

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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פְּרִשְׁת פִּי תְּבוֹא תִשַּׁפ"ה

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בְּרוּךְ פְּרִי בִטְנְךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ וּפְרִי בְהֶמְתְּךָ... (פרק כ' ד')

*Blessed shall be the fruit of **your womb**, and the fruit of **your ground**, and the fruit of **your animals**...*

The Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors beautifully introduce this Parsha of Blessings: "Before the Torah recounts the dire consequences of sin, it gives the blessings that will accrue to the nation for fulfilling the commandments. These blessings are wide ranging and involve every area of material life, thus reassuring the people that their spiritual accomplishments will bring them untold benefits in every area of life."

Rav Meir Simcha is bothered by the sequence in our pasuk-would it not be more appropriate to have בְּהֶמְתְּךָ precede אֲדָמָתְךָ? His answer begins with a Midrash Rabba, earlier in דברים ז' יג, where Moshe Rabbeinu assures *Klal Yisrael*, in a very similar manner as our pasuk does, that if they follow Hashem's mitzvos, ... **וּפְרִי בִטְנְךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ**, (Hashem) *will love you, bless you and multiply you, and He will bless the fruit of **your womb** and the fruit of **your ground**...* Asks the Midrash: "Why does (the Torah) connect בִּטְנְךָ to אֲדָמָתְךָ? ...Another answer: HKBH was hinting to them, 'Just as the fruit of the land requires tithing, so the fruit of your womb requires tithing-מִלָּה i.e., that is the mitzva of *milah*.'" This certainly requires clarification. Rav Meir Simcha proposes, based on נדרים לב: of the pasuk in יט *וְהָיָה חֹכְמָה תְּעוֹז לְחָכְמָה* / *Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers...* that the *עֵשָׂרָה שְׁלִיטִים* are the two eyes, two ears, two hands, two legs, the *milah*, and the mouth. Based on this, he feels that our Midrash is saying that circumcision can be viewed as "tithing" the body, for the *milah* is considered one of the ten limbs that rule a person. Performing a *bris milah* is analogous to the separation of מַעֲשֵׂר, for just as the separation of מַעֲשֵׂר "fixes" the produce and prepares it for consumption, circumcision renders a person fit to be a servant of Hashem.

With this explanation of the Midrash, Rav Meir Simcha's question as to why *our* pasuk does not place פְּרִי בִטְנְךָ after פְּרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ is reinforced, for is there not also a required tithing for livestock, מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֵמָה? Furthermore, why not infer the importance of *bris milah* from the higher level בְּהֶמְתְּךָ in *our* pasuk? To answer this he takes us to בבבב where we are told that although it is preferable to separate the בְּהֵמָה and then slaughter the remaining animals, if one does not, the slaughtered meat is permitted to be eaten. This is vastly different when tithing produce-before it is separated it is טָבֵל and absolutely prohibited to be consumed. What we see from this is that מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאָה creates a תִּיקוּן, a transformation from אֲסוּר to דָּבָר מוּתָר which מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֵמָה does not. And this is exactly what the *bris milah* does. Going from an עֶרֶל to a מְהוּל is more than just performing an important mitzva-it creates

a תיקון for the entire body. Rav Meir Simcha quotes R' Elazar ben Azarya in נדרים לא: who describes an עָרֵל as a מְאֻסָּה, a repulsive *being*. He points out that Rashi, in יומא פה: refers to *milah* as a תיקון. The Terumas Hadeshen (Rav Yisrael Isserlin, 1390-1460), in a responsa which deals with a *bris* on *Shabbos* where the father of the child and a stranger are equally qualified, who should do it, and in his discussion of this case he explains that the reason we need Scriptural permission to perform *milah* on *Shabbos*, even though it is in the category of קלקיל, is *because* it is a לגוף! And Rav Meir Simcha adds that this תיקון הגוף manifests itself in a physical way in that the newly circumcised child is allowed to be smeared with נְשֵׁמַן שֶׁל תְּרוּמָה, something which was not permitted before his *milah*. Using the Midrash, and based on all these similarities, Rav Meir Simcha concludes that in our pasuk, it is quite appropriate to place פָּרִי בְּטֶנֶךָ *immediately after* פָּרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ!

Before finishing this piece, he gives us one more dramatic similarity between *milah* and מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאָה: We read in תענית ט. that R' Yochanan found the young son of Reish Lakish and asked him "to recite to me the verse you studied today in school. The boy said to him: 'עֲשֵׂר תְּעֵשֶׂר / You shall tithe.'... Rabbi Yochanan explained to him that this means, 'Tithe so that you will become wealthy.' The boy said to him, 'From where do you know this?' He replied, 'נָסִי זֵיל, i.e., go and test it.' The boy said to him, 'And is it permitted to test HKBH? But isn't it written: "לֹא תִנְסֶה אֶת ה' / You shall not test Hashem?"' R' Yochanan said to the boy that R' Hoshaya said, 'It is prohibited to test Hashem in any way, except in this case of מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאָה, as it says in הָבִיאוּ אֶת כָּל הַמַּעֲשֵׂר אֶל בֵּית הָאוֹצָר וְיְהִי טָרֶף בְּבֵיתִי... אִם לֹא אֶפְתָּח לָכֶם אֶת אַרְבֹּת מְלֹאכֵי יָדַי / Bring the whole tithe into the storeroom, that there may be food in My house... and test Me now by this, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven...' With regards to מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאָה, Rav Meir Simcha tells us: נָשִׂיר לְנִסּוּי וּלְבִקֻּשׁ שָׂכָר. He points out that one of the *brachos* that is made at the *bris milah* contains the following supplication: קַל חֵי חֲלָקֵנוּ: על כֵּן בְּשָׂכָר זֹאת, i.e., therefore, on this account, living Almighty, our Portion, our Rock, give the command to rescue the beloved soul within our flesh from destruction, for the sake of His covenant that He has set in our flesh. How did the אֲנָשִׁי כְּנָסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה have the temerity to "command" of Hashem a reward for fulfilling a mitzva? According to Rav Meir Simcha, as established by our Midrash, it is exactly because of this strong connection between מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאָה and *Bris Milah*!

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
 לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
 לזכר נשמת חמי מורי ר' יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל
 ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל
 מחבר הגהות על ספר משך חכמה