



Vayeishev

Jewish Failure

Your failure could be the very best thing that has ever happened to you.

We learn this from Parshat Vayeishev. The Torah tells us, “vayehei Hashem et Yosef, vayehei ish matzliach”, Hashem was with Yosef and Yosef was a successful man. Why both statements? If Hashem was with Yosef, it means that he must have been successful and if he was successful, it means that Hashem was with him.

Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshische explains that actually the lesson we learn from here is that sometimes when we are successful there's a danger we might forget Hashem a bit. However, with regard to Yosef, even when things were going well for him, he still fully appreciated the presence of the Almighty in his life.

It is in this vein that the Chofetz Chaim commented on the fact that there is some repetition in our Rosh Chodesh bentching, the prayer we recite just before the commencement of a new month. On two occasions we say, “chaim shel yirat shamayim”, “please God, give us a life that is filled with the fear of Heaven”. And why is it repeated? Answers the Chofetz Chaim: because after the first statement we say “chaim shel osher v'kavod”, “please Hashem give us a life of wealth and of honour”. And the trouble with wealth and honour is that it could take us away from our yirat shamayim, from our fear of God and therefore we repeat the request to always have the fear of Heaven.

I would like to suggest an alternative peirush. Actually, it is possible for Hashem to be with me and for me not to succeed – and that is why the

Torah needs to say Hashem was with Yosef and Yosef was successful. Why do I say this? Because sometimes a closed door opens up many other doors. Sometimes what I perceive to be good for me could actually be bad, and what I think is bad could actually be something absolutely extraordinary for me. It is only in the course of time, that we will discover it.

And indeed, we learn this also from our Rosh Chodesh bentching which concludes with the words, “chaim sheyimalu mi'shalot leibenu l'tovah”, “please God, give us a life in which all the requests of our heart will be answered for the good”. It has to be for the good, because if Hashem were to accede to every single one of my requests, it is quite possible that what I am asking for is not really good for me. So therefore, we place it in the hands of Hashem and we say, please Hashem, You decide the best path of life upon which I will tread.

And when you come to think of it, this is exactly what Yosef experienced. His brothers tried to kill him, he was sold into slavery in Egypt, he had traumatic experiences in the home of Potiphar, he was flung into the depths of a dungeon in Egypt. But, throughout that period, Hashem was with him. It is from those very experiences of Yosef that we learn that even when we are enduring the most traumatic of times, that is when Hashem is with us. May Hashem bless us to take us all the way up to the top, so that whatever transpires is bashert, because whatever Hashem does, He does for the good.

Shabbat Shalom.