Assembly Notes
PARSHAS VAYEISHEV 5786
Assembly Theme: Success Comes When You Are Your Own inner Self

Dvar Torah

Can you define "Hatzlocho" (success)? Many people in the Torah were certainly successful; but only one person is actually described by the Torah as מצליח- successful. Amazingly, it is Yosef! This was a person who was hated by his own brothers; shunned; sold into slavery; abandoned (no attempts to seek him out); attempted to be seduced and then getting blamed for it; thrown into prison. That's quite a bit for a teenager and young adult!

It was when he was a teenager slave that the Torah refers to him as a successful person. Even Potifar, his Egyptian master, saw Yosef's success and his attachment to G-d. So much so that he entrusted the young slave to oversee his entire household.

Success does not depend on what you have, but on what you are. It doesn't depend on where one is, but on what one makes of their situation.

The celebrated Chasid Reb Mendel Futerfas was in the gulag for about eight years. At one point, some prisoners lost the will to live. He described how he witnessed people remaining in their bed, losing their will to live and dying of malnutrition. A fellow prisoner (who was an intellectual) asked Reb Mendel how he is able to keep on top of things. Not only are you alert, you are the one who inspires us to continue! Reb Mendel replied: If your world is indulging in the material, then when that is taken from you, you have lost your world. But my world is serving G-d. When I'm in a situation, even under severe pressure, I think of what G-d wants me to do in that place, and try to do it.

Tuesday was Yud Tes (the 19th of) Kislev, the day that Rabbi Shneur Zalman , founder of Chabad, was imprisoned for his ideas. He was released from the Tsarist prison in 1798, on Yud Tes Kislev. It always falls around the same time as the Sedra Vayeshev.

This event is seen as a victory for his teachings, in the Sefer (book) Tanya, the statement of Chabad. It teaches us how to focus on our deeper life, internalising this awareness and applying it in all situations. Hopefully, we will always be in a place where the challenges are bearable. But regardless, if one has an inner life, their success will be assured.

Story of the Rebbe

In the Iggros Kodesh there is a letter from the Rebbe to a person who had a question. The person then writes in his letter that he met a Jewish man from Bulgaria, who is not very observant. This Jew said that if Hashem would show him a miracle, he promises that he will become totally observant.

The Rebbe answered with three points.

1. Firstly, tell your friend in my name that if he is totally honest with himself, he should think back and he will remember that Hashem has already shown him a miracle on more than one occasion. His life was in danger and he was saved by a miracle.
2. Secondly, it is not a good idea to ask Hashem to show him a miracle. Because that would mean that he was in a terrifying state, a crisis or a danger and then he would be saved from it. Why should he look for a crisis? He has already had that experience! What Hashem did for him should be enough that he should keep all the Mitzvos, including Shabbos, Kashrus and Tefillin.
3. Third of all, tell him that the fact that a Jew (the Rebbe) who never met him and who lives across the ocean knows with certainty that he saw more than one miracle, is itself a miracle!

Good Shabbos!

גוט שבת!