

Eli'ata Bakes Challah - Elijah's New Disguise

Rabbi Elliott Tepperman Family Service Rosh Hashanah

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Eliata liked to bake. Birthday cakes, sufganiyot for Hanukkah, but especially challah for Shabbat.

Did she give tzedakah - sure.

Did she go to services - sometimes.

Did she believe in God - she wasn't always sure.

But challah, she believed in challah.

She liked rolling it out and braiding its strands, the smell of it in the oven, and well, of course, eating it.

At first, she would just bake two challah loaves each Friday.

Her challah was fluffy and sweet.

And even though her kids were very picky eaters, there was never a crumb of this challah left to make french toast on Saturday morning.

One Shabbat,

after weaving the challah dough for her two Shabbat challot,

Eliata looked in the bowl and saw a little extra dough.

This seemed strange.

She was sure she followed the same recipe she always used.

But one thing was for sure:

Eliata was not a person to let good challah dough—or really anything—go to waste.

So she braided it up.

It was just a little bigger than a hotdog bun.

When it came out of the oven,

she wrapped it loosely in foil, walked to her rabbi's house and left it on the porch with a little note.

When the Rabbi got home and saw the note,
his first thought was, what is Eliata up to now?
Then the Rabbi thought but I already have a challah,
bought from the best bakery in the county.
The Rabbi sighed, and that Shabbat this little challah from Eliata sat right
next to the big bakery challah on the Rabbi's Shabbas table.
The next morning there was extra challah to make french toast but it wasn't
Eliata's challah?
No, it was the bakery challah.

Eliata never changed her recipe, but in the weeks to come she kept finding
more and more dough in her baking bowl.
Soon she was giving the Rabbi a challah as big as the one from the bakery.
She baked more challah and gave them to her neighbors.
When someone new moved to town she gave them a challah. Each week
she added a friend or neighbor, but the next week there was even more
challah dough.

Well, Eliata loved baking challah.
She believed in it, but she sure didn't want to waste any challah. So she
went to her rabbi and asked,
"Rabbi surely there must be more people in need of challah or why would
my recipe keep expanding?"

The Rabbi sighed.
Eliata's good ideas always just sounded to the rabbi like more work.
But the Rabbi indeed could think of a few people in the synagogue who
might appreciate just such a gift.
And of course, the Rabbi knew just how a delicious challah could heal a
wounded spirit.

"Eliata," the rabbi told her, "you have to meet Kahalyahu."

Kahalyahu is not such a baker like you,

but she pays attention to the people in need. If you give her your extra loaves of challah she will find them a place.

From then on when Kahalyahu heard about someone alone on Shabbat she delivered an Eliata challah.

A family whose youngest child just went to college,

a woman with a new baby,

A young man with a broken heart,

A parent who lost their job,

A person sitting shiva.

They all got challah.

Eliata baked and Kahalyahu delivered.

One Friday morning, Eliata was making her most amazing magic challah. But when she put the challah into the oven to bake, she realized her oven was broken—no heat.

And no heat meant no challah.

She called the Rabbi. The Rabbi called Kahalyahu. Kahalyahu called Eliata.

“I have a plan.”

Kahalyahu came and picked up the dough and started delivering it first to the Rabbi,

then to Eliata’s neighbors,

she delivered to the family whose youngest child was now doing quite well in college,

the woman with a new baby who wasn’t so new anymore.

The young man who had gotten over his broken heart,

The parent who now had a new job,

The mourner who though still sad had risen from shiva.

They all got challah dough.

They all turned on their ovens,

rolled and braided the dough and began to bake.

Everyone who needed challah that Shabbat had plenty.

Even Eliata received two fresh baked challah from someone else's oven on her table. She had to admit, receiving the challah made it sweeter.

By the next Shabbat, Eliata's oven was fixed.

But some of the receivers of dough now asked for the recipe.

Some of them made changes—vegan challah, whole wheat, gluten-free?
Sure.

Now their dough bowls weren't exactly magical, but they all made extra, because they understood the miracle of receiving fresh baked challah on Shabbat, just when you needed it most.

Did the community give tzedakah? - sure.

Did they go to services? - sometimes.

Did they believe in God? Probably.

But they believe that challah given with love is a miracle.