



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Last time on Shabbat Shorts, we explored the meaning behind our physical rituals for motzi. Today, we will unpack the nusach of the bracha itself.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ, "Blessed are You Hashem our God King of the universe, Who brought forth bread from the earth".

Where does this bracha come from? The answer is connected to a famous disagreement in Masechet Berachot 38a-b between Rabbanan and Rebbe Nechemiyah. The Gemara explains that everyone agreed that 'מוציא לחם מן הארץ' was an acceptable form of the blessing because it means 'He brought forth'-- in the past tense. The disagreement between Rabbanan and Rebbe Nechemiyah was about the word 'המוציא'. Rebbe Nechemiyah said that המוציא is future tense-- 'God will bring forth the bread'-- and therefore wouldn't make sense for a bracha on food we are eating right now. Whereas Rabbanan said it is the same as מוציא-- past tense-- 'He brought forth'. The Gemara concludes that the halacha follows Rabbanan (ruling that המוציא is past tense), which is how our bracha gets fixed as מוציא לחם מן הארץ (מוציא לחם מן הארץ תחת).

What is this disagreement getting at? Is it just about the tense of the word המוציא? Different poskim offer their own takes:

- The Rosh explains that it reflects the need to have halachic chiddushim (innovations) in the nusach of brachot (Rosh on Pesachim 7a-- שצריך להשמיענו חדוש בברכותיו). The halacha chooses המוציא as the word used because it is surrounded by disagreement-- and the Sages wanted the nusach to be halachically cutting edge-- even controversial.
- The Ritva, however, looks beyond the Gemara's conclusion that המוציא is in the past tense. He explains that HaMotzi is a bracha of praise-- praising God for not just having brought bread from the ground in the

past, but for doing it throughout the agricultural calendar-- past, present, and future (עבר והווה ועתיד Ritva on Berachot 38b).

- And Tosafot view this disagreement very practically-- we use the word המוציא so we don't mix up the letters. If we said 'Melech haolam motzi' the back-to-back mem's could get mixed up. The extra ה provides a break 'Melech haolam HaMotzi' so it's easier to say. The question of what about 'lechem min haaretz' comes up, but Tosafot resolve it by saying 'lechem min' is from a pasuk and so it should not be adjusted (Tosafot on Berachot 38b).

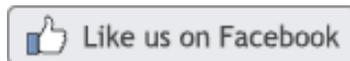
And so, now that we understand why the word we use is המוציא, we can conclude with its translation-- Did God actually **bring** bread from the earth?

There is a Midrash that in Gan Eden, bread grew from trees (Bereshit Rabbah 20:10). But today, it is the ingredients of bread that grow from the earth (the wheat), not the bread. The bread on our Shabbat tables comes from humans combining and baking the right ingredients at the right time-- and unlike in Gan Eden, it takes a lot of effort from us. And so, in the bracha 'HaMotzi', we praise God not only for being our Creator, but for giving us the capacity to create with Him. For it is through our relationship with God-- our partnership with Him in creating-- that we make Him המוציא, 'The One Who brought forth bread'.

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