



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of
maamarim

given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Seuda Shlishis Parshas Vayishlach
(חדוותא דזעיר אנפין פרשת וישלח מאמר ח)

In our *parsha*, Binyamin is born and receives his name.

וַיְהִי בִצְאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא לוֹ בְּנִימִין.

And it was when her soul left her, and she called his name *Ben Oni*, and his father called him *Binyamin*.

This is the only time that Yaakov Avinu involved himself in the naming of the *shevatim*. In all other cases, the *Imahos* chose the names, and Yaakov Avinu agreed to them. However, when Binyamin was born, Yaakov Avinu changed the name given to him by Rachel Imeinu, in her last moments on this earth. The instructions given during the last minutes of someone's life are classified in Halacha as צוואת שכיב מרע - the will of someone on their deathbed, and are taken very seriously.

Why did Yaakov Avinu intervene in the naming of *Binyamin*?

The *Ramban* writes;

"It is correct in my eyes that his mother called him *Ben Oni*, meaning *Ben Evli* - the son of my mourning (as in the *pasuk* - לא אכלתי באני ממנו - I did not eat from it (*maaser*) while an *onen* (דברים כ"ו:י"ד)). And his father transformed the word *אוני* to its other meaning of *כחי* - my strength, as in the *pasuk* - ראשית אוני - the first of my strength (בראשית מ"ט:ג). Therefore he called him Binyamin, the son of strength or power, for in the *yemin* - the right hand, lies strength and success.



[1]

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As it says in *Koheles* (י:ב) חֵכֶם לִימִינוּ לֵב - The heart of a wise man is to his right. And in *Tehillim* (כ"א:ט) יְמִינְךָ תִּמְצָא שָׁנְאֶיךָ - May your right hand find your enemies. And (ק"י:ח:ט"ז) ה' רוּמְמָהּ - The hand of Hashem is upraised.

He wanted to call him by the name that his mother called him, for all of his sons went by the names given to by their mothers. However, he translated it into a name of *tova* and *gevura* - goodness and might.

And I saw in *Bereishis Rabba* (פ"ב:ט)
"Ben Oni (means) Ben Tzaari, and his father called him Binyamin in *Lashon Hakodesh*. And I did not know what this means, for it is all *Lashon Hakodesh*! And so too, the names of all of his sons were in *Lashon Hakodesh*. However, they hinted to what I said above, that he translated the words (of Ben Oni) so that they had a positive meaning."

In other words, the *Ramban* tells us that the word אוני means both *tzaar* and *koach*. By adding the name *Binyamin* to the name *Ben Oni*, he eliminated the *tzaar* aspect of the name, leaving only the aspect of strength.

A *remez* - hint to this idea can be found in the difference between the *gematria* of בן אוני and that of בנימין, forty-three, which is equivalent to the *gematria* of גם - "as well". This reinforces the understanding that Yaakov Avinu's intention wasn't to eliminate the name given by Rachel Imeinu, but rather to add to the name and transform its meaning from negative to positive.

By changing Binyamin's name, Yaakov Avinu taught us that that when something negative takes place, and inflicts pain and weakness, it is always possible and necessary to transform it into a source of great strength. Rather than succumbing to despair and depression, we must hold on to Hashem with all of our strength.



[2]

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Rachel Imeinu was the עקרת הבית - the primary wife, and it was for her that Yaakov travelled to *Charan* and the house of *Lavan*. Nonetheless, even at the most painful moment, when she departed this world, Yaakov Avinu did all that he could to remain strong and apply that strength the task of transforming *Ben Oni* to Binyamin. By doing so, Yaakov Avinu imbued the twelve *shevatim* and all of their descendants with the ability to remain strong in times of pain and crisis. That strength enables them to escape darkness and enter a world of great light.

We find a similar idea in the days of Chanuka that are rapidly approaching. The *Gemara* (שבת כ"ב) says that we should light *ner Chanuka* in the doorway so that the *mezuzah* will be on our right and the *ner Chanuka* on our left. The *Bnei Yisaschar* (כסלו – טבת ב:כ"ד) adds:

“The *Zohar Hakdosh* on our *parsha* (קע"ד:) explains a *pasuk* from *Sefer Iyov* (ל"ג:כ"ג) אִם יֵשׁ עָלָיו מַלְאָךְ מְלִיץ אֶחָד מִנִּי אֶלֶף לְהַגִּיד לְאָדָם יִשְׂרָאֵל.

... פְּדֵעָהּ מִדֶּחַת שְׁחַת - If he has one defending *malach* from among a thousand who will testify to a man's righteousness and say 'Redeem him from descending to destruction. And who is this? This is a *malach* on the left side, as it is written in *Tehillim* (צ"א:ז) יִפֹּל מִצִּדְּךָ אֶלֶף - He will fell a thousand on your side. מצד refers to the left side, for the *pasuk* continues, וּרְבֵבָה מִימִינֶךָ - and ten thousand on your right side.

This enables us to understand the *halacha* brought in the *Gemara* that when lighting in a doorway, *ner Chanuka* should be on the left. Since we do *mitzvos* on the left side as well, the one *malach* in a thousand who stands on the left will go up and defend the one who lights and will be *melamed zchus*, saying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, פְּדֵעָהּ מִדֶּחַת שְׁחַת - redeem him from descending to destruction. And he saves him from calamities in this world.

This is also the concept of *tzitzis* and *tefillin*. For *tefillin* are worn on the left hand. Also, in the *mitzva* of *mila* and *pria* (circumcision and the parting of the inner membrane), it is impossible to perform *pria* without the help of the left hand. And then the one *malach* in a thousand is



[3]

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melamed zchus and says to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Redeem him from descending to destruction.'"

This is the process we described above. Lighting the *ner Chanuka* on the left transforms the aspect of "left" to that of right. The *malach* who stands on my left to prosecute me, becomes one who stands on my right to support me. The prosecutor becomes the defender. This is another example of transforming *Ben Oni* - pain and depression, to *Ben Yamin* - strength and power.

The *Sheiltos D'Rav Achai* (וישלח שאילתא כ"ו ד"ה ברם) includes another detail in the description of *Ner Chanuka*. "The *mezuzah* on the right, *ner Chanuka* on the left, and the *Baal Habayis* wearing a *talis* with *tzitzis* in the middle."

The mitzva of *tzitzis* also demonstrates our ability to elevate something from lowliness to the highest *madreigos*. *Tzitzis* are placed on the lowest part of a garment, its outer edges. However, that garment elevates one who wears it to the highest levels, for *tzitzis* remind us of all *mitzvos Hashem*. That reminder protects us from sin.

This protective power of *tzitzis* is described in a story brought in *Maseches Menachos* (מ"ד). A man who kept the mitzva of *tzitzis* with great diligence was tempted to transgress a terrible *aveira*. Just as he was about to do the *aveira*, his four *tzitzis* slapped him in the face and prevented him from transgressing. The mitzva of *tzitzis* protects a Jew and elevates him from the lowest levels to the highest *madreigos*.

This is the *avoda* which is incumbent upon us. We must transform bitter to sweet, and each *tzaar* into a source of strength and *simcha*. We have inherited that ability from Yaakov Avinu who transformed *Ben Oni* into *Ben Yamin*.

וכן נזכה לדרגת "ימין ה' רוממה ימין ה' עשה חיל אכ"ר



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