

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [284]

Take Your Portion and Leave! (Insights into Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 89b)



Background to Our Story

Exodus Chapter 12

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. ¹² "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Korban Pesach. By [Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon \("Maimonides"\); translated by Eliyahu Touger](#). Chapter 2

1

The Paschal sacrifice should be slaughtered only for the sake of those who were enumerated for partaking of it, as Exodus 13:4 states: "Everyone... should be enumerated on the lamb." The implication is that one should be enumerated on it while it is alive. Those enumerated on a Paschal sacrifice are referred to as "the members of the company."

2

When one individual sacrifices a Paschal sacrifice for himself alone, it is acceptable, provided he is capable of partaking of it in its entirety. As an initial preference, an endeavor is made not to sacrifice the Paschal sacrifice for the sake of one individual alone, for Numbers 9:12 states: "They shall offer it."

? Why would an individual choose to sacrifice a Paschal sacrifice for himself?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

? Besides the technical explanation based on Numbers 9:12, what could be another reason for an individual not to sacrifice a Paschal sacrifice for himself?

3

The Paschal sacrifice should be slaughtered only for those who are fit to partake of it. If one of the members of the company was a minor, an elder person, or infirm, he may be counted among those for whom the Paschal sacrifice is slaughtered if he is capable of eating an olive-sized portion. If not, he may not be counted among them, as implied by Exodus 12:4: "A person according to his capacity to eat," indicating that he must be fit to partake of it. Even if the company includes 100, if any one of them is not capable of eating an olive-sized portion, he may not be counted among those for whom it is slaughtered.

4

A company should not be composed of solely women and servants or minors and servants so that frivolity will not be found among them. A company may, however, be made entirely of women even for the second Paschal sacrifice or entirely of servants. Minors may be counted among the company for whom the Paschal sacrifice is slaughtered, but a company may not be comprised solely of minors, for they are not intellectually mature.

Similarly, a company should not be made up solely of the infirm, the elderly, or those in an acute state of mourning. Even though they are capable of eating, since they will eat only a meager amount, it is possible that they will leave over from the Paschal sacrifice and cause it to become unacceptable. If they transgressed and had a Paschal sacrifice slaughtered for such a company, it is acceptable. Similarly, a company should not be made up solely of converts, lest they not be precise concerning it and cause it to be disqualified. If a Paschal sacrifice was slaughtered for such a company, it is acceptable.

5

If a Paschal sacrifice was slaughtered for people who were not enumerated upon it or for individuals whom none could eat an olive-sized portion or it was slaughtered for the uncircumcised or those impure, it is unacceptable. If it was slaughtered for one who could

partake of it and one who could not partake of an olive-sized portion, for those enumerated on it and for others not enumerated on it, for circumcised and uncircumcised, for the pure and the impure, it is acceptable. Those who are fit to partake of it eat according to law; it is as if he did not have the others in mind.

6

If the Paschal sacrifice was slaughtered for the sake of the circumcised, but its blood was cast on the altar for the sake of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, it is unacceptable. The rationale is that casting the blood is more severe, because it is the fundamental dimension of the sacrifice.

If he slaughtered it for the circumcised so that the uncircumcised will derive atonement through it, it is unacceptable, because he had the uncircumcised in mind when casting the blood. If he slaughtered it for the sake of those who would partake of it so that its blood would be cast for those who would not partake of it, the Paschal sacrifice is acceptable, but no one fulfills their obligation with it, because the ones who will partake of it were not in mind when the blood was cast.

7

When one was healthy at the time the sacrificial animal was slaughtered, but sick at the time its blood was cast or sick at the time of slaughter, but healthy at the time the blood was cast, the sacrificial animal should not be slaughtered, nor its blood cast for him unless he is healthy from the time it was slaughtered until its blood was cast.

8

A person may have a sacrificial animal slaughtered for the sake of his son or daughter who are below majority and for his Canaanite servants and maidservants, whether with their consent or without their consent. He may not, however, slaughter for the sake of his son or daughter who are above majority or for the sake of his Hebrew servants and maidservants or for the sake of his wife without their consent. If they were silent and did not protest, they are considered to have consented.

9

If one slaughtered a sacrificial animal for the sake of his son or daughter who are below majority and/or for his Canaanite servants and maidservants and they went and had one slaughtered for themselves, they fulfill their obligation by partaking of their master's sacrifice.

10

If one slaughtered a sacrificial animal for the sake of his wife, his son or daughter who are above majority and/or for his Hebrew servants and maidservants and they went and had one slaughtered for themselves, there is no greater protest than this. They fulfill their obligation by partaking of their own sacrifice.

11

When a woman is living in her husband's home and her father slaughters for her and her husband slaughters for her, she should partake of her husband's. If she was hurrying to go to her father's home on the first festival after her wedding as is the pattern of all women and both her father and her husband slaughtered for her, she should partake of her father's. From this point onward, she should eat at the place she desires, provided it is clear where she desires to eat at the time of slaughter.

Similarly, if two guardians sacrifice on behalf of an orphan, the orphan should eat where he desires. When does the above apply? To an orphan below majority. If, however, he is above

majority, it is as if he was enumerated on two Paschal sacrifices. And when one enumerates himself on two Paschal sacrifices, he may partake only of the one slaughtered first.

12

With regard to a Canaanite servant of two partners, if they are untrusting of each other, suspecting that the other will steal the servant, he should not partake of either of their Paschal sacrifice. If they are not untrusting, he may eat where he desires.

13

A person who is half a servant and half free, he should not partake of his masters, nor of his own until he attains his freedom.

14

To what extent can people be enumerated on a Paschal sacrifice? Until there is an olive-sized portion for each one.

One may be enumerated upon it and remove himself from it until it is slaughtered. Once it is slaughtered, he may not remove himself from it, for it was already slaughtered on his behalf.

The following rules apply when some people were enumerated on a sacrificial animal and others came and enumerated themselves on the same animal. If there is an olive-sized portion for the first, they may partake of it and are exempt from bringing a second Paschal sacrifice. The later ones who were added until there was not an olive-sized portion for each person should not partake of it and are obligated to offer a second Paschal sacrifice.

15

When a person enumerates others on his portion of the Paschal sacrifice without the other members of his company knowing, the members of the company are entitled to give him his portion after it was roasted at the time when the sacrifice is eaten. The members of the company partake of their portion and he eats together with the others whom he enumerated in a second company.

Similarly, if one of the members of a company is a glutton, the members of the company are permitted to remove him and give him his portion which he will eat in his own company. If he is not a glutton, they may not divide.

Sibolet

A meal of friends

סִיבּוֹלֵת, f. סִיבּוֹלֵת (סִיבּוֹלֵת; cmp. סִיבּוֹלֵת) *sending provisions for a common meal, picnic*. Pes. 89^b אָמַר חֲמִשָּׁה וַעֲשׂוּ סִיבּוֹלֵת (Ms. O. repeatedly סִיבּוֹלֵת, v. Rabb. D. S. a. l. note 7) even (in ordinary cases) when five persons sent articles of food for a picnic; Tosef. ib. VII, 10 (Var. סִיבּוֹלֵת, סִיבּוֹל); Y. ib. VIII, 36^a אָמַר אֲנִי סִיבּוֹלֵת (with anorg. נִי). Y. Maas. Sh. IV, 55^b אָמַר אֲנִי סִיבּוֹלֵת I say (the inscriptions 'in behalf of—' intimate) that they have arranged a picnic among themselves (and each marked his contribution).

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 89b

מתני' הממנה עמו אחר בקלקו – רשאין בני חבורה ליתן לו את שלו, והוא אוכל משלו והן אוכלין משלהן.

גמ' איבעיא להו: בני חבורה שהיו ידיו של אחד מהן נפות, מהו שיאמרו לו "טול חלקך וצא"? מי אמרינן: מצי אמר להו "הא קבילתון", או דילמא: מצו למימר ליה "כי קבלינן – לתיקוני זביחה, אדעתא דאכלת טפי מינן – לא קבלינן".

...

תא שמע: בני חבורה שהיה ידיו של אחד מהן נפות, רשאין לומר: טול חלקך וצא. ולא עוד, אלא אפילו חמשה ועשו סיבולת – רשאין לומר לו: טול חלקך וצא. שמע מינה.

...

איכא דאמרי: הא לא איבעיא לן, אלא הכי הוא דאיבעיא לן: בני חבורה רשאין לחלק או אינן רשאין לחלק?

תא שמע: בני חבורה שהיו ידיו של אחד מהן נפות, רשאין לומר לו: טול חלקך וצא. ידיו נפות – אין, אין ידיו נפות – לא. שמע מינה.

Mishna

If one who is registered for a Paschal lamb unilaterally registers another person with him in his portion of the Paschal lamb, the other members of his group are permitted to give him, i.e., the one who included the additional person, only his portion, which was originally allotted to him. And he, the additional person, eats from his portion, i.e., the portion of he who added him; and they, the other members of the group, eat from theirs. This is because they did not agree to the inclusion of the additional person.

Gemara

A dilemma was raised before the Sages: If there is among the members of a group one of them who has *fine hands*, a euphemism for one who always hastens to take a large quantity of food, what is the *halakha* concerning whether they can say to him: Take your allotted portion to eat and leave; and don't take any more from the other's members portions? Do we say that he can say to them: You accepted me in the group without preconditions, and you therefore have no right to limit how much I can take now? Or perhaps they can say to him: When we accepted you, it was only for the preparation of the offering, we did not accept you with the understanding that you would eat considerably more than us.

.....

Come and hear an explicit resolution to this question from the *Tosefta*: Members of a group in which one of the group had fine hands are permitted to say to him: Take your allotted portion to eat and leave; don't take any more from the other members' portions. And not only is this true of a group sharing a Paschal lamb, but even five people who made a shared meal of friends [*sibolet*] throughout the year are permitted to say to one who has fine hands: Take your portion and leave. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from this that that is the ruling.

.....

There are those who say that this question concerning what a group may say to a member who has fine hands is not our dilemma. Rather, this is our dilemma: Are members of a group permitted to divide up into smaller separate groups, or are they not allowed to divide up if there is no special reason to do so?

Come and hear a resolution: Members of a group in which one of them had fine hands are permitted to say to him: Take your portion and leave, which is equivalent to instructing him to form his own group, albeit of only one person. This indicates that only if his hands are fine, yes, they may divide into separate groups, but if his hands are not fine, no, they may not. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from this that they are not allowed to divide up into separate groups for no reason.



Explaining the Story - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why would someone unilaterally (without consulting or telling the other members of the group) register another person with him in his portion of the Paschal lamb?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? What could be the problem/s about someone unilaterally (without consulting or telling the other members of the group) registering another person with him in his portion of the Paschal lamb?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? Have you encountered people with “fine hands” (gluttons, “fressers”)? Why do you think some individual are fressers?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? Our case is a person with “fine hands,” a glutton, someone who takes more than his share. Can you think of other areas, not related to food, where a person can take more than his or her share?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? Why would a group want to separate and leave an individual alone if he or she doesn't take more than his or her share?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? Why aren't members of a group allowed to divide up the group into separate groups for no reason?

“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from These Texts

! If you realize by yourself or other people tell you that you have “fine hands,” in other words, that you usually take more than your share, start changing fast before you end up eating alone and without friends.

! To exclude people without a reason is wrong, and forbidden (against Hashem's will).



Our halachik discussion addresses the complex dynamics of social groups, where one individual takes more than his share, either literally or figuratively, by imposing himself unilaterally on the other members of the group. The discussion is clearly addressing the situation of an individual, who, without necessarily being wicked, is inconsiderate or lacks the ability to “read” the room. The Sages agreed that the other members of the group, even a group of friends, don’t have the obligation to tolerate rudeness, discourtesy, or lack of consideration.

As a corollary to the discussion about the right of members of a group to exclude selfish and inconsiderate individuals, our Sages remind us that if a member of a group or the community is not selfish or inconsiderate, we have the obligation to include him, and it is forbidden to exclude him, “just because.”