



Parshas Emor

May 13, 2022

A Taste of Torah Success Defined

by Rabbi Yisrael Kellner

The Torah commands (Vayikra 23:9), “When you shall enter the Land that I give you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring an *omer* (a particular measure of volume) from your first harvest to the *kohen* (priest). He shall wave the *omer* before Hashem to find favor for you.” These verses discuss the *omer* offering of barley flour that was brought on the second day of Pesach.

Rashi comments that the *kohen* would waive the *omer* in the four directions of the world as well as up and down. What is the purpose of this waving? Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) in his work *Hakesav Vehakabala* explains that when one plants and raises grain and other produce, there is a fear that one might forget about Hashem and think that he, the farmer, is the one making things grow, and he may erroneously attribute his success to his own abilities. The Torah therefore commands us that before one enjoys the fruits of his labor and partakes of the produce he labored for so long, a portion of the new crop is brought as an offering. The *kohen* then waves it in all four directions and up and down – covering every direction of our three-dimensional world - in order to show that we attribute everything to Hashem, Who has control over every part of the world.

The common view of success is a person whose financial status is secure, makes a good living, can comfortably pay his bills and afford everything he wants. We all have people whom we view in our minds as successful people based upon our perception of success. Someone who is struggling financially and cannot pay his bills is often viewed as a failure. The *omer* offering teaches us what success truly is. Success cannot be based upon the financial status or accomplishments of a person, because that Hashem is solely in

charge of a person’s financial success or failure. The true success that is reserved for Mankind is the effort, going through the motions and doing what is necessary to produce the desired results; the results themselves, however, are not really his. If a person puts in the necessary effort to earn a living in order to feed himself and his family and to pay the bills, but he isn’t able to achieve that goal, he has nonetheless succeeded as far as Hashem is concerned.

Imagine if you would approach someone and ask him how much his paycheck is. He would likely get offended and respond that it’s none of your business. The reason people tend to be sensitive about such matters is because for most people, the size of their paycheck indicates their level of success. This is a mistake, however, because success is really measured by the effort one invests.

My Rebbi once said that a student of his was feeling very down, for he had trouble paying his bills and, as a result, felt very inadequate. My Rebbi then explained to him this concept, that when one is able to pay his bills, it isn’t his success that enables them to be paid but, rather, a decree from Hashem regarding the financial state he should have. The fact that you can’t pay your bills has nothing to do with your success, but is rather a challenge sent to you from Hashem, and you have the opportunity to accept this test - and pass it - with joy. After hearing these words, the student became uplifted and felt no more inferior than his more financially-stable friends.

This concept can be taken a step further. The truth is that even in spiritual matters, success isn’t the level one reaches or any spiritual outcome, but rather the effort one invests. We are accustomed to believing that when it comes to spiritual matters, success is measured by a person’s

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Stories for the Soul

That’s What I Was Taught

Private Yissochor “Rudy” Meyer was a Jewish infantryman for the US Armed Forces during WWII. After the fighting in Germany ended, he was in a DP (displaced persons) camp, where he had the opportunity to help his fellow Jews who had survived the horrors of the Holocaust.

One day, Private Meyer was distributing candy to the children in the DP camp. In an effort to bring them closer to the Judaism of their parents’ homes, he told the children that they’d be given the sweet after reciting a blessing. The children eagerly complied, except for one little girl who stubbornly refused.

The soldier, surprised that a child would be so stubborn, pried the girl to explain why she refused to make a blessing.

“I was taught,” said the little child, “that one only makes a blessing once the food is held in the hand.” (This is indeed the law.)

Overawed that a small child, after having gone through such suffering, could so tenaciously hold onto the education of her formative years, Private Meyer handed the child the candy and she made the blessing.

In this week’s parsha, the *kohanim* (priests) are told to teach their children the special laws that pertain to *kohanim*. Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966) states that the Torah makes a special point of educating the children of *kohanim* because those around them, fellow Jews, do not keep the same strictures; a special emphasis is needed to ensure the children absorb their special responsibility. But the lesson applies for all Jews - we must strive to inculcate our children with an attachment to Judaism so that they cling to it through thick and thin.

Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 50 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:30. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM CONTINUES THIS SHABBOS

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. Program ends 15 minutes before mincha in Southeast Denver, at mincha in West Denver. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: What quasi-blessing is recited only when one has not participated in a meal?

Answer: If one is present when a *mezuman* is taking place but is not part of the *mezuman* (because he did not consume any food or drink that would allow him to join), when the leader says "*neva'rech she'achalnu mishelo*," he should respond "*Baruch umivorach shemo tamid li'olam va'ed*." (If he arrives only when the others are responding "*baruch she'achalnu...*", he

should answer *amein* when they finish; the above formula of *baruch umivorach* is only recited when hearing the leader.) If there is a *minyán* present and Hashem's name is used, he should insert Hashem's name, as well: *Baruch Elokeinu umivorach...* (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 198:1).

This week's question: How is it possible to recite a *borei pri hagafen* on a cup of wine on a weekday even though one is not drinking from the cup?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XLVI

Eventually, a compromise was reached that allowed the *pushkas* to be distributed, but with a message saying that money put

into the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin *pushka* should not be at the expense of any other cause.

A Taste of Torah

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spiritual achievements, by the vastness of one's Torah knowledge, by the amount of time spent studying Torah or praying, and the like. The truth, however, is that even if one does not attain these lofty levels, as long as one is trying and working to the best of his abilities to accomplish and grow, he is considered successful. The definition of success varies for each individual; every person has different abilities and faces different situations that create different expectations from one person to another. This is a hard concept to internalize, because the culture we live in depicts greatness and success as dependent on outcomes. In reality, the outcome isn't in our hands at all; rather, that is all from Hashem, and what's ours is the effort.

The Sefer Tanya (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi; 1745-1812) writes that even if a person battles his *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) his whole life and never succeeds in overcoming it, he is successful because he has invested the effort and tried his best.

To illustrate his point, the Tanya cites the statement of the angel - the ministering angel of Eisav - following his defeat at the hands of Yaakov, "No longer will it be said that your name is Yaakov, but Yisrael, for

you have striven with the divine and with man and have overcome. (Bereishis 32:29)" This angel is none other than Satan himself, who also manifests as the *Yetzer Hara*.

The Tanya wonders, why is the name Yisrael given to commemorate the fact that Yaakov strove to fight Eisav's angel and not *Vatuchal*, "and you have overcome," the term used by the angel that refers to the fact that Yaakov overcame him? Isn't the accomplishment of overcoming more significant? The Tanya explains that the fact that Yaakov overcame his *Yetzer Hara* isn't the primary accomplishment of Yaakov. Rather, the effort and work invested to overcome the *Yetzer Hara* is the most anyone can do. Even in spiritual achievements, then, it is the effort that one puts in, even with minimal results, that makes him a greater success. Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky (1920-2014) once said that in the realm of spiritual achievements, most people do not attain half, a third or even a quarter of their aspirations and goals. What Hashem does value, and where true greatness and success can be attained, is when someone tries and gives it his all based on his abilities and life situation to come closer to Hashem and fulfill His commandments.

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