Insights from the Meshech Chochma
רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל
פָּרָשַׁת וַיִּשְׁלַח תשפ"ז

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(פרק לב' טו-טז) עִזִּים מָאתַיִם וּתְיָשִׁים עֶשְׂרִים **רְחֵלִים** מָאתַיִם **וְאֵילִים** עֶשְׂרִים. ...פָּרוֹת אַרְבָּעִים וּפָרִים עֲשָׂרָה... *Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats; Two hundred ewes and twenty rams. …forty cows and ten bulls...*

The Torah goes into detail listing the distinct types of animals that Yaakov sent as gifts to his brother, Eisav, prior to the dramatic reunion with him. As we shall see, it is obvious that Yaakov developed into a skilled shepherd who was fully familiar with the animal lifecycles, breeding habits and even the proper ratio of males to females to maintain the herds. In their introduction to this event, the Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors make a very insightful remark, worthy of repetition: "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 forego the 'luxury' of asserting that its cause is just. Instead, it must appease its enemies in terms that they, in their greed, can comprehend."

Rav Meir Simcha points out that from the family of צאֹן, Yaakov sent רְחֵלִים and their male counterparts, אֵילִים, which are both two years old, but did not send כְּבָשׂוֹת (sheep) and כְּבָשִׂים (lambs) which are one year old צאֹן. As even the smallest inconsistency speaks volumes to our author, Rav Meir Simcha presents his explanation for the "missing" כְּבָשִׂים כְּבָשׂוֹת and through it, shows us his amazing grasp of secular subjects that can be attained only with a mastery of כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כֻּלּוֹ.

He begins by telling us that the job of a good צאֹן shepherd is to raise flocks that will have healthy offspring and produce luscious wool. Yaakov wanted to impress Eisav with his shepherding skills. Therefore, he sent him רְחֵלִים which, as two-year-olds can become pregnant, and אֵילִים which are old enough to impregnate the רְחֵלִים. The one-year-old כְּבָשׂוֹת and כְּבָשִׂים are not mature enough to do this-so he left them out. Of note, all this is based on various מַאֲמָרֵי חַז"ל with sources provided by Rav Meir Simcha. He also informs us that the פָּרוֹת וּפָרִים can only become parents after they turn three-years-old, as per עבודה זרה כד:.

He uses this information to explain an earlier pasuk in פרק לא' לח, when Yaakov tells off Lavan for suspecting him of stealing, זֶה עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ רְחֵלֶיךָ וְעִזֶּיךָ לֹא שִׁכֵּלוּ **וְאֵילֵי צֹאנְךָ לֹא אָכָלְתִּי**/*These twenty years I have spent in your service, your ewes and she-goats never miscarried, **nor did I feast on rams from your flock.*** What message was he trying to tell Lavan? That he did not eat of Lavan's rams, but he did eat of Lavan's other livestock e.g., כְּבָשִׂים כְּבָשׂוֹת -would that not also be stealing? Rav Meir Simcha explains that what Yaakov meant was that "without a doubt I would never eat of your younger animals which have not reached maturity to reproduce (for as mentioned earlier), that would be bad for my shepherd business. But

even your older אֵילִים which have already reproduced and as a smart shepherd, I *could* consume without damaging the flocks, I left alone!" Rav Meir Simcha is so impressed with this explanation that he tells us וּפָשׁוּט-it is obvious!

Rav Meir Simcha next addresses the פָּרוֹת וּפָרִים and tells us that וְיִתָּכֵן that their names reflect the fact that they are able to פְּרוּ, reproduce. Sounds like a "cute" association but he uses this to explain a hard- to-understand Midrash Tanchuma in פרש חקת: "R' Acha said, 'When Moshe ascended into the heavens, he heard the voice of HKBH sitting and discussing the Parsha of פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה and He was reciting a *halacha* בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרָהּ: 'My son, Eliezer, says, 'The עֶגְלָה עֲרוּפָה must be a one-year-old, and the פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה is to be two-years old. (Note: The חֲכָמִים disagree and say they must be two and three-years-old, respectively.)' Moshe said, 'רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, do not the realms above and below belong to you? Now you are citing a *halacha* in the name of flesh and blood?' He said to him, 'A righteous man i.e., R' Eliezer, is going to arise in My world and is going to begin his teaching with the Parsha of the פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה.' Moshe told Him, "רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, may it be Your will that he come from my offspring!'" Among the many difficulties with this Midrash is that how could Hashem *paskin* like the single opinion of R' Eliezer against the majority חֲכָמִים who would say that a two-year-old פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה is not even old enough to be called a פָּרָה? To answer this, Rav Meir Simcha takes us back to the earlier mentioned ל"חַזַ in עבודה זרה כד: who told us that the Torah's פָּרָה can only reproduce at three years. Tosafos there says, "וְיֵשׁ לִתְמוֹהַ-one can wonder-for after all, we see on a daily basis that cows *do* give birth before their third year?!" Tosafos answers that "דְּוַדַּאי עַתָּה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הָעֵת i.e., no doubt that nowadays, the nature of these animals has changed from that of the earlier times ." נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַטֶּבַע. So that when Hashem told Moshe that the ruling will be like R' Eliezer with regards to the age of the פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה, what He meant was that there will be a שִׁנּוּי הַטֶּבַע and therefore we will in fact be following the teaching of R' Eliezer. And Rav Meir Simcha adds that this may be a way to understand "the מְקוּבָּלִים (perhaps students of the ARI זצ"ל?)" who said, with regards to this Midrash Tanchuma, that in the future the *halacha* will be according to R' Eliezer. Rav Meir Simcha does not elaborate any further-in fact, he cuts the conversation short by saying וְאֵין כָּאן מְקוֹמוֹ לְהַאֲרִיךְ but also וְהָבֵן-understand this!

He ends this piece with an open remark: וְלָבֵן בְּקֹשׁ מֹשֶׁה שֶׁיְּצָא זֶה מֵחֶלְצָיו. Perhaps what he means is that Moshe yearned to have offspring such as R' Eliezer who, in the future would be the "right" opinion and would teach us that it is not because of a change in the Torah חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, but because of the Torah's ability to adapt to all times and developments.

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