

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Vayetzei 5785

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Yaakov makes a unique business arrangement with Lavan.

וַיָּסֶר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַתְּיָשִׁים הַעֲקֻדִים וְהַטְּלָאִים וְאֵת כָּל־הָעִזִּים הַנִּקְדָּוֹת וְהַטְּלָאֹת כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־לָבֶן בּוֹ וְכָל־הַיּוֹם בִּכְשָׁבִים וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד־בְּנָיו:

“And that same day [Lavan] set aside the marked and streaked he-goats and all of the spotted and speckled she-goats, all that had white in it, and every brown sheep; and he gave them into the hands of his sons.” (Bereishis 30:35).

The deal between Yaakov and Lavan was that Yaakov would keep all spotted and speckled, and all the dark colored sheep and goats and Lavan would keep the white and lighter colored sheep and goats. However, before they could separate, Lavan removed all of the spotted and speckled and dark colored animals. This left Yaakov with a pack of solid light-colored animals to commence shepherding. This put Yaakov at a disadvantage, already less the payment owed to him and putting him in a disadvantageous commencing position. However, Yaakov still prevailed.

The translation of “ha-akudim” is marked, streaked, or ringed. The wool on the legs of the animals had some sort of mark, streak, or ring discoloration. It relates to the word נָקַד which means dot or mark. It is important to know this because another important part of history hinges on this translation.

The word Akud appears seven times in Chumash. Six times is during this very narrative about the streaked and marked animals that would belong to Yaakov. The first time it is mentioned is in this pasuk: וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹקִים וַיָּבֶן שָׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: “And they came to the place that the Lord had spoke to him, and where Avraham had built an altar. And he arranged the wood. And he “akud” his son, Yitzchok, and he placed it upon the altar, on top of the wood.” (Ibid 22:9). This pasuk is from the known episode of Akeidas Yitzchok. Like many episodes in the Torah, unfortunately it gets mistranslated in the English-speaking public sphere. More precisely, it is known inaccurately in the public sphere, as the Binding of Yitzchok, due to either non-Jewish influences or translation issues from language to language. Onkelos here is no help as he uses the word “akud.” What did Avraham do to Yitzchok? Did he bind him or do something else?

The Binding of Yitzchok is seemingly a problematic translation. Nowhere else in the Torah or otherwise does “akud” mean binding. The word for tied up or bound is assar. It is the root for “Beis Assurim” – prison house, where Yosef was put. (See ibid 39:20). The pasuk says, וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל־בַּיִת הַסֵּהַר מְלוֹם אֲשֶׁר־[אֲסִירִי] (אסורִי) הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים, “And he put Yosef in the Prison House, a place that the king binds his prisoners.” It can mean “confines” his confined. However, it is known that in the dungeons, inmates were chained to the wall besides being confined behind closed doors. If the term was obvious,

the pasuk would not need to describe how prisoners were confined. Yet, the pasuk went out of its way to say “a place where the king binds his bound.” Not just a place to lock the door but a place where the king keeps his confined bound up. When those from Yehuda handed Shimshon over to the Pilishtim, they bound him up. (Shoftim 15:13). It uses the word “assar.” What does akud mean in the context of Akeidas Yitzchok?

The word is used in Gemara Shabbos 54a, where it says that a camel may not go out with its feet “akud” or ragul. The Gemara explains that while ragul means bending the foreleg and tying it at the knee to prevent it from running away, akud is “akeidas hand and foot. It is like Akeidas Yitzchok.” Again, hard to translate akud with akud. Most translate it as “bind” because, as the Gemara says, “similar to Akeidas Yitzchok.” Again, that is a circular translation. From context, however, the Gemara cannot mean bind the foreleg to the hindleg. That would prevent the animal walking altogether. The Gemara is talking about not allowing a camel to go out in a public domain—walking—with harnesses and the like because of the melacha. Akud, then, means colored ropes tied around the foreleg and the hindlegs, individually, to mark the animal’s ownership. It is forbidden for the camel to go out with these bracelets. How is this like Akeidas Yitachok?

The Gemara in Tamud adds context. The Mishna in Tamud 30b says they would tie cords around the legs—foreleg and hindleg—of the pair to designate them as the daily tamud offerings. This would identify the pairs of tamud lambs as that day’s tamud korbanos. The Gemara elaborates on 31b that they would bind the legs, like “Akeidas Yitzchok.” The legs could not be bound to each other as that could cause a mum. The Gemara is trying to teach how the animals (camels or tamud lambs) had ribbons tied on them to mark them. It was how Avraham marked Yitzchok for a korban.

The pasuk says “and he put it on the wood.” It means, Yitzchok’s marked wrists. Avraham was probably too old to heave Yitzchok onto the wood. Even if he had super strength, no korban is put on the wood before being slaughtered. Every offering gets slaughtered and butchered before it is placed upon the mizbeach. Avraham would have no reason to first tie Yitzchok and then put him on top. If anything, Yitzchok would climb on top and then Avraham would bind him. More logically, though, Yitzchok did not go on top of the wood at all. Avram tied a ribbon on his wrists and then put the marked wrists on the wood. Avraham marked Yitzchok as a korban, placed his hands on the wood, and then was about to shecht Yitzchok. A camel may not go out with ribbons on its legs like Avraham marked Yitzchok. How did he mark Yitzchok with ribbons? Just like a daily tamud offering is marked, with ribbons. In Tehillim this word is explained further. “Lord, Hashem, has given us light, we bind the festival offering with cord, to the horns of the mizbeach.” (Tehillim 118:27). The pasuk uses “asar” to bind. It is not “akud” to the mizbeach but “bound” – assar.

Akud means streaked or marked or ringed. Yaakov’s deal was he would keep the sheep and goats that would appear with these marks on their limbs. It would look like the ribbons on the tamud offering and look the same as the ribbons Yitzchok was marked with to be a korban. Thus, akeidas Yitzchok is more accurately translated as “the Marking of Yitzchok.”