

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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וַיְהִי לוֹ מִקְנֶה צֹאן וּמִקְנֶה בָּקָר וְעַבְדָּה רַבָּה... (פרק כו' יד)

(Yitzchak) had acquired flocks and herds and many enterprises...

Just as his father did when faced with a famine, Yitzchak, with his family, leave their home and spend the **רַעַב**-years in Gerar. While there, he planted crops which produced one hundred times the expected estimate. His herds also multiplied dramatically. Rav Meir Simcha questions, and interestingly, none of the other classical Mefarshim seem to be bothered by this-why did our pasuk have to repeat **וּמִקְנֵהוּ צֹאן וּמִקְנֵהוּ בָקָר** and not simply write **מִקְנֵהוּ צֹאן וּבָקָר**?

Rav Meir Simcha's answer begins with referencing Rashi who earlier, in פסוק יב, when the Torah tells us *וַיִּזְחַק בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וַיִּמְצָא בְשָׂנָה הֵוא מֶאָה שְׁעָרִים* (Yitzchak) *sowed in that land, and in that year reaped a hundredfold* explains, based on Midrash Rabbah, that "they had assessed the field to determine how much it was fit to produce i.e., how much the crop should have yielded, and it yielded one hundred for every measure which they had estimated. חז"ל explained that this assessment was done for tithes." The mitzva of מַעֲשֵׂר. Rambam, in הלכות מלכים ט' א similarly tells us that, "Six commandments were given to Adam... The prohibition against eating flesh from a living animal was added for Noach... These matters remained the same throughout the world until Avraham arose. In addition to these, he was commanded מִילָה and he established the morning prayers. **Yitzchak separated מַעֲשֵׂר** and enacted an additional prayer service before sunset. Yaakov added the prohibition against eating the הֶנְשֵׁה. He also ordained the evening prayers." Rav Meir Simcha proposes that our pasuk's repeating the word מִקְנֶה is to tell us that Yitzchak was so meticulous with his mitzvos that he also followed a not-so-well-known rule, cited by Rambam in הלכות בכורות ז' ד that "tithes are not taken from צֹאן i.e., sheep or goats, for בָּקָר, nor from בָּקָר for צֹאן. One may, however, tithe sheep for goats and goats for sheep." Our pasuk separated צֹאן from בָּקָר with the extra word מִקְנֶה to inform us that with regards to מַעֲשֵׂר, Yitzchak followed the law precisely i.e., he did not mix the צֹאן and בָּקָר but gave מַעֲשֵׂר from each group. He also followed the rule that within the flocks of צֹאן, he gave מַעֲשֵׂר from the sheep and the goats as one unit- מִקְנֶה צֹאן.

Rav Meir Simcha concludes this piece by noting that we see a similar rule in בבורות ג: with regards to תְּרוּמָה: “One may not separate תְּרוּמָה from food of one species to exempt food that is not of that species. If one did so, his תְּרוּמָה is not valid. Where is this derived from? R’ Ami says... ‘with regards to תְּרוּמָה the pasuk tells us, ... **חֶלֶב** תִּירוֹשׁ וְדִגָּן... *All the best of your oil and the best of your wine and grain...* The word חֶלֶב refers to the תְּרוּמָה one separates from his produce. (By writing the extra word חֶלֶב, as opposed to the more concise,

the Torah is telling us to give the *best* of this one, i.e., oil, and the *best* of that one, i.e., wine and grain, but do so separately.” We see from this that the Torah’s separating a group by using a redundant word is meant to teach us something about how to treat the groups relative to each other. Similarly, Rav Meir Simcha applied this to our “extra” *מִקְנֶה*. And therefore, *בְּדַרְכּוֹ בְּקִדְּשׁ*, he can use it as a *שִׁבְכָתָב* source for a seemingly sourceless *מִקְנֶה צֵאן וּמִקְנֶה בָקָר*! *מֵאֲמַר חַז"ל*

Returning to Rambam in *א' הלכות מלכים ט'*, where he told us that Yitzchak separated *מִעֵשֶׂר*, Raavad, not surprisingly, strongly disagrees. Perhaps based on Midrash Rabbah, which on the pasuk earlier, *וַיִּתֵּן לוֹ מִעֵשֶׂר מְלֵךְ* (Avraham gave Malchizedek, who held the status of a Kohen) *a tenth of everything*, Raavad feels that Avraham clearly separated *מִעֵשֶׂר* before Yitzchak was in the picture! Various *נִשְׂאִי בָלְיוֹ* attempt to “defend” Rambam. Rav Y.B. Daskal, in his *sefer Binas Chochma* on the *Meshech Chochma* suggests that according to Rav Meir Simcha one can say that it is true that Avraham kept the mitzva of giving *מִעֵשֶׂר*, but that was *מִעֵשֶׂר* from agricultural produce-*מִעֵשֶׂר דָּגָן*. Yitzchak introduced the requirement to give *מִעֵשֶׂר* from *מִקְנֶה*. *מִעֵשֶׂר בְּהֶמָּה*, i.e., *מִקְנֶה בָקָר*. He does admit that this does not explain why Rambam did not explicitly tell us that Avraham separated *מִעֵשֶׂר*; nonetheless, it is a very innovative attempt to deflect Raavad’s wrath. Perhaps we can say that we know that the Avos observed all the Torah before it was given. Rambam is listing Mitzvos that were *commanded* by Hashem-six to Adam, one to Noach, one to Avraham and one to Yaakov. There is no need to mention that Avraham separated *מִעֵשֶׂר*, as it is part of *כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּלוּלָהּ*. We know he kept it. Rambam, by telling us that *יִצְחָק הִפְרִישׁ מִעֵשֶׂר* may be “giving a nod” to Rav Meir Simcha’s novel insight on *מִקְנֶה צֵאן וּמִקְנֶה בָקָר* and how Yitzchak heeded even the most subtle aspects of a mitzva that would not be detailed until much later in the history of his descendants.

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לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדר ע"ה
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