

A SPLENDID THOUGHT FROM THE KEDUSHAS LEVI

THE LOFTY MESSAGE OF THE WAGONS THAT YOSEF SENT YAAKOV: THE EXILE IS AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE CYCLE OF REDEMPTION

In our Parsha we find the following verses (Bereishis 45:25-26):

“ויעלו ממצרים ויבואו ארץ כנען אל יעקב אביהם, ויגידו לו לאמר עוד יוסף חי וכי הוא מושל בכל ארץ מצרים, ויפג לבו כי לא האמין להם, וידברו אליו את כל דברי יוסף אשר דיבר אליהם, וירא את העגלות אשר שלח יוסף לשאת אותו ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם”

“They went up from Egypt, and came to the Land of Canaan, to Yaakov their father. And they told him, saying, ‘Yosef is still alive’ and that he is ruler over the entire land of Egypt; but his (Yaakov’s) heart stood still, for he did not believe them. And they related to him all the words of Yosef that he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him; then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.”

We must understand why only after Yaakov saw “the wagons that Yosef had sent” was he moved to the point that the holy spirit was renewed within him. (Rashi’s explanation that this was a hint to the parsha of “the calf whose neck is broken” is well known. However, Torah, like a rock exploded by a hammer, can be expounded in many different directions.)

We must also explain that which it states here: “the wagons that Yosef had sent.” This verse clearly implies that Yosef had sent the wagons. However, the verse detailing Yaakov’s entrance to Egypt states (Bereishis 46:5): “וַיִּקָּם יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּשָׂא בָנָיו” - “So Yaakov arose from Beer-sheva; the sons if Yisrael transported Yaakov their father and their young children and wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to transport him.” This verse seems to say that Pharaoh was the one who sent the wagons to Yaakov.

The Zohar (Vayigash, 211a) resolves this issue by explaining that there are wagons from the side of holiness, “the wagons that Yosef sent”, and there are wagons from the side of impurity,

“the wagons that Pharaoh sent.” We must try to understand, albeit according to our limited comprehension, what exactly these two types of wagons are.

Additionally, it is proper to dwell on the words of encouragement that HKB”H gave Yaakov immediately after Yosef sent the wagons to bring him to Egypt (Bereishis 46:3-4): “וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹקֵי אֲבִיךָ אֵל תִּירָא מִרְדֵּה מִצְרַיִם כִּי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשִׁימְךָ שָׁם, - “And He said, ‘I am the Almighty – G-d of your father. Do not be afraid of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes.’” The commentators have worked hard to explain that which HKB”H told Yaakov: “and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes.”

HKB”H RUNS THE CYCLE OF THE WORLD

The beginning of our journey will be illuminated by the words of the holy Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy”a, in Kedushas Levi. In his holy words, he explains the verse as follows: “וַיִּרְא אֵת הָעֲגָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף. רִמּוֹז לּוֹ לִיעֲקֹב שֶׁאֵל יִדָּאג מֵהַגְלוּת, כִּי כָל זֶה הוּא הַסִּיבָה לְגֵאוּלָּה, כִּי הִרְעָה הָיָא הַסִּיבָה לְטוֹבָה. וְהִנֵּה הָעֲגָלוֹת הוּא לְשׁוֹן עֵיגוּל, וְהַסִּיבָה הִיא - “And he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent’: Yosef hinted to Yaakov that he should not worry about the exile because all of this is the eventual cause of redemption, as bad always leads to good. עגלות comes from the word עיגול, circle, as the cause of something is always circular.”

At first glance, Rav Levi Yitzchak’s intention is hidden from us. What does he mean that “the cause of something is always circular”?

As a servant follows his master, let us grab onto the coattails of Rav Levi Yitzchak and attempt to explain his holy words. When we think about it we realize that wagons, which roll

from place to place on wheels that are circular, are a beautiful representation of the ways of Hashem in His running of the world. He rolls the “wheels of nature” in order that His Glory be revealed through them. This is what the Mishnah states (Avos 6:11): “Every single thing that HKB”H created, He only created for His Glory.”

And just as a wagon cannot travel from place to place without a driver, whose job is to direct the wagon and bring the passengers to their destination, so too, l’havdil elef havdalos, HKB”H is the driver of the world. He directs all the actions taking place in this world towards the desired result of the revelation of His Glory in this world. This is what we find in the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 39:1) that Avraham Avinu undertook an investigation to find the director of the world: “Our father Avraham used to say, ‘Is it possible that this world does not have something directing it?’ HKB”H peered down at him and said, ‘I am the Master of this world.’”

And how beautiful are the words of the Rambam, the central pillar whom all of the Jewish people lean on, in explaining this matter of HKB”H running the universe and the natural cycles (Yesodei HaTorah 1:1,5-6):

“יִסוּד הַיְסוּדוֹת וְעִמּוּד הַחֲכָמוֹת, לִידַע שִׁישׁ שֵׁם מִצּוֹי רֵאשׁוֹן, וְהוּא מִמְצִיא כָל נִמְצָא, וְכָל הַנִּמְצָאִים מִשְׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ וּמֵה שְׁבִינִיָּהֶם, לֹא נִמְצָאוּ אֶלָּא מֵאֲמַתַּת הַמִּצְאוֹ... הַמִּצְוִי זֶה הוּא אֱלֹקֵי הָעוֹלָם, אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ, וְהוּא הַמְנַהֵיג [את] הַגִּלְגָּל בְּכַח שְׂאִין לֹ קֶץ וְתַכְלִית, בְּכַח שְׂאִין לוֹ הַפֶּסֶק, שֶׁהַגִּלְגָּל סוֹבֵב תָּמִיד, וְאִי אֲפֹשֶׁר שִׁסּוּב בְּלֹא מִסְבָּב, וְהוּא בְרוּךְ הוּא הַמְסַבֵּב אוֹתוֹ בְּלֹא יָד וּבְלֹא גּוֹף, וְיִדְעֵת דְּבַר זֶה מִצּוֹת עֲשֵׂה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שְׁמוֹת כ-ב) אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ.”

“The foundation of all foundations and the pillar all of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being... This Being is the G-d of the world and the Lord of the entire earth. He controls the universe with infinite and unbounded power.

This power [continues] without interruption, because the universe is constantly revolving, and it is impossible for it to revolve without someone causing it to revolve. [That one is] He, blessed be He, who causes it to revolve without a hand or any [other] corporeal dimension. The knowledge of this concept is a positive commandment, as it says (Shemos 20:2): “אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ”, ‘I am Hashem, your G-d.’”

THE GEMATRIA OF MERKAVA SHELEIMA = AVRAHAM, YITZCHAK, YAAKOV, DOVID

With this we can explain that which the holy Kabbalist, the Megale Amukos (Vaeschanan, 252) writes, that just as there is a chariot from the side of holiness, there is also a chariot from the side of impurity. In his holy words: “It is known that when Moshiach comes the chariot will be completed. ‘Perfect chariot’, אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק יַעֲקֹב” has the same gematria (652) as “מֶרְכָבָה שְׁלֵימָה” דו”ד. Whereas in exile, where the impurity reigns, we have an impure chariot, מֶרְכָבָה טְמֵאָה, which has the same gematria (322) as “כָּלֵב רַע” and “בַּעַל צַפְנִי”. This chariot has a כָּלֵב רַע engraved on it, in connection with that which it states (Shemos 11:7): לֹא: “יִחַרֵץ כָּלֵב לְשׁוֹנוֹ”, ‘And no dog shall whet its tounge.’”

According to our approach this means that our holy Avos and Dovid HaMelech dedicated their entire lives to publicize that there is a G-d in the world, who moves all the cycles of the world from the holy chariot, there being no force besides Him. Through these efforts they became a chariot of holiness themselves, as Hashem ran the world through them and their descendants that accepted the Torah. This is what the Megale Amukos means, that “perfect chariot” equals Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Dovid.

However, the words of the wisest of all men are known (Koheles 7-14): “זֶה לַעֲוֹנוֹת זֶה עֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים” - “God has made this corresponding to that.” Therefore, just as the Avos and Dovid HaMelech are the chariot on the side of holiness, in that they publicized the absolute Oneness of Hashem in His being the only force in the world, so too, correspondingly, you have Pharaoh and his army, the chariot on the side of impurity.

They denied Hashem’s rule and explained everything based on the laws of nature, as it says (Shemos 5:2): “וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה מִי ה'” - “And Pharaoh replied, ‘Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice to send out Israel? I do not know Hashem!’”. And this is what the Megale Amukos means, that “impure chariot” equals בַּעַל צַפְנִי and כָּלֵב רַע, as these are the impure spiritual forces of Egypt.

THE GEMATRIA OF YAVAN = GALGAL, THE STUDY OF ASTROLOGY

It fits beautifully to include the precious words of the Sefas Emes (Chanuka, 1901):

“When the evil Greek kingdom rose up to make them forget their Torah’: The Greeks had the natural sciences, and this type of wisdom leads a person to forget the role of the Creator and His Divine providence. The purpose of the Jewish people is to testify that it is really G-d that is directing all of nature. יו”ך, Greece, has the same gematria (66) as גלגל, cycle, because the Greeks were experts in astrology.

But in truth, all of the constellations are being turned by G-d, as it written in the holy books: אנכי ה' אלקיך, I am Hashem, your G-d, אלהיך has the same gematria (66) as גלגל, which is the same gematria as הו”ה ויהי”ה, He was, is, and will be. This teaches that all the revolutions of the natural cycles all come from G-d, they were all created for His Glory, to teach us that G-d is really the beginning and end of everything.”

We learn from the holy words of the Sefas Emes that already in the first commandment HKB”H reminded us never to forget that He is the driving force in the world, turning all the natural cycles from beginning to end. As the Navi writes (Yeshayahu 44:6): **“כה אמר ה' מלך ישראל וגואלו ה' צבאות אני ראשון ואני אחרון ומבלעדי אין אלקים”** - “So said Hashem, King of Israel and its Redeemer, Hashem, Master of Legions: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and aside from Me there is no G-d.’” In other words, the entire universe, from beginning to end, is run solely by HKB”H.

This Sefas Emes also helps us understand that which is brought down in the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 5:1), that when we utter the four letter name of הו”ה we are to have in mind הוה, ויהיה, that Hashem was, is, and will be, which is the gematria of גלגל. By having this intention we inculcate within us that HKB”H, being that He is Omnitemporal, bridges the past, present and future, in order to direct everything to that ultimate goal of His revelation and the sanctification of His Name.

THE PURPOSE OF EXILE IS TO LEAD TO REDEMPTION

Let us continue along this path to explain the words of the Kedushas Levi regarding the wagons that Yosef sent Yaakov. It is known that the descent of the Jewish people to Egypt and the back breaking slavery was all a purification process to enable the subsequent receiving of the Torah. The Torah says (Devarim 4:20): **“ואתכם לקח ה' ויוציא אתכם מכור הברזל ממצרים להיות לו לעם נחלה:”** - “But Hashem has taken you and withdrawn you from

the iron crucible, from Egypt, to be a nation of heritage for Him, as this very day.” Rashi explains that כור is the utensil used to purify gold. We see from this that the exile is an indispensable part of the redemption. Without this purifying process we would not have merited the redemption and the subsequent receipt of the Torah.

Now our eyes have been illuminated enough to understand Rav Levi Yitzchak’s holy words: Yosef was encouraging his father not to be dispirited over the descent to Egypt. While it was true that the Jewish people would have to stay there for 210 years, this was comparable to the wheels of the wagon that roll from place to place until they reach their destination. In similar fashion, HKB”H was rolling the wheels of the exile process, in order to purify us there, to hasten the redemption and the acceptance of the Torah. This is why Yaakov’s spirit was revived after he saw the wagons with their wheels.

While this concept is pretty clear, let us bring a support to it from one of the greatest Jewish thinkers, the holy Rebbe Moshe Chayim Luzzatto zt”l in his Da’as Tevunos (Chapter 128):

“ובאמת תראי, שגם במעשים אין רע נמצא בעולם אלא בחלקי הדברים טרם התחברם להשלמת הדבר, אך אין דבר מושלם שיהיה רע, וזה כיון שידענו שכל מה שהקב”ה עושה הוא אך טוב מאד, הנה מה שנראה חסר בצד אחד מתנאי הדברים, נשלם החיסרון ההוא בתנאי אחר שמשלים בעדו, ולא היה החיסרון ההוא אלא מפני שלא נשלם הדבר ההוא בכל תנאיו, וכיון שישתלם ודאי הוא טוב.”

“In truth you will see that in actions as well, there is no evil in this world, except in sections of the matter before it has reached its completion. There is no thing that has reached its conclusion that is evil. This is because we know that HKB”H only that does that which is completely good. That which appears lacking in any aspect is only so because it is missing that which will bring it to its conclusion. Eventually it will be completed by some other thing that will make it whole and good.”

The Ramchal is saying that any time something appears negative to us, it is because we lack the ability to see the whole picture. According to the current situation it appears bad. Were we able to see the whole picture, not only the past, but also the future, when HKB”H finishes the complete cycle of this matter, we would realize that there is no bad in this world. Every action has a purpose and a destination that is only for the benefit of the person.

This concept is crystalized in the Gemara (Brachos 60b): “Rav Huna said in the name of Rav who said in the name of Rebbe Meir, and so it was taught in a Baraisa in the name of Rebbe Akiva: a person should always accustom themselves to say that all that Hashem does, He does for the good.” The Gemara goes on to tell the story where Rebbe Akiva was traveling and he arrived at a certain town and they refused to give him lodgings. He said: “All that Hashem does is for the good.”

He went and slept in the field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey, and a candle. A wind came and extinguished the candle, a cat came and ate the rooster, and a lion came and ate the donkey. He said: “All that Hashem does is for the good.” That very night, an army came and took the city captive. Rebbe Akiva said to them: “Did I not tell you that whatever HKB”H does is for the good? Had the candle been burning and the donkey and rooster been making noise, they would have captured me as well!”

HE WHO TRUSTS IN HASHEM, KINDNESS ENVELOPS HIM

At first glance, the extinguishing of the candle and the loss of the rooster and donkey appear like a harsh judgment. However, Rebbe Akiva, in his great faith in the unending kindness of Hashem, understood that he had not seen the full completed circle which would turn this experience into a positive one. And indeed, so it was, when the army came and Rebbe Akiva and those traveling with him had their lives spared.

We see clearly that when we encounter what appears to be a negative occurrence, it is incumbent upon us to believe with complete faith that all that Hashem does is for the best. We must realize that this action is not an end unto itself. We must let it roll and roll until it completes its cycle, at which point we will understand what Hashem was planning from the beginning. This is what the Kedushas Levi means when he says the exile is a cycle, and this was the intent of Yosef in sending the wagons to Yaakov.

Now, at this point one might ask, if it is true that HKB”H intends to roll every action towards an eventual positive outcome, why is it necessary for us to state our belief that “everything Hashem does is for the good?” Won’t it reach this positive outcome whether we believe it or not? The answer is that it is specifically the person’s belief and trust that Hashem will spin this action towards a positive conclusion which causes Him to do so.

This matter is explained by that which the Oheiv Yisrael brings in the name of Rebbe Michel M’Zlotchev zy”a (Parshas Noach): the word אמונה is an expression of raising or drawing as the verse says (Esther 2:7): “ויהי אומן את הדסה” - “And he [Mordechai] raised Hadassah”, because it is through אמונה in Hashem that a person draws down the very thing he is believing in from heaven to earth, from potential into action. However, if a person, G-d forbid, does not have faith that HKB”H turns everything into good, then he stops the circle from being completed.

This is what the pleasant singer of Israel means (Tehillim 32:10): “רבים מכאובים לרשע והבוטח בה’ חסד יסובבנו” - “Many are the agonies of the wicked, but as for one who trusts in Hashem, kindness encircles him.” For the wicked person who does not trust that Hashem directs everything towards an eventual good actually prevents the salvation of Hashem. The matter gets stuck in the middle of the cycle and ends up being strict judgment. Therefore, “many are the agonies of the wicked.” However, on the other hand, “as for the one who trusts in Hashem, kindness encircles him”. The word יסובבנו-encircles, specifically, is used, because it is his very trust that allows HKB”H to complete the circle.

AND HE REMOVED THE WHEELS OF THEIR CHARIOTS

Continuing along this path we can explain the words of the Holy Zohar: the wagons that Yosef sent were from the side of holiness, while the wagons that Pharaoh sent were from the side of impurity. Yosef’s wagons symbolized Hashem’s rolling of all the natural cycles to their eventual destination: the revelation of His Glory. So too, this exile was just a necessary step towards the eventual redemption. Pharaoh, on the other hand, represented the side of impurity, who try to use the natural cycles to, G-d forbid, deny the existence of Hashem. As Pharaoh, the representative of all the impurity of Egypt, put it: “Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice... I do not know Hashem.” Pharaoh’s intention was to make use of the cycle of exile to drown the Jewish people in the 50 levels of impurity contained within Egypt.

Based on the above, we can understand that which it says (Beshalach 14:23): “וירדפו מצרים ויבואו אחריהם כל סוס פרעה רכבו” - “Egypt pursued and came after them – every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen – into the midst of the sea.” This means that Pharaoh and his army galvanized

