. While saying “Hamotzei” we should hold both loaves in our hands, placing them on top of each other. [According to the Arizal, when saying the Hamotzei one should stand both Challahs upright, their bottoms touching each other.]
11. We cut the lower Challah. [At the daytime meal, we cut the upper Challah.] The bottom Challah should be held closer to you than the top one.
12. The slices should be large, to show how much you cherish the Mitzvah of the Shabbos meals.
13. According to the Arizal, you should begin by cutting for yourself a small slice of Challah, the size of an olive. [1 – 1 ¾ ounces] Then cut a larger slice [twice the size of the first one] for your wife. Only then should you eat your slice. The other people around the table should receive a slice the size of an olive. If there is not enough, a smaller piece is acceptable.
14. Dip the Challah into the salt three times.
15. The person who cuts up the Challah should place the slices on the table, and everyone should help himself from the pile. If there are many people at the table, then the Challah is passed around the table on a plate or similar container. One should not hand Hamotzei slices into other people’s hands at the table. One should be careful not to throw the Hamotzei slices.
16. If you have a very large crowd with many children, you may have some cut up Challah prepared in advance for the children, so they can have a piece to eat immediately after you have a piece of Challah.
17. One person may say the blessing of Hamotzei over the Lechem Mishneh for everyone at the table. The person making the Hamotzei should wait until everyone has washed and is sitting at the table.
18. Before beginning the blessing, one should make sure he has everyone’s attention by calling “Birshus” [“with your permission.”] The brooch should be said loudly and clearly.
19. Everyone else at the table should respond Amen to the blessing and not say their own Hamotzei. They should not speak until after eating some of the Challah.
20. Everyone at the table should not partake of the Challah before the one who makes the blessing.
21. One must use two complete loaves for “Lechem Mishneh.”
22. A loaf is considered whole even if has a split or crack, provided that when one lifts the Challah by the weaker section, the loaf does not break in two.
23. Loaves that became attached during baking may be separated and are still considered whole for the purpose of Lechem Mishneh.
24. A broken loaf is still considered whole, according to some authorities, if the amount missing is less than 1/48 of the entire loaf.
25. A Challah which is smaller than the size of an olive should not be used, unless one has no other Challah.
26. A fully baked Challah that has been frozen may be used for Lechem Mishneh, and need not be thawed out first.
27. While eating the Challah, a person should focus and take pleasure in feeling the food going into your system providing you with life sustaining nourishment. You should be filled with the pleasure of knowing that Hashem is providing you with that nourishment via His Divine flow of love for you. This is an optimal moment to feel a strong connection with Hashem. The Zohar teaches that in this merit, blessings for the upcoming six days of the week enter via the Shabbos table.