

Geulas Yisrael #35

Bo: A Money Wire to Yerushalayim

Moshe Taragin

We departed Egypt without much food, but stocked with clothing, gold and silver. At the outset of the redemption, Hashem had already directed Moshe about the Jews "borrowing" precious goods from the Egyptians "on their way out". As redemption nears, Hashem reminded Moshe of this extremely important "petitioning" of gold and silver. Evidently, this "handover" - as abrasive as it sounds- is a crucial part of our geulah. The transfer of wealth to the Jews served numerous functions.

First of all, we deserved monetary reparation. Yetziat mitzrayim doesn't merely liberate us from slavery, but also showcases important moral lessons- including the notion of culpability for sin and the experience of teshuva. Merely apologizing for crimes doesn't constitute complete teshuva; where relevant, damages must be repaired, and losses reimbursed. The clothing and gold were "symbolic" payment for two centuries of slavery.

The gemara in Sanhedrin details a trial convened by Alexander the Great to consider Egyptian accusations of this illegal heist of Egyptian wealth. When the issue of these unpaid wages was raised, Alexander quickly acquitted the Jews. Paying off the bill established "reparation" as part of the teshuva process.

Additionally, this "lending" of clothing and gold averted a potential outbreak of violence. Two hundred years of pent-up anger and resentment could easily have erupted into a massacre or, at the very least, into wide-scale plunder. Sadly, revolutions are often followed by waves of murder and

violence directed against a former oppressor. This voluntary arrangement of lending goods, prevented barbarism and vandalism toward the terrified and completely vulnerable, Egyptians. We were to become a chosen people, tasked with broadcasting moral messages of kindness and civility. Rampant violence is not the way to begin our national history. Politeness and courtesy are better ways to launch the Jewish historical mission.

Additionally, these gifts “bonded” the Egyptians with their former slaves. As the makkot unfolded, the Jews became well-respected and admired by general Egyptian society. Moshe's popularity skyrocketed, and by the time we actually left Egypt, the Egyptians are referred to as רעהו -or friends of the Jews.

Egyptian admiration of the Jews is crucial for the "spread of ideas". The redemption from Egypt introduced seminal religious values to the Jews and, by extension, to the Egyptians who were eavesdropping. Being the cradle of ancient civilization, Egypt then disseminated these ideas across the globe. Having gifted the Jews with material provision for their desert journey, the Egyptians were now more emotionally invested in the Jewish experience. These monetary gifts created greater Egyptian identification with the Jews and their revolutionary religious values. This condition amplified the broadcast of these seminal values and ideas.

To summarize, these gifts served multiple purposes: they repaid an immense debt, averted ruthless behavior and created deeper sympathies toward the Jews.

However, quite aside from these important functions, the transfer of wealth from Egyptian to Jew was crucial to advance an epic project. After being liberated from Egypt, we were meant to immediately enter Israel, purge it of pagan

corruption, erect a Mikdash and usher in utopia. History was meant to conclude after 2448 years, with all humanity inhabiting the kingdom of G-d, living peacefully and prosperously. The centerpiece of this universal kingdom - the Mikdash- must be an international project. While the actual construction is performed by Jews, the material support should be more universal.

The famines of Breishit had rerouted significant “global wealth” to Egypt. The transfer of this wealth to the Jews during the Exodus was earmarked for the purpose of building the Mikdash! This immense transfer of wealth is not just a gift, but a global money wire for the construction of an international palace for Hashem.

Unfortunately, we veered from that original plan and delayed the construction of the Mikdash by hundreds of years. When the Mikdash is finally constructed in the days of Shlomo, numerous foreign monarchs participate in this project. Ultimately, the house of Hashem is globally funded- as originally planned.

Fast forward a few hundred years and wealth has, once again, accumulated in dominant world powers. The Assyrians conquer vast swaths of ancient Mesopotamia and amass great wealth. This wealth transfers to the Babylonians who conquer the Assyrians, and, ultimately to the Persians who supplant the Babylonians. The extraordinary "accumulated" wealth of the Persians is on full display during the lavish parties of Achashverosh. What will become of all this wealth?

Ultimately a sizable portion of this “global wealth” transfers to Mordechai and Esther when they assume control over Haman's portfolio. This isn't a personal award for Mordechai and Esther, but rather, a financial allocation to enable the ultimate

reconstruction of the Mikdash- which was concluded a few years after the Megillah miracle. Once again, global wealth had accumulated across centuries, passing from empire to empire, ultimately funneling to construct the house of Hashem.

Jewish history unfolds in repeating patterns and we are currently living through a similar experience. Over the past few centuries, global wealth increased and became conglomerated in the Western world. Five centuries of European Colonialism brought immense wealth to the West and the subsequent rise of capitalism and democracy further concentrated global wealth within Europe and, of course, North America. This accumulation of wealth was capped off by a dizzying era of industrialization, which peaked around the turn of the 20th century- just as Zionism was becoming institutionalized!.

By and large, it is the United States and much of Western Europe which initially supported the Jewish return to their homeland. Though recently, moderate Arab states have joined this cooperative rebuilding of history, the process has been fueled by countries which accumulated wealth over the past five hundred years. Is history repeating itself?

Wealth and profit appear to be human manufactured, yet it is controlled and managed by Hashem. He doesn't merely determine individual portfolios, but also directs the global flow of wealth. At crucial junctures of history, wealth accumulated in particular regions or empires and was streamed to Yerushalayim to bankroll humanity's construction of the house of G-d.

The exodus from Egypt can't begin until the money wire is transferred!