

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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פְּרִשְׁת וַיִּשְׁלַח תְּשֻׁבָּה

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וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיִּקַּח מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לַעֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו. (פרק לב' יד)
(Yaakov) *spent the night there, then he took from **that which had come in his hand**, a tribute to Eisav, his brother.*

It is worthwhile to quote the Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors' extremely insightful description of Yaakov's mindset as he prepared for his meeting with Eisav: "To show his goodwill and reiterate his subservience, Yaakov sent a lavish tribute-actually, a series of tributes-to Eisav in the hope of assuaging his wrath. In so doing, Yaakov set a pattern for future generations that would confront Eisav's oppression. In times when Israel is powerless to fight its enemies, it must forgo the 'luxury' of asserting that its cause is just. Instead, it must appease its enemies in terms that they, in their greed, can comprehend."

Many Mefarshim offer explanations for the redundant and unusual phrase מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ and as always, we begin with Rashi: "*Into his hand* is used here in the sense of בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ-into his domain... An aggadic Midrash interprets it as referring to precious stones and pearls which a person binds up in a packet and carries them in his hand. Alternatively, based on Psikta, מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ means from that which is not sacred i.e., Yaakov had taken מִעֵשָׂר and only after separating the tithe, did he send a tribute for Eisav."

One of the more intriguing interpretations for מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ is given by Rabbeinu Bachya: "...there is a certain bird called falcon which is an expert hunter. Seeing that Eisav was a hunter, Yaakov thought that presenting him with such a bird, which had been domesticated like a hunting dog, would please him. We would then translate the verse as: 'He took a gift for Eisav his brother from amongst these birds, i.e. from a species Eisav used to carry in his hand.'" The Ba'alei HaTosafos on our pasuk also mention this bird gift. Rav Moshe Alshich also offers an interesting explanation: Yaakov selected his gift מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ i.e., from the *livestock* that he had accumulated during his years of unremitting labor under Lavan. Yaakov felt that the most effective gift he could give was one which was earned through his own toil and labor.

Rav Meir Simcha "borrows" from Rashi the word בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ but uses it as follows: The Tosefta in עוֹבֵד עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה tells us that "one who sells his slave to an עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, the slave goes out free... Whether he sold him or gave him as a gift, he goes free, שָׁמָּה יֵצֵא לְרִשְׁוֹת נְשָׂאֵינָה רִשְׁוֹת, שָׁמָּה יֵצֵא לְרִשְׁוֹת נְשָׂאֵינָה רִשְׁוֹת, שָׁמָּה יֵצֵא לְרִשְׁוֹת נְשָׂאֵינָה רִשְׁוֹת." Rav Meir Simcha understands this as תִּזְוֶה"ל" telling the Jewish slaveowner that he has no right to transfer his slave, who has taken on certain mitzvos, to the רִשְׁוֹת of a non-Jewish master who may pull him away from Yiddishkeit. וַיִּקַּח מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לַעֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו is the Torah telling us that Yaakov did not give gifts to Eisav from *all* that he possessed, which he

enumerated earlier i.e., **וְעֶבֶד וְשִׁפְחָה** / *oxen and donkeys, flocks, servants and maidservants* but rather only from livestock. And that is because he was not permitted to give his **וְשִׁפְחָה** to Eisav, an idolator. Rav Meir Simcha refers us to the words of Rabba bar Mamel who said in בבא מציעא נ: “Where it cannot be said that יָדוּ is a reference to an actual hand then it would mean in his possession.” **בְּיָדוֹ-וַיִּקַּח מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ** as **בְּיָדוֹ-וַיִּקַּח** as Yaakov gave Eisav gifts from that which were in his possession to give but not from the **וְשִׁפְחָה**!

Next, Rav Meir Simcha focuses on Rashi's second explanation of **וַיִּקַּח מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ**, as mentioned earlier, that Yaakov sent him gifts from what was leftover after **מַעֲשֵׂר** was taken. From the חולין. Rav Meir Simcha notices how different the approach of Yalkut Shimoni as well as Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer are: The **מִנְחָה** that Yaakov sent to Eisav was the *actual* **מַעֲשֵׂר** which he separated. “HKBH told him, ‘Yaakov, you took something which is **קוֹדֵשׁ**, **מַעֲשֵׂר**, and by giving it to Eisav made it **חֵל**?!’” Yaakov replied that he gave him the **מַעֲשֵׂר** to flatter him i.e., to make Eisav think that he is being treated with great reverence and thereby avoid his anger.

Continues Rav Meir Simcha: How do we explain such a dramatic difference between these Midrashim? He believes that the *machlokes* between Yalkut/Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer versus Psikta is centered on a different *machlokes* between R' Akiva and the Rabanan. In תמורה בא, the Rabanan tell us that if **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** from outside Eretz Yisrael came unblemished to the Beis HaMikdash, they are sacrificed like a **בֶּכֹר** or **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** coming from within Eretz Yisrael. R' Akiva, in בבורות ג, tells us that **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** which was designated as such outside of Eretz Yisrael *should not* be brought as a *korban* but rather should be allowed to roam in a field until acquiring a blemish and then can be eaten. In בבורות ג we are also told by Rabba that according to R' Akiva, the reason **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** is no longer separated is due to the concern that a mishap might occur i.e., the animals might be benefited from or eaten before they developed a blemish. Applying R' Akiva's rule to the animals from which Yaakov took **מַעֲשֵׂר** outside of Eretz Yisrael meant that he had all these **מַעֲשֵׂר** animals which he could not bring as *karbanos*. To avoid any **תִּקְלָה**, and to be **מַחֲנִיף** Eisav, it made sense to give the **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** to him. The opinion of the Yalkut and Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer! According to the Rabanan, however, Yaakov would not be allowed to give his **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה** to Eisav, for just as a **בֶּכֹר** had to be sacrificed on a *Mizbeach*, which he would construct later when he arrived in Shechem, so too his **מַעֲשֵׂר** animals. According to the Rabanan, **וַיִּקַּח מִן הַבָּא בְּיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֵשָׂו אָחִיו** could only refer to the **חולין** animals leftover *after* Yaakov separated **מַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֶמָּה**. The opinion of the Psikta!

Once again, the consistently classic style of the Meshech Chochma comes through to present us an innovative **פְּשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא** and help us more fully appreciate the **לְשִׁיטַתוֹ**!

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
 לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדר ז"ל
 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