



Parashat Miketz



English version

THINKING about ME.org

THE GREATEST SPIN ON YOUR LIFE

The Beit Yosef asks, Why do we celebrate the miracle of the candles for eight days? There was no miracle on the first day, for all candles burn, naturally. So why don't we celebrate only seven days?

The answer of R Tzadok is a great lesson: that when the miracle of the candles occurred, they realized that the very fact that candles burn is a miracle. (פרי צדיק - חנוכה כה) Because all of nature is a miracle. The Ramban, in Parashat Bo, (13;16) teaches that the reason why we mention the Exodus in so many mitzvot that we perform, (Kiddush, Sukkot, Pesach, Shema recital, Tefillin, tzitzit, Mezuzah, etc.) is because that is a sign that G-d rules every part of nature. G-d could have brought one plague and finished with the Egyptians. But G-d wanted to show the world, ONCE AND FOR ALL, that He controls all ten aspects of nature that He subjected to plagues (S. HaChinuch 21). R' Chazkel says that it is recommended to learn this Ramban once every thirty days. Because it is so, so easy to forget.

R Tzaddok continues. Why is the "miracle of nature" embedded within the Chanukah miracle? Why, specifically on Chanukah, do we need to remember this lesson that the laws of nature are nothing more than G-d's Will? The answer to this question is the underlying message of Chanukah, and what Yehuda HaMaccabee and his brothers put their lives on the line for. To fight the Greek philosophy that there is an independent concept of Science and Nature in the Universe not related to G-d.

The Greek culture had its roots in the teachings of Aristotle. Aristotle was not only a philosopher. He was a forefather of education in all areas. He encouraged Alexander the Great to capture the world, in order to make it an educated one, instead of a barbaric one. Aristotle introduced the concept of logic to the secular world. Deduction. Math. Science. If you can't prove it, it does not exist. If you cannot prove that a bris makes someone holier, or that the Rabbis can rule nature by deciding when the new moon is, or that the seventh day is any holier than the sixth - if you cannot prove these things, chas veshalom, they do not exist. Aristotle taught his disciples to challenge and question everything. This makes Aristotle's teachings problematic, in that they advocate questioning the existence of G-d. (מה למעלה ומה לאחור. Tamid 32a)

Out of all the games possible, the children studying Torah in the caves on Chanukah pulled these dreidels out to play with. This always bothered me, especially because the letters נס גדול היה שם were not yet applicable. But the meaning is now clear. The message of the Dreidel was the idea that the problem with Aristotle's "science" and Greek Culture is, what, exactly, makes the science a science? What makes the world spin, fire burn, or heat rise? What is the difference, scientifically, between a live body and a dead one; if all the parts are there, what made it stop working? Who is making the heart pump, or the mind think? The world of science definitely does not have all the answers. The world is being sustained by G-d's Will. People are breathed by G-d! If G-d wants a sea to split, fire not to burn, the dead to live ...



science is not an issue. Whether it makes sense according to scientific laws or not, His Will rules.

And this is the lesson of the Dreidel. When you do not spin the dreidel “from above”, it lies, lifeless, on the table. The fact that it is spinning, means that someone has made it spin! The world that we see is the greatest proof that it did not “happen on its own”. And that is the miracle of nature, the miracle of the first candle. And the lesson of the additional night.

In last week’s article I mentioned a quote from Napoleon Hill, author of “Think and Grow Rich”, the forefather of modern day self-help books. I got an email complaint, asking how I could have cited wisdom from a man who himself was not successful in making money other than by teaching others how to. Why take the advice and the wisdom from someone who, himself, was not successful?

I replied that the fact that he did not make money in his lifetime, does not mean that he had no wisdom. לא לחכמים לחם. *Bread does not belong to the Wise.* (Kohelet 9 11) This common irony, that those people who write best-selling books on self help and advice who themselves were not successful in those areas, exists because G-d wants to show the world that success is up to Him, not up to your wisdom. For success is not a science. If G-d does not spin your dreidel, no matter how good your plan and efforts are, your dreidel will not spin. If G-d wants something to happen, it will happen. G-d wanted Bill Gates to become rich, so He made him the owner of Microsoft. It is not that because Bill Gates owned Microsoft he became wealthy. There were others who could have done it or may have tried to do it as well, but G-d did not want them to become wealthy, so they failed. “Results” are not due to science that is independent of G-d. So, even if Napoleon Hill was right about the secrets of success, if G-d does not put His seal of approval on those methods, it just won’t happen.

It was almost certain, and completely logical and to be expected, that the butler would have

remembered Yosef earlier. Every time he went to tell Pharaoh, as he entered the palace, he forgot. When he left the palace, he remembered, and when he reentered he forgot, again and again. Everyday. For two years. Because when G-d does not want something to happen, He simply does not spin the dreidel. Even the dreidel of your knowledge. Aristotle once asked R’ Yossi, “What is a wise person?” According to Judaism, that G-d is the one who spins the dreidel of success and knowledge, who is wise? Is the amount that I was able to come up with through “logic” also dependent on G-d? And if according to Judaism, G-d is in control of what I remember and what I forget, and when, so who then is considered Wise? To that R’ Yossi answered, Being considered a wise person is not determined by how much you know or how much you use your logic. Your wisdom is determined by your willingness to live according to the principles of truth that you have learned. Because the only success that we are in control of, is becoming a better person.(189 בראשית רבתי פרשת מקץ) (Aristotle was caught behaving different than some of his moral teachings.)

The Talmud mentions a conversation between Aristotle’s student, Alexander the Great, and the Sages. Alexander asked, Who is wise? The Rabbis answered... One who can foresee the outcome. ...Who is Strong?... One who overcomes his Inclination... Who is rich?... One who is happy with his lot...(Tamid 32a)

Alexander wanted to hear the perspective of the Torah to self-help and productivity. He wanted to learn a fresh perspective on what is considered success. Because if G-d is in charge of results, then who is considered a successful businessman? It could be that the successful businessman ends up being a poor person, who never made a dollar! The victor could be the weaker of two combatants, just because G-d wanted him to win! So, who is really the Mighty? The Rabbis answered, that “your” success is not defined by external results, which are in the hands of G-d. But on how you better your nature. By working on becoming a better person.



THE BELIEF OF A DEAD MAN

Beliefs are powerful. A fellow walked into the office of the psychiatrist, looking healthy, successful, but concerned. After an hour of therapy, the psychologist could not figure out what was bothering the person. "What is it that you are concerned about?" "Dr., it is strange, but I believe that I am dead. Do not let out my haunting secret to anyone, for they will think that I am retarded, or something."

The psych. asked the "dead" fellow. "Do dead people bleed?" The fellow responded, "Of course not! They are dead!" With that, the psych. smiled, and pulled out a long sharp needle from his desk drawer. He walked over to the fellow, pricked his finger, and let out some blood. The man stared at his bleeding finger in shock, turning white. He gulped, and said, in somewhat of a whisper, "My goodness! Dead people bleed! Dead people bleed!"

In coaching I know that when I found the belief, I found the problem. But I can't change it by pricking a finger, or some other quick fix, for the negative and mistaken belief the client has built up and repeated to himself again and again is too powerful. When the subconscious has resistance, you can't go against it. Still, with silk gloves, or rather silk questions, you can alter it, if you are persistent.

The greatest thing that we can do to help ourselves and others is by changing a negative, discouraging or ineffective belief that governs us. Successful people, in any area of life, have the successful beliefs about that field. From stopping smoking (see Alan Carr's book) to becoming a genius (register to my Effective Learning Course). Making a harmonious home, effectively parenting a wayward teen, or functioning as a good negotiator, knowing how to keep one's cool in heated situations - all boil down to adopting effective beliefs of those who succeed in these areas, and disregarding the ineffective beliefs that bring us to where we do not want to be. For example, a person who is successful in keeping his cool in heated situations has two core beliefs. The method that is

widely used for helping people to get over their lifelong angers is The Four Questions. The originator of this method stated, at the end of her book, that the two core beliefs behind the method are, 1 - G-d is everything, 2 - G-d is good. We Jews recite those beliefs twice daily, *ואתה מושל בכל* and *טוב ה' לכל*. Still, even though we Jews know it, we still get angry. Why? Because, in that minute, we were not living with those beliefs. For just a moment, we thought that *אני מושל בכל*, *I am running everything*. Or, I know better than G-d what's best for me. Or, He does not care about what's best for me.

Try to calm someone down while he is very angry, whispering to him, "Don't worry, don't fret. G-d is everything and G-d is good". Then duck, because he might punch you in the face. At that moment, the belief that governs him is that **he** is running the show, and you are standing in the line of fire of his belief, contradicting it. Our rabbis tell us, *אל תרצה אדם בשעת כעסו* *Don't calm someone when he is angry*, and this is why.

Beliefs come and go, they intensify and shrivel, depending on how much we think about them. The only way we can be of help is if, somehow, we can get a person to change his belief, on his own. When the heavy negative belief softens a little, the negative beliefs can be questioned, and replaced by new, positive ones. And then, hopefully, prepping those beliefs every now and then, until they are second nature. If we would only daven right, we would find that many of the "gem beliefs" of Judaism and of the successful are hidden in the words of the Siddur. Prayer is replete with positive thinking, thankfulness and appreciation for what we do have in life. The *יג עיקרים*, the thirteen Ani Maamins, are the thirteen beliefs of a perfect Jew. By intensifying these beliefs, one can change himself and the world.

Yosef's brothers came down to Egypt with two goals in mind: to buy food and to find Yosef and bring him home, no matter what the cost. They got to Egypt and they saw their brother, but didn't



recognize him. The last time they had seen him was when he was 17, more than twenty years before, when he did not yet have a beard.

The question is obvious. Wouldn't you be able to recognize your brother, even if you had not seen him for twenty years? They were looking for him, and now they were looking right at him! They knew he was going to look a little older, probably with a beard by now. So, how could they have missed him?

The deep answer is that they never used to look at Yosef. They would look at his coat! That is all they remembered about him. His coat. They did not even know how he looked, because that's what jealousy does. It makes you oblivious to your own sibling, because you see only that the sibling has more than you.

The *deeper* answer is that they believed, with every bone in their body, that Yosef deserved to die for attempting to be Yaakov's only inheritor, cancelling out the other Tribes. They believed that he lied to their father about them, and so he needed to be eliminated! Yaakov did not report to Yitzhak about Esav's bad ways, so why should Yosef tattle on his brothers? The Tribes, holiest of men, would never have done what they did to Yosef had they not believed that he deserved it. After seeing how much pain this caused Yaakov, they needed to bring Yosef back. They believed that he was in the pits of Egypt, for that was where he belonged. They even looked for him in "the clubs of prostitutes", as he was handsome.

When they faced him, they could not believe that his dreams had come true, because they believed he was wrong, wrong, wrong. A belief can be so strong, that you can look your brother in the face and not recognize him.

When Yosef attempted to change their belief, he knew there would be resistance. He needed to have them question if their actions had been just. He cried about putting his brothers in such pain, in order to do so, but there was no other way. His first question after revealing his identity was, 'Is my father still alive?' *Selling me, may have been correct, but did my father deserve the agony you caused him? You care about him so much in regard to Binyamin and Shimon, but you did not care about him when you sold me!*

And then, Yosef landed the atom bomb on their belief about what they did to him. *G-d sent me. G-d wanted this. You did not do anything. It was all G-d. You thought that you changed my destiny, but this **was** my destiny.* The ultimate belief of the ultimate Jew is that G-d is the One who writes each and everyone's script.

The Maccabees, a mere thirteen men, stood up against the mightiest army of the world. How? Because of their motto - Maccabee. מי כמוך בא-לים ה' Maccabee stands for, *Who is like You, among the mighty?* They believed that not even tens of thousands of Greek troops, could come anywhere near the might of G-d, and they called out to all who accepted this belief to join their army. They altered the negative belief (Greeks are most powerful) to the effective belief (G-d is most powerful) with a question format, "Who is...." That is the only way you can change a belief. Ask yourself the question each and every day of your life, before, during and after praying, *Do I really believe that G-d is running my show? Do I really believe that He is good, even when it looks otherwise? Do I really believe that what my brother has, and what I don't, is all G-d?*

IMPORTANT NOTICE!! THE EFFECTIVE LEARNING COURSE WILL BE TAKING PLACE NEAR THE MIR 1:45 – 3:15 ON MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS STARTING AFTER CHANUKAH. CALL 0527679186 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H



CHECK OUT NEW WEBSITE YOSEFFARHI.COM FOR MORE MOTIVATIONAL CONTENT