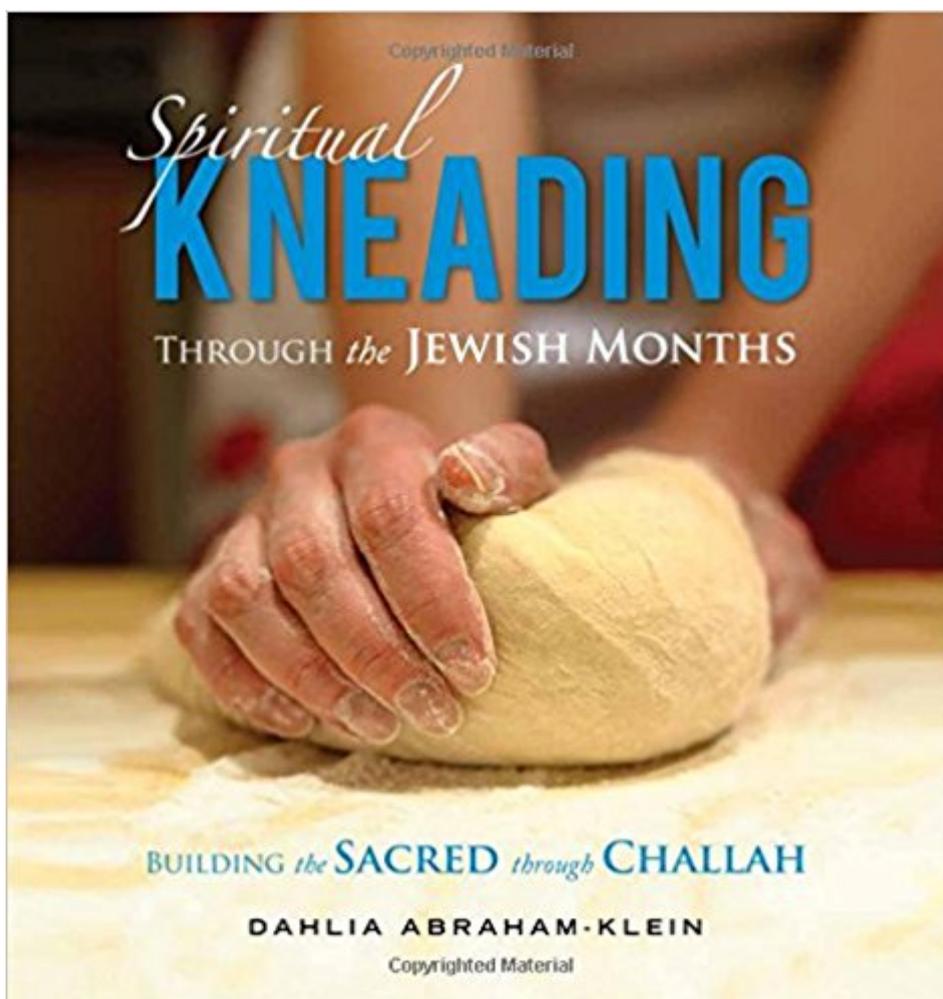


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# Spiritual Kneading Through The Jewish Months: Building The Sacred Through Challah



## Synopsis

Spiritual Kneading through the Jewish Months is an evocative collection of challah recipes, Jewish spiritual insights, and Torah study as it relates to each Jewish month, called Rosh Chodesh. Dahlia Abraham-Klein, pulls from Jewish texts a book that enhances women's spiritual growth via the tradition of challah baking while meditating upon the Jewish theme of the month. The book gives an extensive history of Rosh Chodesh and why it's traditionally been a woman's holiday. The book covers all twelve months of the Jewish year, with specific Torah text for each month as well as a specific challah that relates the Torah theme to that month. In essence Spiritual Kneading is palatable Torah. Each Jewish month includes a meditation guided through the kneading of the challah dough. The kneading is an action meditation, best understood as the performance of commandments and rituals. The inner essence of the dough elucidates divines in the challah and becomes a springboard to reach God. This conversation in turn is kneaded into the dough and becomes part of the spiritual wisdom transmitted to your loved ones. When commandments are seen in this light, particularly baking challah, the challah takes on a greater spiritual significance. Each chapter then goes on to give sources, ideas, and questions to be discussed by the group while the challah dough is rising. The purpose of baking challah in this particular way is to develop one's own personal spiritual growth within the context of a Rosh Chodesh group. Recipes and Shapes include: TISHREI Spiral Challah with Apple and Silan CHESHVAN Rainbow Shaped Challah KISLEV Cheese Loaf TEVET Star of David Challah

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"You don't have to be a Jewish baker to fall in love with challah, especially the challah of Spiritual Kneading. In this unique and beautiful challah journey, in the form of a comprehensive recipe book that takes you on a monthly meditation along with a challah theme, you'll remember afresh or learn for the first time, the honour of this ancient bread. Artfully laid out in a majestic year of bread, fused to biblical prose and traditions, this is a book for the baker with soul. Abraham-Klein generously shares the sacred magic of challah for a year of baking, feeding you body, mind, spirit and soul. In a word, this is a wondrous book - transformational and inspiring on every level."- Marcy Goldman, author of "A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking" "Seldom is one given the opportunity to experience the literal fusion of both body and soul on such a tangible level. In "Spiritual Kneading Through the Jewish Months", Dahlia Abraham-Klein manages to do just that. She builds the sacred through the Challah baking process, taking you on a year-long journey you wish will never end. Every stop along the way is infused with a measure of heaven, a dash of love, and the enormous blessings that flow freely as the Jewish woman, whether alone in her home, or accompanied by others, caresses and weaves the physical dough into something far more meaningful than an ordinary loaf of bread... A beautiful book that rightfully belongs in the Cookbooks, Judaism & Judaica, Religion & Inspiration, and Self Help & Self Improvement sections all at once... A treasure you will want to share with everyone you know."- Mrs. Shaindy Jacobson | Director, Rosh Chodesh Society "For a wonderfully inspiring, deeply learned, and delicious experience, read this book! With great spiritual delicacy, Dahlia Abraham-Klein is restoring a beloved but neglected Jewish mitzvah that you will love."-Susannah Heschel, Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies, Dartmouth College "Spiritual Kneading through the Jewish Months is a comprehensive spiritual manual and introspective guide to attain a greater awareness in living a higher more meaningful life. Through her soothing meditations, lucid instructions and wealth of ingenious information, Daliah Abraham-Klein transforms the challah baking process into a eye opening, spiritually charged learning encounter. I highly recommend this book to all Jewish women who wish to understand more about their feminine spirituality and about the special mitzvah of challah that has been entrusted to the Jewish woman."-Chana Weisberg, Author, lecturer and editor of thejewishwoman.org "so original, so insightful cant wait to read her next book" - Rabbi Manis Friedman, author, lecturer, philosopher and host of cable series: Torah Forum with Manis Friedman "When I picked up Dahlia Abraham-Klein's new cookbook-meets-curriculum 'Spiritual Kneading Through the Jewish Months: Building the Sacred Through Challah', I found a language and framework for lifting up the physical actions I know and love - sifting, mixing, kneading - to give them a sacred, spiritual connection beyond

myself to a larger whole." – Jewish Women's Archive

Dahlia Abraham-Klein has a Master's of Science in Education. She has been conducting Spiritual Kneading Rosh Chodesh Challah Baking groups within her Long Island community since 2010. She has taught privately in her home, as well as to larger groups in local synagogues and Adult Learning centers. She has previously published a cookbook, *Silk Road Vegetarian: Vegan, Vegetarian and Gluten Free Recipes for the Mindful Cook*. The cookbook focuses on Dahlia's ancestral Jewish cuisine from Central Asia, and includes over one hundred gluten-free recipes that utilize local ingredients, making the dishes more accessible to the West.

Great product.

Incredible book combining the spirituality of baking challah by the lunar calendar months. This will be my # 1 go to book every week when I bake challah. Ms. Abraham -Klein's thought provoking research and study about each month's themes offers the reader magnificent insight into the journey that has been part of Jewish tradition for so many centuries. A true treasure for our time!!!

Dahlia Abraham-Klein braids the sacred rituals of kneading bread with the spiritual prayers of a woman's life into a book as gorgeous and satisfying as a wonderful challah.

Inspirational and good eats!

A thoughtful, deepy inspiring work. A fresh new look at our ancient tradition!A pleasure!

a beautiful, loving book....

I have been baking most of the bread that my family consumes for more than fifty years. Very little is more satisfying than the feel of the dough beneath your fingers as you knead it. Few things are as good for stress relief as kneading bread dough and making bread is a wonderful way to learn patience. As an extra boon, making your own bread is one of the easiest ways to cut your food bills dramatically. Dahlia Abraham-Klein's *Spiritual Kneading through the Jewish Months: Building the Sacred through Challah* brings an entirely new perspective to the art of bread baking. We've all heard that "Bread is the Staff of Life" but few of us have really thought about that idea. If you're

Christian then bread shows up at services a few times a year as part of a communion service. If you're Jewish then the Challah on your Shabbat table might very well come from a bakery. Many of us, women in particular, simply never consider that it is to women that producing the Staff of Life has been given. How easy it is to overlook the story of Abraham entertaining his angelic visitors. Abraham prepared the finest meal with his own hands, but it was to Sarah that he turned for the bread, the very stuff of life. One of the things that I have always enjoyed most about kneading bread is the opportunity to think. For 10 or 20 minutes you are chained to one spot, rhythmically pushing and throwing the dough back and forth. I've had some of my best thoughts, worked out many a problem while kneading dough. Dahlia takes that opportunity to a new level, using the opportunity to focus the thoughts of the kneader on various religious themes as you move throughout the year. Each chapter of the book centers around the thirteen lunar months of the Jewish calendar year. In each chapter you'll find things to think about central to the events of that particular month along with several recipes for Challah, each of which has a unique and significant shape. Dahlia's recipes are large. Intended for use during communal baking sessions, each uses an entire 5 pounds of flour and makes 6 to 8 loaves - and there is a huge variety. Chocolate Challah, a rose shaped Challah flavored with rose water and studded with raisins, Gluten Free Challah, a spiral shaped Challah studded with apple and redolent of date honey are just a few of the enticing variations. There was a time that I baked a dozen loaves of bread at a time - several times a week no less. These days I do not have the stamina that I once had and my extra-large Kitchen Aid mixer which did my kneading for me has chosen to die (I cannot afford to replace it), so I bake just one or two. I did cut several of these recipes down to a size that is manageable for me, then waited until a couple of my daughters could be available at the same time to try a full-size recipe. They were all lovely. Bread freezes beautifully, both baked and unbaked, so if you've the freezer space don't be afraid to mix up the entire batch in order to have fresh-baked bread on hand at the drop of a pin. To freeze unbaked dough, cover the shaped but not risen dough with oiled plastic wrap and place in the freezer, still on a baking sheet, until firm, about one hour. Wrap the dough securely, then place it into a large ziplock bag. Bake the dough within a month or two. Place the frozen dough, unwrapped, onto a prepared baking sheet, cover loosely with the wrapping to prevent it drying out, and allow to thaw in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight. Remove to room temperature to complete the rising, then bake as usual.

Grandma's \$0.02 - Dahlia Abraham-Klein brings a new dimension of thought to baking bread while introducing a wide variety of shapes and flavors to our Daily Bread. Women of either Jewish or Christian heritage will find new ideas throughout the pages of *Â Spiritual Kneading through the Jewish Months: Building the Sacred through Challah*. Highly

Recommended\*Sample provided

I previously reviewed Dahlia Abraham-Klein's *Silk Road Vegetarian: Vegan, Vegetarian and Gluten Free Recipes for the Mindful Cook* [Vegetarian Cookbook, 101 Recipes] for , and loved the blend of Middle Eastern and Central Asian flavors; low-fat and full of flavor, there are also many gluten-free and dairy-free recipes (including baked goods). In her latest book *Spiritual Kneading*, Dahlia combines meditation and reflection with the traditionally feminine task of making, blessing, and baking the challah, a bread with deep spiritual and cultural meaning central to Jewish life. *Spiritual Kneading* uses the medium of meditation while kneading and working the dough to reflect on various passages and themes for each Jewish month. Beginning with an introduction to the feminine dimension of Rosh Chodesh and challah, there is a fascinating look at the origins of separating challah in midrashic verse. There are instructions how to form a Rosh Chodesh Challah Baking Group (Spiritual Kneaders), with a curriculum for each month of study and a helpful planner including an outline, equipment, and calendar. Further reading suggestions are also included to extend the use of the book beyond the first year. Numerous prayers in Hebrew (some transliterated) and English are included. Each month's syllabus contains a specific challah recipe and shape that mirrors that month's theme. Each recipe includes an introduction to the challah theme during the yeast activation, meditation during kneading, and a discussion during the rising, as well as reflective questions. Although I've been baking challah for years, I learned so many fascinating historical facts, customs and the use of challah across the centuries through *Spiritual Kneading*; baking challah is truly forging a connection across time. The significance of each ingredient took on new meaning as I continued to read and bake. I also love that Dahlia recommends using organic, fair-trade ingredients when baking; this is something I try to practice every day. Beginning with Tishrei, the first month of the year, there is a traditional spiral challah with apple and silan (date syrup, the original "honey" mentioned in the Torah/Bible). Rosh Hashanah traditionally has us dip apples in honey for a sweet year, and spiral challahs are traditional as well, representing positive changes in the new year (others believe it represents a crown. Other loaves include a (dairy) braided cheese loaf for Kislev (there is also a pareve option), Seven Species pomegranate-shaped challah for Shvat, boiled egg in challah (chubzeh di Purim) for Adar Alef, a gorgeous rose-shaped challah with raisins and rosewater for Adar Bet, and a crown-shaped challah with olive oil and za'atar for Elul. The basic dough recipe for each is the same, and is scaled to make 8-10 medium loaves (as I am baking for a

small household, I scaled each recipe to 1/4, which yields two medium loaves). I've been baking challah for years, but was intrigued by the book's premise of merging meditation (which I practice frequently) with bread baking; I had always found the rhythm of kneading to be soothing, and it lends itself well as a time for reflection. I made the rose-shaped challah with raisins and rosewater using the crown-shaped braiding instructions, and I can say without a doubt that this is truly the most beautiful loaf of challah I've ever made. I used premium yeast from my friends at Red Star Yeast, who were kind enough to send samples, as well as imported Lebanese rosewater from Maureen Abood's online market. The basic dough recipe is a water challah (no eggs or butter) with a little olive oil added: Basic dough recipe: 4 tablespoons active dry yeast 4 cups (1.1L) warm water 1 cup (150g) organic sugar plus 2 tablespoons organic sugar 5 pounds (2.25 kg) organic white flour 1 1/2 tablespoons sea salt 1 cup (230 ml) neutral-tasting oil (some recipes call for olive oil) This dough is more common with Sephardic Jews rather than the perhaps more familiar "eggy" challah baked by Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe; Sephardic Jews believe that adding eggs to the dough renders the challah more like cake, and thus ineligible for the Hamotzi blessing. The basic dough recipe very easy to work with and produces a light, fluffy, sweet challah (the base recipe calls for added sugar) that invites add-ins. As I primarily cook in metric, I appreciated that metric weights were included for portions of each recipe. The instructions were very clear and easy to follow (and the step-by-step photos were a lifesaver, especially for my first attempt at braiding a four-strand crown loaf!). The cooking times were also very accurate; the recipe mentioned 30-35 minutes, and mine took 30 exactly (my old oven tended to run hot, so breads baked faster / more unevenly). I love that the author also includes a challah recipe using fresh yeast; one of my earliest memories in the kitchen is of my Polish grandmother baking bread with fresh yeast, and it's a tradition I've tried to uphold (I generally purchase fresh yeast from bakeries as the Fleishman brand once found in the grocery store seems to be a relic of the past due to its rapid spoilage). Recipes for spelt, whole wheat, and a gluten-free oat challah (which requires shaping in a silicone mold as it is not braidable) are also included. Other shapes and braids (single strand, two-strand, four-strand, six-strand) are also included, with super-helpful step-by-step photos for the braiding. Not only are the bread recipes delicious, creative, and reliable, but I really connected with Dahlia's choice of reflections for each bread. Many stories from the Torah are brought to life with details I'd never noticed before, and the choice of readings and reflective questions really bring a deeper spirituality to making challah. I look forward to baking my way through the rest of the

book over the coming year! Anyone interested in bread baking should add this title to your collection; the step-by-step photos and helpful text demystify yeast baking for all audiences. (This review originally published on Bundt Lust April 13, 2016)

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