

Parshat Vayeshev Secrets of Success

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Torah tells us that Yosef Hatzadik was *matzliach*/successful in all that he did. Our commentators cite two different ingredients to Yosef's success, *bein Adam laMakom*/between man and God and *bein adam lachavero*/between man and his fellow man. Rashi points out that he constantly spoke of Hashem, *Shem Shomayim shogur b'fiv*.

Potiphar saw that Yosef was successful and appointed him over his entire household. He noticed that Yosef seemed to be muttering to himself. At first, he assumed that he was practicing the sorcery but then he realized that his success was attributable to Hashem's intervention. Success alone is not proof that Hashem was with Yosef. We see that evil people are often successful while righteous people often fail. The Ohel Yehoshua explains that Potiphar saw something unusual in Yosef's behavior. He never took personal credit for his success, never asked for any benefit or promotion, adds Letitcha Elyon, always crediting Hashem. Even more, writes Tov Hapeninim, he always asked for Hashem's help in advance and always thanked him afterward, a habit each of us can develop, whether what we need is big or small, spiritual or physical.

Many of us may already be in the habit of saying, "*Boruch Hashem*", "*B'ezrat Hashem*," However Yosef didn't just say the words, he meant them, says Rabbi Wolbe z"l. He understood that success or failure depended only on Hashem's will. Our challenge is to realize that we are merely the conduit of

Hashem's will.

The Yad B'Torah notes that there seems to be two related ideas in Rashi here. The first is citing Hashem and crediting Him, and the second is success. Human nature is that we take personal credit for our successes but blame Hashem (circumstances, etc.) for our failures. We have to trust in Hashem's support as much as we trust that the chair I am about to sit upon will support my weight. This is true for all small things as well as big things, whether it's finding a parking spot, having all the ingredients one needs for a recipe, or building a successful business.

How can we develop this habit? Rabbi Berkowitz explains that prayer need not be formal. We should talk to Hashem throughout the day for everything we need and thank Him for what we have. In this way, the reality of His existence will penetrate our heart and we will feel His presence at all times. Even when Yosef was in prison, he felt God's constant presence. When the king's cup bearer and baker had disturbing dreams, he immediately said, "Isn't God the interpreter of dreams?" When he was asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, he again said, "It is God Who will respond..."

When we can live on this level of faith, notes the Ksav Sofer then if something negative happens, while we may feel pain for a time, we will not remain despondent, for we know Hashem is with us. The Divine presence rests only on one who is happy. This means Yosef must have remained joyous, for he was able to interpret the dreams accurately. Faith provides one with a sense of equanimity. Yosef being

taken down as a slave to Egypt, thanked Hashem for being with him; he sensed His caress through the sweet smelling spices the merchants were transporting. The eyes of Hashem are always on those who await His kindness (Tehillim 33). We too can feel Hashem's eyes upon us if we sensitize ourselves to His presence in our daily lives.

Rabbi Friefeld zt"l notes that just as our Creator gives life to all, so must we try to infuse vitality into others. All human relationships crave validation, that smile of recognition, and Yosef is described as an *ish matzliach*. Grammatically speaking, this is the causative form of being successful. Yosef helped others achieve success. When I show an interest in another, I am shining a light on him and making his day better, writes the Menachem Zion. To be successful, one must go outside oneself and show interest in the other. Rabbi Scheinerman explains that when Yosef told his dreams to his brothers, when he was the focus of attention, he began the process of his own downfall. In contrast, when he showed genuine interest in his cellmates and their dreams, he began the process of his own salvation. When you help others and give of yourself, you are giving also to yourself, notes the *Aish Tamid*. Actually, the purpose we were created for is to help others, writes Rabbi Y. Rebo. According to the Magen Avraham, it is preferable that one light only one candle each night and share one's oil with his friend so that both can kindle the light of Chanukah. A Jew helps his fellow Jew carry the difficult burden alongside him.



The Courage of Chanukah Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The Mesilas Yesharim teaches us that life is a series of tests. We face them all the time. One great test is gratitude. Do we expect everything to come to us or are we grateful for what we have? We tend to appreciate something when we lose it. The challenge is to be grateful when we have it. Man was created incomplete and his job is to complete himself through spirituality. When you recite a *bracha* do you truly appreciate the food or do you just mumble the words? The Navi Zecharya says, "You men are walkers among those who are stationary." Angels never develop or progress while humans keep progressing dynamically and perpetually. Animals may grow larger but they never change or reach a higher spiritual level. They cannot transform themselves into anything other than what they were created to be. The only way to fulfill Hashem's mandate to grow

and ascend is by keeping to the divine plan mapped out in the Torah. This requires constant involvement. Hence the Talmud would say when a *Tannah* passed away, "*Ki noach nafsho*, his soul rested." Up until that point he was growing and advancing. Only when he died did his soul repose.

The great Rebbe Zushe of Anipol would say, "Hashem will not ask me why I was not Avraham. He will ask me, why I was not Zushe. One should ask oneself, "Not what's in it for me but for Hashem." To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "Don't ask what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." We should constantly ask ourselves, what we can do for Hashem. The *kiddush Hashem* imperative is a great and constant test. The only way to do it is by constant devotion to Torah. In Devarim it says, one cannot add or detract from a *mitzvah* because

by definition perfection cannot be improved upon. Adding is as detrimental as detracting. You can't add or improve upon the Torah. If you have a combination lock whose combination is 613, if you dial 612, as close as it is, it won't open. Half measures don't get you halfway, they don't get you there at all.

A student once came to the Chofetz Chaim and asked, "Is it better for someone who is only 23 years old to start giving a shiur or should he wait till he's older when he can give over to others so much more?" The Chofetz Chaim answered, whatever will create more *kavod shamayim*, honor for heaven. That student was the Ponovezher Rav and for the rest of his life when he had a dilemma, he would just plug in this formula, what will bring about more *kavod shamayim*.

Derech Hashem: The Causes of Our Decisions Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Torah records how Hashem brought the Jews to Sinai from *Refidim* three months after they left *Mitzrayim*. He did not bring them there immediately because He wanted to wait till they were ready to choose to receive the Torah. You cannot choose life over death in a moment. In *Mitzrayim* they were spiritually dead. Being alive means there's a possibility of change. A table is dead because it doesn't move. It is what it is. A person is alive because he's always in flux. Egypt was a materialistic society that was self-oriented, driven by desire, and flowing towards oblivion. The Jews needed 3 months to become alive again. Hashem would not put them in a situation where the choices he presented to them were not choices they could actually make. This is measured by Hashem's wisdom which is far above ours. On a human level we cannot control the extent of spiritual movement which any choice will bring about. But Hashem is all-knowing. He knows what will inspire a person, what stimulation he will need to be challenged, and what his realm of choice is.

Hashem created a world in which good would be distributed unevenly because it allows people to choose compassion over cruelty. But poverty doesn't make cruelty inevitable

nor does prosperity make compassion inevitable. The wealthy man is tested by his wealth. Will he be cruel or compassionate to the poor man who needs him? The poor man is tested by his poverty. Will he believe that whatever he has is what Hashem wants him to have and feel satisfied with it? Or will he be so discontent that it will take him to violence and bitterness? Will the rich man feel superior over the poor man? Will he waste his life on self-indulgence and the futile pursuit of pleasure? Or will he be humble and choose Torah and service of Hashem? There is a trigger pressed by Hashem. All of the events that happen to a person are an opportunity to make choices. Will he choose good, be inspired, and come closer to Hashem or will he allow his bad choices to extinguish the light of His presence and distance him from the Almighty? Each person is exposed to choices and challenges that are completely individual and unique to him. This creates his *olam habah* and who he will be when his body and soul reunite.

Individuality will be retained in *olam habah* and after the *techiya* even for people who are extraordinarily close to Hashem to the point where they let go of any separate identity of who they are. Before reading the Torah we say, "*Ana avda d'kudsha brich hu*," my whole identity is being a servant of Hashem. You

could think the ultimate level is becoming like a drop of water that flows back to its source, the great ocean, losing all of your uniqueness as your self is absorbed by Hashem. Rather see yourself as a pebble and a part of the innumerable number of pebbles that make up a great wall. Each one is unique and purposeful. But what you see when you look at it, is the great wall rather than the individual pebbles. The uniqueness of your life is something to treasure in this world. We tend to make hierarchies. In the secular world, those with wealth, success, and beauty, are number one. In the Torah world, those who have achieved outward success in Torah learning and *mitzvot* seem on top. Everyone has their challenges and their point of inspiration. We cannot possibly know who succeeded and who failed. In the future world we'll be very surprised. Just as each servant has their own position and having the king's will done depends on each specific servant doing their own specific job, each person has their own portion and only together do we create *shleimut* (perfection). Another part of seeing the wholeness of the world and the *techiya* is appreciating that you are only a part of the whole. Everyone has their own portion. In this world we'll never see the wall, only the pebbles. But in the future world after the *techiya*, it will all become clear.