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## פרשת חיי שרה

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פרק כז פסוק י

וַיִּקַּח הָעֶבֶד עֲשָׂרָה גְמָלִים מִגְּמְלֵי אֲדֹנָיו וַיִּלְךָ וְכָל-טוֹב אֲדֹנָיו בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-אָרֶם נְהָרִים  
אֶל-עֵיר נְחוּר:

רש"י

מִגְּמְלֵי אֲדֹנָיו: נִכְרִין הָיוּ מִשְׁאָר גְּמָלִים, שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹצְאִין זְמוּמִין מִפְּנֵי הַגָּזֵל שֶׁלֹּא יָרְעוּ בַּשְּׂדוֹת  
אֲחֵרִים.

מושג

שֶׁהָיוּ יוֹצְאִין זְמוּמִין מִפְּנֵי הַגָּזֵל

### Translation:

They (the camels of אברהם אבינו) would go out muzzled so as not to steal.

### Explanation:

By sending his camels out muzzled, אברהם אבינו was teaching the world to what extent one must go to ensure that neither he nor his animals steal. אברהם was demonstrating that he not only preached Torah, but practiced it as well.

On his way to find a wife for יצחק, Eliezer took these muzzled camels with him, together with symbols of Torah and Avodah, to drive home this message. It was, likewise, Rivka's actions that interested him and would be the test as to her becoming יצחק's wife.

### Looking in the Pasuk:

Our Musag comes to explain why the Pasuk needed to tell me that Eliezer took מִגְּמְלֵי אֲדֹנָיו, camels that belonged to אברהם. The fact seems to be both obvious and irrelevant. The end of the Pasuk, which tells us that he took כָּל טוֹב אֲדֹנָיו, also needs explanation: Why does it not say כָּל רְכוּשׁ אֲדֹנָיו, and how could Eliezer could carry it all in his hands?

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## NOTES

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The Musag quoted by Rashi is taken from the מדרש רבה which teaches:

גמליו של אברהם אבינו היו ניכרים, בכל מקום שהיו יוצאים יוצאים זמומים.

The Midrash is bothered by the fact that the Torah saw a need to tell us that Eliezer took the camels of his master אברהם. Would it not have been sufficient to tell me simply that he took camels? Rather, answer חז"ל, this teaches us that wherever the camels of אברהם went they were recognizable as the camels of אברהם. For, explains the Midrash, the camels of אברהם always went out muzzled (so as not to eat in the fields of others<sup>1</sup>).

The מפרשים question why אברהם's camels should need to be muzzled. Their question arises from the גמרא which teaches that Hashem not only helps Tzaddikim to not sin accidentally, but even ensures that their animals do not sin:

השתא בהמתן של צדיקים אין הקב"ה מביא תקלה על ידם, צדיקים עצמן לא כל שכן.

If so, why would אברהם need to muzzle his animals? Wouldn't Hashem provide them with the protection they required so as not to cause a sin to be committed through the animals of the Tzaddik? The question becomes even more difficult because we happen to know that the animals of אברהם were particularly righteous. In אבות דרב נתן (פרק שמיני) we are taught:

כשם שהצדיקים הראשונים היו חסידים, כך בהמתן היו חסידות. אמרו: גמליו של אברהם אבינו לא נכנסו לבית שיש בו עבודת אלילים. שנאמר: (בראשית כד) "ואנכי פניתי הבית ומקום לגמלים", ואנכי פניתי הבית - מתרפים. ומה תלמוד לומר 'ומקום לגמלים'? מלמד שלא נכנסו לבית לבן הארמי, עד שפינו כל העבודת אלילים מפניהם!<sup>2</sup>

If indeed the camels would not walk into Lavan's house due to the mere presence of idols, they most certainly would not steal food from the side of the road! Why did אברהם need to muzzle them?

We might answer that it is well known that אברהם's mission was to spread the knowledge of Hashem and the moral messages of the Torah. It is therefore entirely possible that אברהם did not muzzle his animals in order that they should not steal, but rather to teach others that this was the correct fashion in which one should travel with one's animals. This is why the Midrash did not say that they were muzzled so that they would not steal (as the words Rashi adds infer) but simply that they were muzzled. Even Rashi's addition might be understood to explain what the muzzling was meant to teach to others.

There is an interesting comment made by the כלי יקר which should serve to connect this idea and the remainder of the Pasuk. He wonders to what the 'כל טוב אדוניו בידו' mentioned at the end of the Pasuk is referring? How, he asks, was Eliezer able to place all the goods of his master in his hands? (Rashi, quoting the Midrash, was bothered by the same question, and answered that it refers to a document that gifted all of אברהם's belongings to יצחק.) The כלי יקר answers:

מדלא פירש במקרא מה היה בידו על כן קרוב לשמוע שקאי על מה שמצינו שלקח בידו, והיינו נזם זהב בקע משקלו ושני צמידים עשרה זהב משקלם. וקראם כל טוב אדניו לפי שאברהם עשה מהם סימן על השקלים, ועל עשרת הדברות שבשני הלווחות, ואין טוב אלא תורה על כן קראם כל טוב אדניו, כי זהו הטובה האמיתית! לכך לא נאמר כל רכוש אדוניו...

Eliezer was thus traveling with objects which symbolized the Torah<sup>3</sup> of his master. But not only did he carry symbols, he acted upon those symbols as well. Thus, when he demanded a high level of

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<sup>1</sup> The words in parenthesis are Rashi's addition on the words of the Midrash. This will be significant as to Rashi's understanding of the Midrash, as we will explain later.

<sup>2</sup> This passage from the אבות דרב נתן significantly changes the way we understand the idea that the animals of Tzaddikim did not sin (the המור of יאיר בן יאיר being the most famous example mentioned in the גמרא). Usually we understand that Hashem protects the Tzaddik so that no sin is committed by him accidentally (for example if someone were to unwittingly serve the Tzaddik something not kosher, Hashem would protect the Tzaddik and make sure that for some reason he would not eat the food). In the same vein, Hashem would do the same for the animal of the Tzaddik so that no sin should be committed even by the Tzaddik's possessions. However, the אבות דרב נתן claims that the animal of the Tzaddik is righteous in his own right and thus warrants protection on his or her own accord!

<sup>3</sup> The two symbols carried by Eliezer were meant to symbolize the שקלים and the עשרת הדברות. While giving רבקה a symbol for the לווחת is easy to understand, why does he give her a symbol for the שקלים? The answer is that the שקלים were used to purchase קרבנות in the בית המקדש. The שקלים thus symbolize the service in the בית המקדש (it is even possible to explain that this was why the symbol of קרבנות was a nose ring, as all sacrifices are ניהוח while Torah is

moral character from the girl who would become the wife of his master's son, he demonstrated that this moral system was part and parcel of his master's life and was evident not only in his personal actions but even in the way his animals traveled<sup>4</sup>.

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. How can we understand the fact that animals are righteous? Do they have free choice to decide between good and bad?
- b. אברהם אבינו sought to teach the world that one must be careful that even his or her possessions should not cause a sin to be committed. Does this idea apply to us as well? How?

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placed on the hands to symbolize guiding our action) . Eliezer was thus giving her a symbol for תורה and a symbol for עבודה.

We can glean a powerful lesson from the message Eliezer sends. רבקה has just demonstrated that she clearly has internalized the lesson of גמילות חסדים. What Eliezer teaches us through his next act is that once one has mastered גמילות חסדים then, and perhaps only then, can תורה ועבודה follow. This concept of דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה explains why אברהם, the מידת התורה של חסד, precedes יצחק, who represents the מידת העבודה and יעקב who represents the מידת התורה.

<sup>4</sup> Could it be possible that the 10 camels were an illusion to the עשרת הדברות as well?