

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XI: Vavigash (Gen. 44:18–47:27)

Essay 7. Don't benefit from a stingy person

פִּירֵשׁ רש"י על פסוק "וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הָעֲגָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף" וכו', סימן מסר להם במה הנה עוסק בפירוש ממנו בפרשת עגלה ערופה וכו'. יש לדקדק למה דוקא ארבע הדבר שיוסף יהנה נפרש מאביו בפרשת עגלה ערופה, ומהו זה הרמז ששלח יוסף עכשיו לאביו.

Rashi interpreted the verse, “But when they recounted all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons [עגלות] [agalot] that Joseph sent to transport him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.”¹ Rashi wrote:

This is a sign that he delivered to them about what [Torah] he had been busy [learning with his father] when he separated from him: the heifer [עגלה] [egla] that had its neck broken.² This is why it says, “and when he saw the wagons that Joseph sent,” and it doesn't say “that Pharaoh sent.”

- Rashi on Gen. 45:27, based on Gen. Rabbah 94:3

I.e., the words for cart [עגלה] [agala] and heifer [עגלה] [egla] are spelled with the same Hebrew consonants, though they are pronounced differently and have different origins. The midrash interprets “when he saw the wagons” homiletically as “when he saw [in his mind] the heifer [that had its neck broken],” Jacob remembered the last Torah section he learned with Joseph.

This was Deut. 21:1–9. If a murder victim was discovered in open land between cities in the Land of Israel, and authorities could not determine the killer, then the elders and judges were to measure the distances from the corpse to the nearby towns. The elders of the nearest town were to take a heifer that had never worked down to an ever-flowing wadi and break its neck. The priests were to come forward, and all the elders were to wash their hands over the heifer.

We have to check why it specifically happened that Joseph would be separated from his father while learning Torah in the section of the heifer that had its neck broken, and what this hint is that Joseph sent now to his father.

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¹ Gen. 45:27.

² Deut. 21:1–9.

וַיֹּזֶר לְדַאֲיָתָא בְּפֶרֶק ז' דְּסוּטָה עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה אֵינָה בְּאָה אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל צָרֵי הָעֵינִן וְכוּ'. עַל כֵּן הִקְב"ה רָצָה שְׂיֹסֵף יִתְפָּרֵשׁ מֵאֲבִיו דְּנֹקָא כְּשֶׁהֵינָה עוֹסֵק בְּפִרְשֵׁת עֵגְלָה, דְּהוֹאִיל שְׂיֹסֵף הֵיךְ תְּחִלַּת גְּלוּת מִצְרַיִם תִּהְיֶה לוֹ תְּמִיד לְזִכְרוֹן פִּרְשֵׁת עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה שְׂאֵינָה בְּאָה אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל צָרֵי הָעֵינִן, וּבְזֶה יִשְׁמְרוּ עֲצָמָם יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂלֵא לִיְהִנּוּת מְלָחָם הַמִּצְרַיִים שֶׁהוּא רַע עֵינִן, דְּאֵי תָא בְּזֶהר פִּרְשֵׁת שְׁמוֹת וְ"ל, דְּאֵי כִּד נִחְתּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִצְרַיִם, לֹא יִטְעֲמוּן נִהְמָא דְּמִצְרַיִם, לֹא אֲשַׁתְּבְּקוּ בְּגְלוּתָא, וְלֹא יַעֲיֻקוּן לוֹ [1] מִצְרָאֵי עַכ"ל.

It can be said that it's brought in the seventh chapter of tractate Sotah:

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: [When a person is found slain between two cities and it is not known who killed him,] **a heifer whose neck is broken is brought.** [This occurs] **only because of miserly people.**

As it is stated: "And they shall speak and say: Our hands have not shed this blood."³ But did it enter our hearts [to think] that the Elders of the court are murderers? [I.e., why is it necessary for them to publicize that they did not kill him?] Rather, [they must declare: It is] not [that this victim] came to us and we dismissed him, and it is not that we saw him and left him. I.e., it's not that he came to us and we dismissed him without food, and we did not see him and then leave him without an escort. [Rather, it is miserly people who do not provide others with food and cause them to travel to places where they might be murdered.]

- Sotah 38b

Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted Joseph to part from his father especially when he would be engaged in the section of the heifer that had its neck broken. He wanted this since Joseph was the beginning of the Egyptian exile, so that he would always have a memory of the section of the heifer that had its neck broken, which only came because of miserly people. In this way, Israel would guard themselves, that they wouldn't benefit from the Egyptian food, which was associated with the evil eye. For it is brought in the Zohar, parashat Shemot, and this is the language:

Rabbi Chiya opened the discussion saying: "Do not eat of a stingy man's food; do not crave for his dainties."⁴ I.e., do not eat the food of him who has an evil eye, because the food or benefit from that person who has an evil eye is not worth eating or benefiting from. When Israel descended into Egypt, **had they not tasted the food of Egypt, they would not have been forsaken in exile in Egypt, and the Egyptians would not have been able to harm them.**

- Zohar, Shemot, II:3a

³ Deut. 21:7.

⁴ Prov. 23:6.

ולכן יוסף פִּשְׁרָצָה שְׁאָבִיו גִּרְד אֵלָיו לְמִצְרַיִם וְהָיָה מִתִּירָא פֶּן לֹא יִרְצָה לְבֹא מִחֲמַת יְרֵאת הַגָּלוּת שְׁפָכֵר הָיָה נוֹדֵע לָהֶם, שְׁלַח לוֹ סִימָן זֶה שֶׁל עֲגֻלָּה עֲרוּפָה, כְּלוּמַר הַגָּלוּת שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם אֵינּוּ הַכְרָחִי וְדָבָר נִגְזָר מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, רַק הוּא מִחֲמַת רַע עֵינַי, וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל יְכוּלִים לִיזְהָר שֶׁלֹּא לֶאֱכֹל מִלַּחֲמֵם, וְלִכְּן אָמַר לוֹ, "וְכִלְכַּלְתִּי אִתְּךָ שָׂם", דִּהְיִינוּ אֲנִי מִשְׁלֵי אֲזוּן אוֹתָךְ וְלֹא תֵאָכֵל מִשְׁלֵי מִצְרַיִם כְּלוּם.

Therefore, when Joseph wanted his father to come down to him in Egypt, and he was afraid lest he would not want to come because of the fear of the Exile, which was already known to them,⁵ he sent him this sign of a heifer that had its neck broken. This is as if to say, the Exile of Egypt is not necessary and something decreed from Heaven; it is only because of an evil eye. Israel can be careful not to eat from their food, and therefore [Joseph] said to [his father], “There I will provide for you,”⁶ that is, I will feed you from my food and you will not eat anything from the food of Egypt.

אֲמַנָּם אִי קִשְׁיָא, הָא קִשְׁיָא: דְּבַפְרָק ט' דְּסוּטָה אֲמַרִּינוּ שְׁבִשְׁכָר אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת שְׁלוֹוְהוּ פְרֵעָה לְאַבְרָהָם זָכָה וְנִשְׁתַּעֲבַד בְּבָנָיו אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. וְאִם כֵּן אַף אִם לֹא יֵאָכְלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלַּחֲמֵם שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם כִּבְר זָכָה בָּהֶם פְרֵעָה. וַיֵּשׁ לוֹמַר דְּלוּיַת פְרֵעָה לְאַבְרָהָם אִין בָּהּ לְבַדָּה טַעַם מִסְפִּיק לְהַשְׁתַּעֲבַד בְּבָנָיו, אֲלֵא לְפִי שְׁאֲכָלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלַּחֲמֵם זֶה וְזֶה גָרַם לְהִיּוֹת בְּגָלוּת, שְׁהַנָּה כְּמַב הַכְּלִי יִקָּר בְּפִרְשָׁה זֹו שְׁטַעַם הַלְנָה הֵינּוּ שְׁכַל הַהוּלָךְ בְּלֹא לְנָה מִן הָעִיר יֵשׁ לְחוּשׁ שְׁמָא יִרְאוּ הַלְקָטִים שְׁהוּא הוּלָךְ לְבַדוֹ וְנִתְשַׁבּוּ שְׁאִין לוֹ גּוֹאֵל וְקָרוֹב לְפִיכָךְ "כָּל-מִצְאָו" הַרְגָנָה בְּחֻשְׁבוּ שְׁאִין מִי שְׁיִדְרוֹשׁ דָּמוֹ מִיָּדוֹ עַכ"ל.

Actually, if there is a difficulty, this is the difficulty: In Gen. 12:10–20, Pharaoh takes Sarai, believing her to be Abram’s sister. When he learns she is actually his wife, he releases her, and provides men to accompany the couple as they leave Egypt. **In the ninth chapter of tractate Sotah 46b, it is said by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that in the merit of the four *amot* that Pharaoh accompanied Abraham, he merited that [Abraham’s] children would be enslaved for four hundred years in his service. If so, even if Israel wouldn’t eat from the food of the Egyptians, Pharaoh would have already merited them.**

It can be said that Pharaoh’s escort of Abraham alone is not sufficient reason to enslave his children. Rather, it’s because Israel ate from their food, and this caused them to be in Exile, for thus wrote the author of the *Kli Yakar*⁷ for this parasha. He wrote that the reason of the accompaniment of Abraham and Sarah by Pharaoh was that everyone who walks from a city without accompaniment should worry lest robbers will see that he is walking alone and think that he has no savior and relative, therefore “anyone who met him”⁸ will kill him, thinking that there is no one who would demand his blood from his hand.

⁵ Gen. 15:13.

⁶ Gen. 45:11.

⁷ Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz, *Kli Yakar* (1602) on Gen. 42:9.

⁸ Gen. 4:15.

וכן היתה פנונת פרעה פשלוניה אברהם ושרה, להודיע לכל העם שהוא אוהבם ויתבע דמם מיד כל הקמים עליהם, ולכן זכה שהשעבוד שפבר נגזר "בארץ לא להם" יהיה מתקיים במצרים ונקא ולא באומה אחרת. ורש"י ע"ה כתב על פסוק "ונתנו-לי להם לאכל" שהמבקש להם קרוי נעזב, והטעם הוא שפשעוהו מבקש להם מסיר בטחוננו מן הקב"ה שפבר הבטיח, "נתן להם לכל-בשר", ומשום הדי קרוי נעזב ונקא שנעזב מן הקב"ה הואיל שלא בטח בו כראוי לו.

Thus, it was Pharaoh's intention when he accompanied Abraham and Sarah, to inform all the people that he loved [Abraham and Sarah] and would immediately demand the blood from all who would rise up against them. Therefore, he merited that the servitude that had already been decreed, "And [G-d] said to Abram, 'Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years,'"⁹ would begin specifically in Egypt and not in another nation.

Rashi, peace be upon him, wrote on the verse, "Jacob then made a vow, saying, 'If God remains with me, protecting me on this journey that I am making, and giving me food to eat and clothing to wear,'"¹⁰ that one who begs for food is called "forsaken."¹¹ The reason is that when he requests food, he removes his trust from the Holy One, Blessed be He, who already promised, "Who gives food to all flesh,"¹² and because of this is called "forsaken" from the Holy One, Blessed be He, since he did not trust in Him as was proper for him.

ומעתה ישאל במצרים אם היו בוטחים בהקב"ה שימתן להם להלחם לפי צרכם, בשכר הבטחה זו נמי היו נגאלים תוך ומיד, כשם שלבסוף נגאלו בזכות האמנה אף על פי שעדיין לא נשלם הקץ, כדאיתא בילקוט על פסוק "ניאמינו בה" ויעיי"ש, אמנם לאחר שאכלו מלחמם של המצריים נקרא שהסירו בטחונם מהקב"ה ולפיכך הניחם בצער הגלות.

From now we understand that regarding Israel in Egypt if they had trusted G-d to give them food according to their needs, in the merit of this trust they would have been redeemed immediately, just as they were finally redeemed in the merit of their faith, even though the end of the Exile had not yet been completed. This is as it was brought in the Yalkut Shimoni¹³ on the verse, "When the people saw the wondrous power which the L-rd had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared the L-rd; they had faith in the L-rd and in his servant, Moses."¹⁴ However, after they ate from the food of the Egyptians, it's said that they removed their trust from the Holy One, Blessed be He, and therefore He placed them in the sorrow of the Exile.

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⁹ Gen. 15:13.

¹⁰ Gen. 28:20.

¹¹ Rashi on Gen. 28:20: "One who begs food is called "forsaken, as it is said, 'I have not seen the righteous forsaken and his descendants begging food' (Ps. 37:25)."

¹² Ps. 136:25.

¹³ Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Beshalach, remez 240.

¹⁴ Ex. 14:31.