

”כלנו כצאן תעינו”

אבנר רמו



speckled
spotted
streaked

We read in the Book of Genesis about what Jacob requested from Laban in return for shepherding Laban’s flock:

אעבר בכל-צאנך היום, הסר משם כל-שה נקד וטלוא וכל-שה-חום בכשבים, וטלוא ונקד בעזים; והיה שכרי.

“I will pass through all your flock to-day, removing from thence every speckled and spotted kid, and every dark kid among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and that shall be my wages” (Gen 30:32).

However, the syntax of this verse suggests that **וכל-שה-חום** - “and every dark kid” is an erroneous insertion by a late scribe. In addition, the logic of this verse suggests that here **הסר** (*haser*) is a vowel letter deletion and a vowel letter exchange error of **ואסר** (*vaaser*) - “and I will remove” (e.g. Is 10:13; Eze 16:50; Zep 3:11).

Similarly, we find in the next verse, that in the future when Laban will inspect Jacob’s flock:
כל אשר-איננו נקד וטלוא בעזים וחום בכשבים-גנוב הוא אתי.

“Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and dark among the sheep, that if found with me shall be counted stolen” (Gen 30:33).

Here again the syntax suggests that the word **חום** - “dark” is superfluous.

Two verses later we find:

ויסר ביום ההוא את-התישים העקדים והטלאים, ואת כל-העזים הנקדות והטלאת
“And he removed that day the he-goats that were streaked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted” (Gen 30:35).

While in verses Gen 30:32-33 Jacob spoke about sheep and goats, in verse Gen 30:35 we hear about **תישים** (*theyashim*) instead of **כשבים** (*kesavim*) or **כבשים** (*kevasim*) - “sheep.” However, if here **תישים** (*theyashim*) is a letter-substitution error of **כבשים** (*kevasim*) - “sheep”, then this discrepancy disappears.

In addition, it appears odd that in contrast to verse Gen 30:32 Jacob removed **העקדים והטלאים** - “(the) streaked and (the) spotted” instead of the **נקד וטלוא** - “speckled and spotted.” However, if **העקדים** (*haa'qudim*) is a letter-substitution error of **הנקדים** (*hanequdim*) - “the speckled”, then it would appear that Jacob indeed did what he suggested to do.

Four verses later we find: **ותלדן הצאן, עקדים נקדים וטלאים** - “And the flocks gave birth to streaked, speckled, and spotted” (Gen 30:39).

It is possible that we read here about the “streaked, speckled, and spotted” (no mention of the **חום** - “dark”), because a late scribe inserted here **נקדים** (*nequdim*) as a correction for the corrupt word **עקדים** (*a'qudim*).

In the next chapter we hear Jacob telling his wives:

**ואביכן התל בי, והחלף את-משכרתי עשרת מנים; ולא-נתנו אלהים להרע עמדי.
אם-כה יאמר, נקדים יהיה שכרך-וילדו כל-הצאן נקדים; ואם-כה יאמר, עקדים יהיה
שכרך-וילדו כל-הצאן עקדים.**

“And your father had mocked me, and changed my wages ten times; but God did not let him to hurt me.

If he said thus: The speckled shall be your wages; then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said thus: The streaked shall be your wages; then bore all the flock streaked” (Gen 31:7-8).

We may wonder, why we do not hear in these verses about the **טלאים** - “spotted” ones. It is suggested that here a late scribe erred by replacing the **טלאים** - “spotted” with the **עקדים** (*a'qudim*) - “streaked.”

It is also odd that two verses later we are told that the flock of Jacob contained three types of flock: **עקדים נקדים וברדים** - “streaked, speckled, and grizzled” (Gen 31:10; see also: Gen 31:12).

Whether **ברדים** are the Greek: “ash-colored spotted”, or the English: “grizzled”, we have not heard previously about such type of flock belonging to Jacob or Laban.