



THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

Betrayed by his brothers as a boy, abused by his master and let down by those close to him, he keeps on smiling, helping others, and eventually saves the world!

What is his secret?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



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A. The Secret of Success5

Joseph is sold into slavery by his older brothers, and transported to Egypt where he is appointed a senior official in Potiphar's household. Joseph is very successful, and his master, Potiphar, sees that G-d is with him (Source 1).

The Rebbe asks: Why does an Egyptian official attribute Joseph's success to G-d, and not to the deities of Egypt? The Rebbe answers that this is why Rashi emphasizes that the name of Heaven was on Joseph's lips (Source 2). Joseph always said: Thank G-d, with G-d's help, etc., and this is how the Egyptian official knew that it was G-d who was the reason for Joseph's success.

B. Joseph's Wanderings.....9

Despite Joseph's devotion and loyalty to his master, his master's wife makes false libelous accusations against him, and he is thrown into prison in disgrace. Ten years later he meets two of Pharaoh's officers in prison, and their faces are sullen. Joseph asks them if he can help, and he hears that they had peculiar dreams. He sits down with them, and interprets their dreams.

Two years later, Pharaoh has a dream and demands that his advisers interpret them. After no one was able to provide a satisfactory interpretation, the butler stood up and told Pharaoh that a "Hebrew man" had successfully interpreted his own dream two years prior. Pharaoh orders that Joseph be brought to him. Joseph interprets his dreams in a wondrous manner and is then appointed viceroy of Egypt. Later, he saves the people from starvation. (Source 1).

The Rebbe asks: Why the length? Why does the Torah find it necessary to describe this whole story with the dreams in such detail?

C. Why Did Joseph Try?.....12

At the time of this story - Joseph is really unfortunate. He is a lonely prisoner: his mother was dead, he hadn't seen his father for twelve years, his brothers had betrayed him, and his master's wife falsely accused him, leading him to be cast into prison in terrible shame. Joseph could have been expected to be resentful and despondent. Then two officers, colleagues of his former master Potiphar, are thrown into prison with him. Joseph is supposed to despise them, to see in them the epitome of evil. Nevertheless, he stands up, smiles and asks: "Why are you sad today?" How did he do it?

D. Abraham's Tradition of Helping Others.....14

Joseph knew that everyone has a responsibility, and if G-d put him in this place, there is obviously a reason for it. And so, when he sees people suffering, he does what he can to help them.

Here we see the power of one act. A simple gesture of "How are you?", set in motion a chain of events that ended up saving many from starvation.

Insight: Joseph's gesture marked the fact that he was not consumed by gloom and self-pity, but rather thought about what he could do for another person. This is what helped him get so far. The Rebbe cites a story from a disciple of the Alter Rebbe that illustrates this point.

E. This Chanukah We Are All Joseph.....18

We must learn from Joseph, who was not satisfied with taking care of himself, but also took care of others. On this Chanukah, we will not be satisfied with lighting our own Menorah, but will influence other Jews to do the same.

Introduction

An unlucky Jew is thrown into prison, and instead of becoming depressed - he encourages himself, and even tries to encourage others.

A conversation about faith and the power of a simple gesture.

השיעור לפרשת וישלח

משיחת שבת פרשת וישב ה'תשמ"ה,

בלתי מוגה.

תורת מנחם ה'תשמ"ה ח"ב, עמ' 917

ומשיחת שבת פרשת מקץ, שבת חנוכה, ה'תשל"ד,

בלתי מוגה

תורת מנחם חלק ע"ד עמ' 51

A. The Secret of Success

Source 1 Genesis 37:23, 25-27

Joseph's Sale To The Ishmaelites:

Student's
pg. 3

When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his shirt, of the fine woolen coat he was wearing...

They sat down to eat a meal, and they lifted their eyes and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites approaching from Gilead, with camels carrying spices, balm, and lotus, en route to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites rather than raising our hand upon him, for he is our brother, a part of our flesh." And his brothers listened.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר בָּא יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחָיו וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף אֶת כְּתֹנֶתוֹ אֶת כְּתֹנֶת הַפְּסִים אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו.

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לֵאכֹל לֶחֶם וַיִּשְׂאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וַיִּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה אַרְחַת יִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בָּאָה מִגִּלְעָד וּגְמֻלֵיהֶם נִשְׂאִים נִכְאֹת וּצְרִי וְלֹט הוֹלְכִים לְהוֹרִיד מִצְרַיִם. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל אָחָיו מַה בָּצַע כִּי נִהַרַג אֶת אָחִינוּ וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת דָּמוֹ. לָכוּ וְנִמְכְּרֵנוּ לְיִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים וַיִּדְנֹו אֵל תְּהִי בּוֹ כִּי אָחִינוּ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אָחָיו.

Success in Egypt

Genesis 39:1-4

Joseph had been brought down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the chief of the butchers, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

The L-rd was with Joseph and he was successful, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. Joseph's master saw that the L-rd was with him and that the L-rd gave him success in everything he did. Joseph found favor in his master's eyes and served him, and Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

וַיֹּסֶף הוֹרֵד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקְנֶהוּ פוֹטִיפָר סָרִיס פְּרִעָה שֶׁר הַטְּבָחִים אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם מִיַּד הַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְדוּהוּ שָׁמָּה.

וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרַיִם. וַיִּרְא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה ה' מְצַלִּיחַ בְּיָדוֹ. וַיִּמְצָא יוֹסֵף חַן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁרַת אֹתוֹ וַיִּפְקְדֵהוּ עַל-בֵּיתוֹ וְכָל-יֵשְׁלוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדוֹ.

>> The Rebbe

An Egyptian Officer Attributes Success To G-d?

Student's
pg. 4

The simple meaning of the verse "The L-rd was with Joseph and he was successful" is that G-d was with Joseph and this is why he was successful.

But the following verse, "Joseph's master saw that the L-rd was with him" raises the question: How did Potiphar know that the reason behind Joseph's success was that "the L-rd was with him"? Potiphar was an officer in Pharaoh's court, so he must have been an idolater like all Egyptians. How then did he know to attribute Joseph's success to this that "the L-rd was with him"? Seemingly, he should have attributed it to the Egyptian deity (as we find that Lavan attributed success to the gods of Nachor)?!

When Lavan made a pact with Jacob he mentioned Abraham's G-d and Nachor's gods. He didn't pass on the opportunity to express his belief in his idols. Why then was it so clear to Potiphar here that the G-d of the Hebrews is assisting Joseph?

כאשר לומדים את הפסוק¹ "ויהי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח" - הרי פירוש הדברים הוא בפשטות, שהקב"ה היה עם יוסף, וכתוצאה מזה היה יוסף איש מצליח.

אמנם, כאשר באים לפסוק שלאחריו, "וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו" - נשאלת שאלה פשוטה: מניין ידע פוטיפר שסיבת הצלחתו של יוסף היא מפני ש"ה' אתו" - פוטיפר היה שר אצל פרעה מלך מצרים, ובודאי היה עובד עבודה זרה ככל תושבי ארץ מצרים, ואם כן, מניין ידע פוטיפר לתלות את הצלחתו של יוסף בכך "שה' אתו", לכאורה, היה צריך לתלות זאת ב"יראתם של מצרים" (ועל דרך שמצינו אצל לבן - "אלקי נחור"²)!?

Source 2 Rashi, Genesis 39:3

G-d's Name Was Always On Joseph's Lips

Student's
pg. 4

The L-rd was with him: G-d's name was always on his lips. פי ה' אתו: שם שמים שגור בפיו.

>> The Rebbe

Student's This is why Rashi explains on the words
pg. 4 "Joseph's master saw that the L-rd was with him" that "G-d's name was always on his lips." The five-year-old student is already familiar with the expression "G-d's name was always on his lips" from Rashi's commentary to Jacob's words to Isaac, "Because the L-rd your G-d arranged it before me."

Therefore, when Rashi explains that G-d's name was always on Joseph's lips the student understands that this means that he was accustomed to say about every occurrence that "G-d arranged it for me."

Two weeks ago we read in the torah the story of Isaac's blessings. Isaac asked Esau to hunt and animal and prepare food for him, following which he would bless him. Rebecca quickly prepared food in the kitchen and gave it to Jacob to bring to Isaac, so that he should receive the blessings. Isaac asked Jacob,

"How were you able to catch prey so quickly?" Jacob answered, "G-d arranged it for me."

The Torah student is therefore already familiar with the concept of people mentioning G-d's name and attributing success to Him, "thank G-d," "with G-d's help," etc. When Rashi says that G-d's name was always on Joseph's lips, the student understands that like his father Jacob, Joseph would always attribute his success to G-d.

Student's It is therefore no surprise that Potiphar
pg. 5 knew to attribute Joseph's success to G-d's assistance - because Joseph would constantly mention that his success in every endeavor was because "the L-rd was with him."

ולכן מפרש רש"י, "וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו - שם שמים שגור בפיו": הבן חמש למקרא למד כבר בפירוש רש"י את הביטוי "שם שמים שגור בפיו" - בקשר לדבריו של יעקב ליצחק "כי הִקְרָה ה' אֵלַיךְ לִפְנֵי".

ולכן, כאשר רש"י מפרש בנוגע ליוסף ש"שם שמים שגור בפיו" - מבין שפירוש הדבר, שיוסף היה רגיל לומר על כל דבר "כי הִקְרָה ה' לִפְנֵי".

ועל פי זה מובן שאין כל פלא מדוע חשב פוטיפר שהצלחתו של יוסף היא מפני ש"ה' אתו" - מכיון שיוסף היה אומר וחוזר בכל עת שהצלחתו בדבר זה הוא מפני ש"ה' אתו".

How did Rashi know that Joseph basically went around all day saying "Thank G-d"?

As we continue reading the Torah portion, it becomes clear that in every recorded conversation Joseph had in Egypt he mentions G-d.

The first time we hear Joseph's voice in Egypt is with the incident with Potiphar's wife, when Joseph refused her advances, saying, "I shall have sinned to G-d."

The second time is when he speaks with the Egyptian royal court officers: the chief butler and the chief baker, offering to interpret their dreams by saying, "G-d has answers"—again he mentions G-d.

And at the beginning of the Torah portion of Mikeitz, when we find Joseph standing before the Pharaoh, the all-powerful ruler, at the moment that will decide his entire fate—slavery or freedom—what does he say? "G-d will tell Pharaoh's welfare."

We thus find that in every dialogue, Joseph mentions G-d.

So it's no wonder, then, that Potiphar knew that "G-d was with him." Joseph took pains to convey that he knew that everything comes from G-d, which is why he would say "Thank G-d" and "with G-d's help" all day.

*

The lesson

We frequently hear how successful people are asked, "What's the secret of your success?"

Some will say, "Hard work," or "study"—each one provides a different reason for their success.

The first success story we read about in the Torah is the story of Joseph: "And he became a successful man."

What was his secret of success? That he attributed his success to G-d.

A Jew must always recognize that his success is in G-d's merit and that he cannot not do it alone. When he says "Thank G-d" for everything he has, and knows that everything he plans to do will only happen "G-d willing," if G-d wants, then G-d blesses him with success in all the work of his hands.

That is the true secret of Jewish success.

(Some of the explanations in this lesson are based on Rabbi Zushe Greenberg's sermon <https://shluchimsermons.org/1297> and Rabbi Shneur Ashkenazi's class.)

B. The Dream Interpreter

Source 3 Genesis 39:7-8, 10-20

A Lowly Libel

Student's After these events, Joseph's master's wife
pg. 6 lifted up her eyes to Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." Joseph refused, and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me my master knows nothing about anything in the house, and all he has, he has given into my hand."

She spoke to Joseph day in and day out, but he did not listen to her, to lie beside her, to be with her. One day, Joseph came to the house to do his work, and no one else was home. She grabbed him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and fled outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled, she called to the people of her house, and she said to them, "Look! He brought us a Hebrew man to mock us. He came to me to lie with me, but I cried out loudly. When he heard me raise my voice he left his garment with me, and he fled outside." She left his garment beside her, until his master came home. She told him the same thing, saying, "The Hebrew slave that you brought to us came to me to mock me. When I raised my voice and called out, he left his garment beside me and fled." When his master heard his wife's report claiming that, "Your slave did such things to me," his wrath burned. Joseph's master took him and put him into prison, the place where the king's prisoners were imprisoned, and he was there in the prison.

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶדְנָיו אֶת עֵינֶיהָ אֶל יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁכַב עִמִּי. וַיִּמָּאן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶדְנָיו הֲלוֹ אֲדֹנָי לֹא יָדַע אֶתִּי מַה בַּבַּיִת וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדִי.

וַיְהִי כִּדְבַרָּהּ אֶל יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ לְשֹׁכַב אֶצְלָהּ לְהִיּוֹת עִמָּהּ. וַיְהִי כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֵא הַבַּיִתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֶאכֶתוֹ וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבַּיִת. וַתִּתְּפֹשֶׂהוּ בְּבִגְדוֹ לֵאמֹר שְׁכַב עִמִּי וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיִּנָּס וַיֵּצֵא חֲחוּצָה. וַיְהִי כִּרְאוּתָהּ כִּי עֹזֵב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיִּנָּס חֲחוּצָה. וַתִּקְרָא לְאֲנָשֵׁי בֵּיתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֵאמֹר רְאוּ הֵבִיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עִבְרִי לְצַחֵק בָּנוּ בָּא אֵלַי לְשֹׁכַב עִמִּי וְאֶקְרָא בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל. וַיְהִי כְשִׁמְעוּ כִּי הָרִימֹתִי קוֹלִי וְאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיִּנָּס וַיֵּצֵא חֲחוּצָה.

וַיְהִי כְשִׁמְעַע אֶדְנָיו אֶת דְּבָרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר דְּבָרָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר כִּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה לִּי עַבְדְּךָ וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ. וַיִּקַּח אֶדְנָיו יוֹסֵף אֹתוֹ וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל בֵּית הַסֵּהַר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲסִירֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים וַיְהִי שָׁם בַּבַּיִת הַסֵּהַר.

Psychological Counseling:

Genesis 40:1-8

Student's Now it came about after these events that
pg. 7 the butler of the king of Egypt and the baker sinned against their master, against the king of Egypt. Pharaoh became incensed at his two officers, at the chief butler and at the chief baker. He placed them in the prison of the house of the chief of the slaughterers, into the prison, the place where Joseph was imprisoned. The chief of the slaughterers appointed Joseph to be with them, and he served them, and they were a year in prison. One night, both of them had a dream, each one his dream on the same night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison. Joseph came to them in the morning, and he saw that they were troubled. He asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the prison of his master's house, saying, "Why are your faces sad today?" And they said to him, "We have had a dream, and there is no interpreter for it." Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to G-d? Tell them to me."

>> The Rebbe

Why Such Detail?

Student's Pharaoh had a dream and needed
pg. 7 interpreters, "he sent and called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt and related to them his dream, but no one interpreted them for him." The butler then told Pharaoh about Joseph who had successfully interpreted the dreams that he and the baker had while in prison, and Pharaoh summoned Joseph.

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה חֲטָאוּ
מִשְׁקָה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וְהָאֶפֶה
לְאֹדְנֵיהֶם לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם. וַיִּקְצַף
פַּרְעֹה עַל שְׁנֵי סְרִיסָיו עַל שֶׁר
הַמְשָׁקִים וְעַל שֶׁר הָאוֹפִים. וַיִּתֵּן
אֹתָם בְּמִשְׁמַר בַּיִת שֶׁר הַטְּבָחִים
אֶל בַּיִת הַסֵּהַר מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵף
אָסוּר שָׁם. וַיִּפְקֹד שֶׁר הַטְּבָחִים אֶת
יוֹסֵף אֹתָם וַיִּשְׁרַת אֹתָם וַיְהִיו יָמִים
בְּמִשְׁמַר. וַיַּחְלְמוּ חֲלוֹם שְׁנֵיהֶם
אִישׁ חֲלֹמוֹ בְּלַיְלָה אֶחָד אִישׁ
כְּפִתְרוֹן חֲלֹמוֹ הַמְשָׁקָה וְהָאֶפֶה
אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר אָסוּרִים
בְּבַיִת הַסֵּהַר. וַיָּבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם יוֹסֵף
בְּבֹקֶר וַיִּרְא אֹתָם וְהֵנֵם זֹעֲפִים.
וַיִּשְׂאֵל אֶת סְרִיסֵי פַרְעֹה אֲשֶׁר
אֹתוֹ בְּמִשְׁמַר בַּיִת אֹדְנָיו לֵאמֹר
מַדּוּעַ פְּנֵיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם. וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֵלָיו חֲלוֹם חֲלַמְנוּ וּפְתָר אֵין אֹתוֹ
וַיֹּאמְרֵם אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא לְאֱלֹהִים
פְּתָרָנִים סִפְרוּ נָא לִי.

פרעה חלם חלום והוצרך לפותרים,
"וישלח ויקרא את כל חרטומי מצרים
ואת כל חכמיה ויספר פרעה להם את
חלומו ואין פותר אותם לפרעה"³, עד
ששר המשקים סיפר לפרעה אודות
יוסף שפתר את החלומות שחלמו הוא
ושר האופים בהיותם בבית האסורים,
וכפי שפתר כן היה (כמסופר בפרטיות
בסוף פרשת וישב), ואז שלח פרעה
לקרוא ליוסף.

There is a puzzling detail in this story that Rashi doesn't address.

Every detail and every word of Torah is precise. Why then does the Torah relate all the details about the dreams of the butler and the baker and Joseph's interpretation of the dreams? It should have sufficed to relate that Joseph successfully interpreted their dreams, therefore Joseph was called to interpret Pharaoh's dream which resulted in him becoming the viceroy, and eventually Jacob came down to Egypt. This is what is necessary for the structure of the story. In addition, the story of Joseph's conduct in prison is important in order for us to learn how a Jew needs to conduct himself even when he is in prison. But why is it necessary to relate all of the details about the dreams of Pharaoh's servants and how Joseph interpreted them?

Notice the obvious difference between how this story is related and how other far more consequential stories are related:

The story of the creation of the universe, the foundation of belief in G-d, numbers 31 verses in total. The giving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments - the basis of Torah and mitzvot - count 14 verses. But the story of the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker is told over the course of 23 verses!

Who cares about this? Why is it important for the Torah to relate the story of the dreams of two prisoners? What would have been lost had the Torah just briefly stated that Joseph successfully interpreted a dream for the butler, and two years later the butler remembered this and told Pharaoh about it?

ובסיפור זה יש דבר תמוה הדורש
ביאור, ולא מצינו שרש"י יתעכב על
זה:

לשם מה מספרת התורה - שהיא
בתכלית הדיוק בכל ענין וכל תיבה
- את כל אריכות הדברים אודות
פרטי החלומות של שר המשקים ושר
האופים ופתרונם על ידי יוסף; לכאורה
נוגע רק כללות הענין שיוסף פתר
להם חלומות, שבגלל זה נתבקש יוסף
לפתור את חלומו של פרעה, וכתוצאה
מזה נתמנה למשנה למלך, ובעקבות
זאת הגיע יעקב למצרים - שכל זה נוגע
כדי שיהיה סיפור מסודר; וכמו כן נוגע
הסיפור שיוסף היה בבית האסורים,
כדי ללמוד איך צריך יהודי להתנהג
אפילו כשנמצא בבית האסורים; אבל
מהו הצורך בסיפור פרטי חלומותיהם
של שרי פרעה ואופן פתרונם על ידי
יוסף?

C. Why Did Joseph Try?

>> The Rebbe

A Bitter Young Man?

Student's Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker took place while he was in prison, after he was "stolen from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."
pg. 9

Consider Joseph's circumstances: He had been terribly betrayed by his brothers when he was sold to Egyptian slavery, and then when he had found favor in his master's eyes and been appointed as the manager of the household, he was imprisoned on trumped-up charges. Joseph would have been expected to be angry and bitter, and to feel a special hatred for Pharaoh's officers, because one of them - Potiphar, chief of the slaughterers, had placed him in prison.

Nevertheless, when Joseph saw the troubled faces of Pharaoh's officers, the butler and the baker, he turned to them and asked them, "why are your faces sad today?"

Their lives weren't in any danger due to lack of food or water, they were just in a bad mood.

Let us step into Joseph's shoes for a moment. At the time of this story - he is most unfortunate. He is a lonely prisoner, his mother died, and his father mourned him after his brothers returned home with his shirt soaked in blood and "erased him" from the world.

If this was not enough, his master's wife plotted against him, and he was thrown into prison, in

המאורע של פתרון החלומות של שר המשקים ושר האופים על ידי יוסף, אירע בהיותו בבית האסורים, לאחרי ש"גנוב גונבתי מ(בית אביו שהוא ב)ארץ העברים וגם פה לא עשיתי מאומה כי שמו אותי בבור"⁴.

ולכאורה: כיון שיוסף היה במצב כזה, שגרמו לו עוול הכי גדול בכך שמכרוהו למצרים, ובמצרים עצמה, הנה לאחר שמצא חן בעיני פוטיפר עד ש"הפקיד אותו בביתו ועל כל אשר יש לו"⁵, שמו אותו בבית הסוהר ללא עוון בכפו - הרי מטבע הדברים היה צריך להיות מאוכזב וממורמר, "ברוגז על כל העולם" ... ולחוש שנאה מיוחדת לשרי פרעה, שאחד מהם - פוטיפר שר הטבחים⁶ - הכניסו לבית הסוהר.

ואף על פי כן, בראותו בבית הסוהר את סריסי פרעה, שר המשקים ושר האופים, ש"הנם זועפים" - פנה אליהם ושאל אותם⁷:
"מדוע פניכם רעים היום!"

לא היה כאן מצב של פיקוח נפשות, בגלל חסרון של מאכל ומשקה וכיוצא בזה, אלא רק היו במצב-רוח לא טוב...

6 שם לו, לו, לט, א.
7 שם מ, ו-ז.

4 וישב מ, טוב (וברד"ק).
5 שם לט, ד.

terrible shame. One can only imagine the headlines of the Egyptian newspapers those days. Such a person would have been expected to despair, overwhelmed with a sense of victimhood and hatred for the whole world.

And then something even worse happens: Into his prison cell, his last “personal space” in the whole world, come two officers from Pharaoh’s cabinet – people who represent the government. Even worse, they are colleagues of Potiphar, who was also a minister of Pharaoh. Joseph was supposed to despise them, to see them as part of the cabal, and the personification of all evil.

What actually happened is the precise opposite. When Joseph gets up in the morning and sees his two neighbors in a gloomy mood, he smiles at them, pats them on the shoulder and asks: “Why are you sad today?”

Why Did Joseph Care?

Student's
pg. 10

What is so surprising about an officer in prison looking upset? The fact that he looks sadder today than the previous day is probably because he realized that another day has passed and he is still in prison!

And anyway, why is it Joseph’s business? It wasn’t his fault they were in prison, and they were actually the friends of the wicked person that had thrown him into prison.

Nevertheless, Joseph cared about their state, and asked them “why are you sad today?” He thought that maybe there is a slight chance that as their cellmate he could help them.

ומה הפלא בכך ששר שנמצא בבית הסוהר פניו זועפים?!... ומה שפניו זועפים היום יותר מאתמול, הרי זה בגלל שמתבונן שעבר יום נוסף והוא עדיין נמצא בבית הסוהר!...

ובכלל: מה זה ענינו של יוסף - הרי אין זו אשמתו שהם נמצאים בבית הסוהר; ומה גם שהם החברים של השר הרשע שזרק אותו לבית הסוהר.

ואף על פי כן, היה אכפת ונוגע ליוסף המצב שלהם, ולכן שאל אותם “מדוע פניכם רעים היום” - בגלל ספק וספק ספיקא: אולי יש ביכולתו, בהיותו עמהם בבית הסוהר, לעזור להם!

D. Abraham's Tradition of Helping Others

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 11

The reason for this was that Joseph was a descendant of Abraham, "who commanded his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the L-rd to perform righteousness and justice" (even though this wasn't obligatory before the giving of the Torah). Therefore, when Joseph saw one of G-d's creations in a sad state—as opposed to being happy from the very fact that he is a creation of G-d, the ultimate perfection—he took it as a sign that it is his business, and immediately tried to help him.

וההסברה בזה: יוסף היה מזרעו של אברהם, "אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו לעשות צדקה ומשפט"⁸ (אף שלפני מתן תורה לא היה מחויב בזה).

ולכן, בראותו בריה של הקב"ה במעמד ומצב שאינו בשמחה - תמורת זה שצריך להיות בשמחה מצד עצם עובדת היותו בריה של הקב"ה, שזוהי תכלית השלימות - הנה כיון שהוא ראה זאת, הרי זו הוכחה שזוהו ענין השייך אליו, ולכן מיד השתדל לנסות לעזור.

Joseph knew that every person has a responsibility to the environment around them, and if G-d put him here - there must be someone or something that needs his help.

This is why the Torah goes into great detail about the conversation between Joseph and the officers, to show that he was not complacent, he didn't "gloss over" the situation, and was not satisfied with merely fulfilling an obligation. He gave them his full attention, just as if he were a private psychologist charging per hour

One Action Saves The Entire World

Student's
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We see here how a single action can affect the entire world.

Joseph's decision to ask Pharaoh's officers "why are you sad today" set into motion all the subsequent events, culminating with

כאן רואים איך שבכוחה של פעולה אחת להשפיע על כל העולם:

כתוצאה מפעולתו של יוסף לשאול את סריסי פרעה "מדוע פניכם רעים היום" -

his interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and becoming the viceroy of Egypt.

Most importantly, Joseph's appointment as viceroy wasn't only of benefit to him personally.

(There is a well-known saying of the Alter Rebbe to a chasid that asked for a blessing in his livelihood: "all of this is what you need, but what are you needed for?")

Joseph's appointment as viceroy saved the entire world from hunger, as related later in the Torah portion, "there was a famine in all the lands . . . and everyone came to Egypt to procure food, to Joseph."

The Torah teaches us a very important message: we will never know the effect of a single heartfelt gesture, of one "good morning." For you, it simply means that you are a proper human being - a "Mentch", to take your head out of your phone and say "Good morning" to the person sitting beside you. For him, this might be the moment that changes his life. Maybe he will decide to give his marriage another chance or reconcile with his children. He will certainly learn from you to be a better Jew.

But the truth is the story is much bigger.

Let's stop for a moment and ask: what was the turning point in Joseph's life? At what stage did it all stop, and change from a crash to a launch?

Well, here is the precise moment!

The morning when Joseph looked outside, at those around him, and showed compassion - this was the day when his own destiny turned around, and more broadly, when the foundation was laid to save millions of people from starvation. This is what establishes him as a professional dream interpreter, and after two years, when Pharaoh is looking for a dream-interpreter, the butler will stand up and tell him about the Hebrew dream interpreter he met in prison. Joseph will be invited to Pharaoh's palace, will be appointed deputy to the king of Egypt, and will receive the tools to save Egypt and the entire region from a severe famine.

This is a truly moving message: when you help another person, you make your own life meaningful, and you can save the entire world. G-d created a world built like a tapestry. We are all intertwined, my completeness depends on your completeness. We were not meant to live alone - but in groups,

נתגלגל כל המשך המאורעות שלאחר מכן, עד שיוסף פתר את חלומו של פרעה, ובגלל זה נתמנה למשנה למלך.

ועוד והוא העיקר - כי, מה שיוסף נתמנה למשנה למלך הרי זה רק טובה עבורו בלבד, והרי ידוע⁹ פתגם רבינו הזקן שאמר לאחד החסידים שביקש ברכתו בעניני פרנסה: כל זה הוא מה שאתה צריך, אבל בשביל מה צריכים אותך?! ... - שעל ידי זה הציל את כל העולם מרעב, כמסופר בהמשך הפרשה¹⁰: "ויהי רעב בכל הארצות . . . וכל הארץ באו מצרימה לשובור אל יוסף".

(9) ראה סה"ש תש"ז ע' 125 ואילך. וש"נ.
(10) פרשתנו שם, נד-נד.

therefore, I will not reach happiness without you and you will not reach happiness without me.

This lesson is uniquely illustrated in the story which the Rebbe refers to in the talk:

A Story - What are you needed for?

The Chassid, Rabbi Zalman Senders, was a wealthy Torah scholar. He was a learned Jew, worshiped G-d with all his soul, and also owned many successful businesses. R. Zalman was a special person, as he also excelled in character. Despite his wealth and greatness, he was considerate even with the poor people and the simple folk. His hand was open for anyone in need, and many poor people regularly knocked on his door.

The day came when R. Zalman got involved in a huge deal that failed. As big as the deal was, and the profits that were expected from it, greater and more severe was the downfall. Years of work went down the drain. R. Zalman, the great rich man and the well-known philanthropist, suddenly became just another ordinary person. It goes without saying that many people felt bad for R. Zalman's trouble, since, in fact, it was also their trouble as well.

In his distress, R. Zalman went to his Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. Upon entering the Rebbe's room, he felt that there was no more suitable place to pour out his heart and tell things as they were. Full of emotion, he unfolded before the Rebbe the whole story of this failed deal that buried all his wealth.

R. Zalman's emotions swelled in him and his crying intensified. "If the Almighty wishes to take my wealth from me - I will have no objection, G-d forbid," he said bitterly, "but first I must clear my debts and fulfill my obligations. I need to return the money entrusted to me in order for me to invest; I need to fulfill my commitments to the charity collectors; I need to cover the wedding expenses of the orphans I promised to marry..."

All this time the Rebbe sat - his two elbows on the table, his head between his palms - and listened. When R. Zalman finished pouring out his heart, there was silence in the room. The Rebbe's direct gaze penetrated his disciple and his face became inflamed. And then the Rebbe said: "You don't stop thinking and talking about what you need, but there is one question which you haven't given any thought at all - what are you needed for?!"

The Rebbe's words pierced R. Zalman's heart, and he fainted. The Chassidim, who were in the outer room, waiting for their turn to enter, heard the noise and rushed in to take R. Zalman out of the room. After much effort, they finally managed to wake him up from his faint.

After he recovered, R. Zalman changed and became a new person. He banished from his mind any worry about the loss of his possessions and pushed aside all thoughts of the affairs of this world. He realized that with his harsh words, the Rebbe was trying to remove the evil that was rooted in the depths of his soul - for that feeling of “self” and self-regard does not belong anywhere near the divine presence. Therefore, he decided to stay for a while in the Rebbe’s court, completely immersing himself in Torah and the service of prayer. After a few days, the Rebbe called him and said: “Go back home, and may G-d bless to succeed in whatever you turn to.”

On his way home, R. Zalman happened upon a train station, and suddenly met there a group of estate owners who used to trade with him in the past. These people, who knew nothing about his difficult financial situation, expressed their desire to resume business with him. R. Zalman saw this as a sign from heaven and an opportunity to receive G-d’s blessing, which the Rebbe mentioned during his private audience.

Some time later R. Zalman began to recover from his downfall. He slowly regained his fortune and success returned to his life. In this way he was also able to fulfill his charitable obligations that he had accepted in the past. However, this time he did it without a feeling of “self”, rather, with the recognition that he is only a “conduit,” a middleman, for the energy and sustenance given from above. For his entire life R. Zalman had the Rebbe’s poignant question before his eyes - “What are you needed for?”...

*

We see the same point in this story as well. When the rich man was immersed in his own troubles, he was unable to get out of it. Only after the Alter Rebbe shocked him, took him out of his depression and self-pity, and encouraged him to think about what he is needed for - what he can do for the environment around him - only then did everything turn around, and he set out on a new path.

E. This Chanukah We Are All Joseph

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 13

The practical lesson from this is that when we are instructed to close our book of Talmud and go out to influence another Jew to put on tefillin or light Chanukah candles, we may argue: I understand why I need to put on tefillin myself, but what is the great mitzvah in going out and looking for other Jews and trying to influence them?

The story of Joseph gives us a response to this argument. We need to learn from Joseph, who cared when he saw a person with a sad face and tried to help him. Joseph did this just out of pure goodwill, even though it wasn't a mitzvah given at Mt. Sinai.

This is all the more true in our discussion, which is dealing with a mitzvah, and specifically the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles which spread light. We certainly must work on it.

Just as was the case with Joseph, this action will impact the entire world. Not in solving physical hunger, but in solving spiritual hunger, as the verse says, "behold days are coming, says G-d, and I will send famine into the land, not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the word of the L-rd." May we merit to study new Torah teachings from the mouth of Mashiach, very soon.

וההוראה מזה בנוגע לפועל: כשתובעים מיהודי לסגור את הגמרא ולצאת ולפעול על יהודי נוסף להניח תפילין או להדליק נר חנוכה, יכול הוא לטעון: בשלמא מה שהוא בעצמו צריך להניח תפילין וכיוצא בזה, הרי זה מובן; אבל מהי ה"מצוה" ללכת ולחפש יהודי ולנסות (על הספק) לפעול עליו!?

ועל זה אומרים לו, שצריך ללמוד מיוסף, שהיה אכפת לו שיש מישהו שפניו זועפות, ולכן השתדל לנסות לעזור לו - רק מצד רגש טוב, אף שלא היה בגדר של מצוה, ובוודאי לא עם כל ה"רעש" וקולות וברקים שבמתן תורה!

ועל אחת כמה וכמה בנדון דידן, שמדובר אודות ענין של מצוה, ועל אחת כמה וכמה המצוה של הדלקת נר חנוכה שפועלת אור - הרי בוודאי שצריך להשתדל בזה.

וכפי שהיה אצל יוסף - תשפיע גם פעולה זו בכל העולם, אבל לא באופן שיש צורך לשלול רעב כפשוטו, כי אם בנוגע לרעב ברוחניות, כמ"ש¹¹ "הנה ימים באים גו' והשלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע את דברי ה'", עד שנזכה ללמוד תורתו של משיח מפיו של משיח, בקרוב ממש.

משיחת שבת פרשת מקץ, שבת חנוכה, ה'תשל"ד
הנחה בלתי מוגה. תורת מנחם חלק ע"ד עמ' 15.