



Behaalosecha - There are No Limits



In Parshas Behaalosecha, the Torah articulates the laws of Pesach Sheini. In the year following the exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe to instruct the nation regarding the service of the Korban Pesach. Several men had become ritually impure due to contact with a corpse, thus preventing them from offering the Korban. They approached Moshe to ask if there was a possibility for them to be included and not forfeit the opportunity to bring the korban with the rest of the nation. Moshe, unsure of how to answer their question, tells them, "Stand, and I will hear what Hashem will command concerning you." Rashi, referencing the Midrash, explains that he said this to them as one would express: "I will hear the matter from my teacher's mouth." Rashi continues and exclaims, "Fortunate, indeed, is a human being (lit., one born of woman) who may so confidently rely on that at any time when he wishes to do so he may speak with the Shechinah!

Rashi notes that he conveyed this with absolute assurance, much like a student who is sure he will receive information from his teacher at any moment. Had Moshe not been confident in this, he would not have told them to 'stay here while I go to ask. I will be back shortly.' Rashi then continues with a fascinating remark. Truly fortunate is a human being (literally, one born of a woman) who can so confidently rely on the fact that whenever he wishes, he can engage in conversation with the Shechinah! Rashi does not say, 'Fortunate is Moshe.' He states, 'Fortunate is (one born of a woman) a human being.' This suggests that a human being is capable of attaining such elevated states.

The Swinging Pendulum

Human beings have an infinite capacity for achievement. The pages of history are filled with individuals who have notably changed the direction of human civilization. Many heroes and villains have played a role in shaping the world as we know it today. The world has witnessed remarkable figures such as Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, the Rambam, the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov, and Sara Schenirer, and numerous other religious leaders. Additionally, the world has produced outstanding scholars and brilliant philosophers, scientists, and inventors. There has been a remarkable surge in technological and medical innovations. The potential of humanity has enabled us to journey to the moon and back.

Unfortunately, this inherent potential can also be harnessed for nefarious purposes. One need only examine the legacies of Hitler, Stalin, and similar figures. The unprecedented devastation they unleashed upon the world is without parallel. Their capacity for evil was boundless. This reality is not only evident on a global scale but also manifests in smaller, more intimate, and personal contexts. For example, a gang leader who instills fear in a community or an abusive partner or parent can inflict considerable damage on those in their immediate circle.

Failure is Not an Option

Many individuals will not fulfill their entire potential because they fail to recognize the immense possibilities within themselves. As a result, they tend to abandon their efforts when faced with difficulties, particularly when they believe that success is unattainable. This perspective is based on several erroneous beliefs. Firstly, success is not typically achieved without considerable struggle. Frank C. Mars, the founder of the Mars Candy company, faced bankruptcy three times before establishing a prosperous enterprise. Similarly, Babe Ruth recorded nearly 500 strikeouts throughout his illustrious Hall of Fame career. Thomas Edison famously remarked that he made 1000 attempts with the lightbulb before achieving success.



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Secondly, people frequently interpret failure and challenges as confirmation of their limitations. When they encounter an unsuccessful attempt to achieve a goal, they often give up, concluding that it is beyond their abilities. However, the reality is quite the contrary. If they had continued to strive and put in the effort, they would have been able to achieve much more than they initially thought possible. Failures do not define an individual's potential. It is through success that one's true potential is revealed.

Don't Settle for the Moon

There is no more significant application of this concept than in the pursuit of closeness to Hashem. Indeed, the goal of humanity is to bring glory and honor to Hashem. The path of spiritual growth is a lengthy journey filled with numerous challenges and triumphs. However, the Tanna Dibai Eliyahu states, "a person is obliged to question themselves about when their actions will attain the level of their forefathers' actions." Is it conceivable that every person is meant to achieve the same accomplishments as the Patriarchs, Moshe, or King David? The Torah itself attests that Moshe was the humblest of all men and that there will never be a prophet in the Jewish People who can attain his level of prophecy. Does Hashem seek duplicates of former righteous figures?

To address these inquiries, the following explanation can be provided. The responsibility that lies with every individual is to strive to realize their potential. Each person encounters unique situations and challenges that are specifically designed to help them maximize their potential. The Avos were charged with establishing a nation that would serve Hashem. They lived up to this potential by bringing the Jewish People into existence. Moshe reached his potential by becoming so close to Hashem that he could say to the people, "Stand, and I will hear what Hashem will command concerning you." That was their greatness. Every individual has the opportunity to fulfill their potential and achieve greatness. To begin this journey, each person must reflect: What is my unique purpose in life, and am I prepared to invest the necessary effort to realize it?

Norman Vincent Peale, a popular psychologist and author, who is considered the father of the Theory of Positive Thinking, famously said, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." Perhaps the expression should be changed to "Shoot for the moon and watch yourself soar to heights you never imagined."

Have a wonderful Shabbos,

Binyomin Stolov



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