

English

בסייעתא דשמיא

# Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



Vayishlach תשפ"ו

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

ליל 370

## אמרות שמשון

### The Animals Yaakov Sent to Esav Were Not Maaser (Tithe)

**"And he stayed there that night, and he took from what came into his hand a gift for Esav his brother."** (Bereishit 32:14)

In the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Parashat Vayishlach, remez 133), it is taught that Yaakov took all the **tithe** (*maaser*) of his livestock and sent it in the hands of his servants to give to Esav. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* said to him: "You made the sacred profane. [You took the *maaser*, which is consecrated for holy matters, and gave it as a gift to Esav, in whom there is no holiness whatsoever]." Yaakov responded: "*Ribono shel Olam*, what I separated was to flatter the wicked one so that he would not kill me."

It is appropriate to ask: Why did Yaakov send precisely the tithe, and not assets of his personal property?

To explain this, it is worth recalling that, from the beginning, when Yaakov left the Land of Israel and headed to Charan, he had the dream of the ladder and the revelation of Hashem, Who promised to guard him on all his way. When he awoke, Yaakov made a vow to separate the tithe. The intention of this vow was to tithe all the possessions he would acquire outside the Land of Israel, since by being under the jurisdiction of foreign spiritual forces, it was appropriate to give them a portion to prevent them from accusing him. Thus writes the *Siftei Kohen* commentary (on the verse "and he put it into the hands of his servants," citing the *Zohar*) regarding the two he-goats of Yom Kippur: one for Hashem and one for Azazel.

For this reason, when Yaakov woke up from the dream of the ladder and made the vow to separate tithes, he doubled his expression saying: "*aser, aaserenu Lach*" (עֲשֶׂה וְאֶעֱשֶׂנוּ לְךָ):

'I will tithe, tithe it for You' (Bereishit 28:22), hinting at two deliveries: one for Hashem and one "for Azazel." This is hinted at in the rhythmic cantillation accents (*taamei hamikra*) of the Torah reading found on the words of this phrase in Hebrew: below the word "*aser*" (עֲשֶׂה) is the *Tarcha* accent (or also called *Tipecha*), which indicates an interruption and separation from the text that follows, "*aaserenu Lach*" (אֶעֱשֶׂנוּ לְךָ). This implies that Yaakov had made a vow to separate two tithes: the *maaser* that is "profane" — which he would end up giving to Esav, and which was separated from the *maaser* he was going to give for Hashem — and the *maaser* "*kodesh*," which was consecrated for Hashem.

There was no sin in this on Yaakov's part, as this had been his intention from the beginning. However, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* still said to him: "You made the sacred profane," because he should not have called what he sent to Esav "tithe." Furthermore, he should not have mentioned both expressions together in such a way that it would seem that both "*aser*" and "*aaserenu*" would be "*Lach*," for Hashem, giving rise to the suspicion that Yaakov had given Esav something he had promised to dedicate to Hashem.

Yaakov responded to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* by saying that before the possessions come into the person's domain, the name "tithe" does not yet apply. Therefore, when he said "and of everything You give me, I will surely tithe it for You," the tithe did not yet exist: it would only become tithe once he received it and set it aside. And at the

moment of setting it aside, by explicitly stating that it was to be handed over to Esav, it would be clear to everyone that his intention in saying "*aser*" was solely to appease him so that he would not kill him, by giving him a generous portion called "tithe" (similar to the he-goat sent on Yom Kippur to Azazel to "appease" him and prevent him from accusing Israel). Everyone would know that it was not truly a tithe; he was not giving him anything from the tithe that belonged to Hashem.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Vayishlach, Art. 4)

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## The Zera Shimshon on the Prophet Obadiah

*The words of the Zera Shimshon on the absolute dedication of the Prophet Obadiah were placed at the entrance of Obadiah's cave, in the locality of Baram • Thousands visit his tomb, known as a propitious place for blessing and salvation • A particular Segula for the matter of having enduring offspring.*

In the *parashah* of *Vayishlach* (art. 3), **Rabenu the Zera Shimshon** brings an extraordinary passage concerning the **sacrifice and dedication of the Prophet Obadiah**. In those days, Queen Ezebel, wife of Ahab King of Israel, decreed the extermination of all the prophets of Hashem. Obadiah, who was not yet a prophet and served as the steward of Ahab's palace, **risked his life** and hid one hundred prophets in two caves, personally taking on the task of providing them with food and sustenance throughout the entire time they remained hidden from the affliction that threatened them.

Well known are the sayings of our Sages (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Pe'ah* 1:1): in the generation of Ahab, they went out to war and were victorious, with no casualties, whereas in the generation of King David, they went out to war and fell. This was despite the fact that in the time of King David, Torah study reached such perfection that, from the region of Dan to Be'er Sheva, there was no boy or girl who did not know the Torah in its **forty-nine facets of purity and forty-nine of impurity**. Why, then, did the generation of Ahab deserve more? Because in their time, they did not speak *lashon hara* (evil speech). Indeed, when the Prophet Eliyahu presented himself on Mount Carmel and proclaimed (*Melachim I* 18:22): **"I alone am left as a Prophet of Hashem,"** the entire nation knew that Obadiah had hidden one hundred prophets in caves... **and not a single one went to the king to betray that information!**

The **Zera Shimshon** also analyzes the Talmudic passage that explains why Obadiah divided the prophets into two caves and did not hide them all together in one. The *Gemara (Sanhedrin 39b)* says that Obadiah learned the strategy from Yaakov Avinu: when Yaakov prepared to meet Esav, he set up three avenues — prayer, gifts, and war — and also divided his camp into two, saying: **"If Esav comes and attacks one part, the other will be able to escape."** Rabbi Elazar comments that Obadiah learned this tactic from Yaakov Avinu and therefore divided the prophets into two groups. Another explanation

is brought by Rabbi Avhu: that Obadiah did not need to learn this from Jacob; simply, **a single cave could not accommodate everyone.**

**Rabenu the Zera Shimshon** develops this discussion in a deep and surprising way.

In the locality of **Baram**, in the north of Israel — about a twenty-minute drive from the holy site of Meron — lies the marked tomb of the **Prophet Obadiah**, the student of the Prophet Eliyahu, of blessed memory. According to tradition, his tomb was marked by R. Shmuel ben Shimshon and by "Yad Moshe"; it is also recounted that **Rabenu the Or HaChaim** visited and prayed there in the year 1742.

Throughout the year, **thousands of Jews** flock to this holy place, which is considered **propitious for receiving salvation and mercy**. Many stay in the structure built over the cave, which has been recently refurbished to serve as a suitable space for study, prayer, *siyum masechet* celebrations, and festive *mitzvah* meals.

One of the scholars — an erudite man from Bnei Brak who regularly visits the site and studies the Torah of the **Zera Shimshon** daily — was deeply moved upon learning Rabenu's commentary on the **cave of the Prophet Obadiah**. He then decided to

benefit those who come to the site and offer them a significant **spiritual preparation** before entering the holy place.

After a period of intense activity and arrangements, an emotional ceremony was held with the participation of a *minyan* of Sages who studied the words of the **Zera Shimshon** together and celebrated a *mitzvah* meal. There, at the entrance to the cave, they placed an impressive, beautifully designed, large-sized sign that presents the **Zera Shimshon's** analysis on this week's *parashah, Vayishlach*. Since then, many of the visitors to the site study the **Zera Shimshon's** commentary on the dedication and bravery of the Prophet Obadiah, and **enjoy the sweetness of his teachings** in explaining those events.

The Zera Shimshon on the Prophet Obadiah



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