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Parshas Shemos ✍️ Rabbi Meir Leib Mandelbaum

The Limp of Victory

"V'aleh shemos B'nei Yisrael habaim Mitzraymah . . . Vayehi kol nefesh yotzei yerech Yaakov shivim nefesh."

"And these are the names of the B'nei Yisrael who came to Mitzrayim . . . And all the people who emerged from Yaakov's "thigh" were seventy." Shemos 1: 1-5.

This expression - *Yotzei Yerech Yaakov*- who emerged from Yaakov's thigh- is striking, as Yaakov's children are normally referred to as B'nei Yisroel. We find the same expression in Parshas Vayigash (46:26). It states, "*Kol hanefesh habaah l'Yaakov Mitzrayima yotzei yireicho* – All the people belonging to Yaakov that come into Mitzrayim, that came out of his yarech." It appears that in relation to their descent to Mitzrayim they were called "*Yotzei Yerech Yaakov*" - emerging from "Yaakov's thigh." Why?

My friend Rabbi Simcha Dachs suggested that the Torah is alluding to the *Kaf Hayarech*- the *Gid Hanasheh*. Upon his failure to defeat Yaakov Avinu, the Sar of Eisav told him, "*Ki sarisa im Elokim v'im anashim vatucha*- For you have struggled with God and with men and you have prevailed." How do we understand this in light of the fact that the Sar of Eisav managed to wound Yaakov Avinu and not vice versa?

Regarding the symbolism of the Mitzvah of *Gid Hanasheh*, the Chinuch states, "Even though B'nei Yisrael will endure many troubles in Galus, they can be assured that they will never perish. Rather the Redeemer will come to redeem them just as the Angel tried to destroy Yaakov and his family, but was unable to prevail over him and only managed to hurt him on his thigh. Just as the sun rose for our father [Yaakov] and he was relieved from his pain, so too the sun of Mashiach will rise for us."

Rav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch in Parshas Vayishlach adds another thought that is relevant here. The Angel said, "*Lo Yaakov ye'amar od shimcha ki im Yisrael* – Not Yaakov shall any more be called your name, but Yisrael. " It cannot be that the Angel actually changed Yaakov's name, for we find later on in Parshas Vayishlach that Hashem changed his name. Rather, the Angel was saying, "Your name Yaakov will be expressed as Yisrael." Yisrael is our lofty name, representing our mission as a light unto the nations, to spread the Dvar Hashem and Kavod Shamayim. One of the basic ways that we accomplish this is by being Yaakov- downtrodden and at the heel of Eisav. The nations try their best to hamper our progress in this world. They cause us to limp through history. Nonetheless, it is abundantly clear that Hashem is leading us and protecting us, for we endure, limping, against all odds. When the Angel wounded Yaakov's thigh, causing him to limp, he proclaimed that now, our name Yaakov will be expressed as Yisrael, for this will serve our cause as Yisrael.

Thus, the Yarech of Yaakov gives us hope in two ways. It gives meaning to our suffering throughout the Galus and it assures us that the Geula will come.

This may be why, in connection with their descent to Mitzrayim they were called Yotzei Yerech Yaakov, for at the moment the Tzaar of the Galus begins, the Torah alludes to the hope and nechamah of the Geulah from that Galus.

May we merit to see the rising sun of Mashiach speedily in our days.

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Bircas Hazimun

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What is Zimun?

The Mishna in Brachos 45a states that three or more people who eat together a meal with bread which obligates Bircas Hamazon are required to bentsh together in Zimun. The procedure for bentshing in Zimun consists of a Mezamen (leader) calling upon the others to bentsh, and then he alone bentshes while the others listen attentively. However, because it is likely that the listeners will not concentrate properly, they should bentsh quietly together with the Mezamen. The Mishnah Berura (183:7:28) criticizes those who immediately begin bentshing aloud on their own and writes that they must at least say the first bracha (quietly) together with the Mezamen in order to fulfill the obligation to "exalt his name together." Some have the minhag to listen to the Mezamen make the first bracha and only start bentshing afterwards on their own.

Eating Together

The primary criterion for Zimun is that the group must be settled down to dine together. The Shulchan Aruch (167:11) states that sitting and sharing the same table while eating meets this criterion. The Mishnah Brurah (193:2:18) points out that the Gra holds that members of the same household that are eating together with the leader of the household are considered to be settled down and dining together even if they are on different tables. Contemporary Poskim (see V'Zos Habracha pg 133) explain that they are really dining together, and only because of the lack of space they are dining on different tables. Consequently, people who are dining at an event such as a wedding or Bar Mitzvah, but are sitting at different tables, will also be considered to be settled down and dining together.

There is no obligation for Zimun in a restaurant or hotel between the tables. Regarding a Yeshiva or restaurant where people at one table without intending to be with their tablemates, it is unclear if there is an obligation, and a competent Rav should be consulted. (see V'zos Habracha ibid note 2, Piskei Tshuva 193 #7.)

A Third Person Joining

In order to be considered settled down and dining together, everyone must either begin or end the meal together. Once two people that had been dining together decide to bentsh, it is too late for a third person to join. (see Mishna Berurah 193:2:19). It is a mitzvah for the two to find a third person to join them before they end eating. The Mishna Berurah (197:2:22) writes that if the "joiner" does not want to eat bread, he may lechatchila eat or drink any food (except water) in an amount that obligates him to make a Bracha Achronah. Drinking a l'chaim does not suffice. Although the "joiner" should also listen and respond to the Mezamen, he must nevertheless make his own Bracha Acharona afterwards.

Leaving early

If a group of three is eating together and one of them has finished before the others, he may not bentsh until the others are ready to make the Zimun. If the individual must leave in order to not incur a monetary loss or to perform a mitzvah (such as helping his wife), he need not wait for the others to bentsh. (Mishnah Berurah (200:1:5)) However, the remaining two are encouraged to stop eating in order to allow him to be mezamen. They should listen to him make the first bracha and then they could continue eating afterwards. If two finish eating, the third must pause his

eating in order to respond to the zimun.

A dilemma may arise where one attends a wedding which ends very late. In addition to having to join a zimun, there is also an obligation to bentsh the Sheva Brachos, and for many people it is very difficult to stay until the end. Rav Moshe Feinstein (IGM OC I 56) writes, that in order to be obligated in zimun, not only must they eat together, but they also must have intention to bentsh together. He proves this from the Rema that states that those eating the Seudah Hamafsekos on Erev Tisha B'Av do not bentsh together in Zimun even if they eat together because they knew from the start that they would not bentsh together. Therefore, if one goes to a wedding and has in mind that he will not stay for bentshing he is not required to join in zimun. Some poskim suggest that if a person usually doesn't stay for the Zimun, he does not have to specify intention every time. If the person subsequently decides to stay, he does not return to his obligation unless he eats a kzayis of bread.

No obligation

The Rema writes (193:2) that even when there is no obligation of Zimun, it is better to be mezamen because of *B'rov Am Hadras Melech*. The Mishnah Berurah (24), however, cites the Pri Migadim who says that by ten people, because there is mention of Hashem's name, Zimun should not be done unless it is obligatory. The Mishnah Berurah questions the Rema's psak, and suggests that even three people should not be mezamen unless there is an obligation.

Zimun of Ten

If ten or more people eat together the word Elokeinu is added to the nusach of the zimun. It is enough that only seven of them eat bread although the other three must eat or drink enough to make a Bracha Achrona. If the mezamin forgets to add the word Elokeinu and the group had not yet answered, he may repeat the zimun with Elokeinu. It is a good idea that someone should always remind the Mezamen about the addition.

Women in Zimun

Although women are not counted together with men to make a zimun of three, if they are part of a meal where a Zimun is already taking place, they must also join in the Zimun. Therefore, women should be careful to not leave on their own before the men bentsh. The Vilna Gaon writes (199,7) that three women who eat together are required to bentsh together in Zimun. However, the Biur Halacha (ibid) writes that the custom is not to obligate them. Regardless, women never add Elokeinu even if they are ten.

Kos shel Bracha

The Mishnah Berurah (182,4) writes that if wine, grape juice, or any other chamar medinah is available, they should be used for a Kos Bracha when three or more bentsh in zimun. There is no difference between Shabbos or Yom Tov. Rav Moshe Feinstein defines Chamar Medinah as a drink that a person drinks for enjoyment and to make the meal special, not just to quench one's thirst. Rav Moshe writes, however, (Y.D III 52,4) that many do not have a minhag to use a kos even if there are three.

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