



דרכים בפרשה

תולדות



ויגדל האיש וילך הלך וגדל עד כי גדל מאוד

The man became great and kept becoming greater until he was very great (26:13)

After Yitzchak Avinu arrived in Plishtim from escaping the famine, and the episode of Rivka being taken and subsequently returned, the Torah goes on to mention the incredible success of Yitzchak and how he managed to become great and continuously rise in stature.

It would seem that the Torah is discussing the making of Yitzchak Avinu's *gadlus* with regards to his financial situation, great wealth, power and influence. Of course this is an interesting tidbit of information, but it does seem quite trivial for the Torah to be placing such an emphasis on this. After all, מעשה אבות - we must pay close attention to all the occurrences of the *Avos* because they bear great relevance to Klal Yisroel's future. Furthermore, is this truly how the Torah views greatness, basing it on the size of one's bank account?

Rav Shmuel Birnbaum z"l explained that the greatness of Yitzchak was *not* because he became wealthy, but rather, it was despite the fact that he became wealthy. For the average man, such change in life would have created great challenges. This would have caused him to dress, eat and drink differently. Suddenly, his social circles would change and he would perhaps *need* to move to a "better" neighbourhood. Different (not always positive) behaviours were now expected of him due to the societal pressures. The voices in his head would constantly yell, "*es past*

nisht fahr a gvir". No longer could the once unassuming man sit along the side and smile with others; now his every word was paid attention to by others as if he had also acquired great wisdom overnight. The novelty of Yitzchak Avinu was that all of his wealth did not change him one iota. He remained loyal to HaShem, always fearing Him and doing what HaShem asked of him. His power and bank account would not define him at all. This is not a small thing at all, but rather a great lesson about our Avos and how the Torah defines greatness.

We find similarly a comment from Rashi regarding Yosef HaTzaddik. At the beginning of Chumash Shemos, when the Torah recounts who came down to Mitzrayim, the possuk says ויהי כל נפש יצאי ירך יעקב שבעים נפש - **ויוסף היה במצרים** - *The total number of persons that were of Yacov's issue came to seventy, Yosef being already in Mitzrayim* (1:5). Rashi wonders why the Torah mentions this if in fact we already know this from the last four parshiyos in Chumash Bereishis. וכי לא היינו יודעים שהוא היה במצרים? אלא להודיעך צדקתו של יוסף, הוא יוסף הרועה את צאן אביו, הוא יוסף שהיה במצרים, ונעשה מלך, ועומד בצדקו - *Do we not know that he was in Mitzrayim? But rather, its purpose is to inform you of Yosef's righteousness: this is the same Yosef who tended his father's sheep; this is the same Yosef who was in Mitzrayim and became king there, and yet he remained steadfast in his*

righteousness, and the change from a humble position to exalted rank in Mitzrayim caused no deterioration in his character. Yosef was a major success story. One would think that the great viceroy of Egypt would now be a different person. But the Torah points out that after all that Yosef had been through, beginning with the issues he had with his brothers and being sold down to Mitzrayim as a slave, and then getting thrown into jail. One would think that he would have been a hardened person by now. Next came the great rise in stature. At Yosef's whim, he could have anything he wanted and raise and lower any person in the kingdom. But this did not change him. Furthermore, upon the arrival of the rest of his family, perhaps he may have even experienced a bit of pride sitting on his throne and looking down at them. Yet, the Torah testifies that nothing at all had changed. He was still the same person, not allowing the success to get to his head.

How does one develop such greatness? I believe that the answer can be found a few pesukim earlier in the comments of the *heiliger* Ohr HaChaim. The possuk (26:6) *וישב יצחק בגרר* - *Yitzchak settled in Gerar*. The Ohr HaChaim writes *לומר שקיים מאמר הבורא ברוך הוא ובטל מחשבתו שקדמה לו* - that Yitzchak was *mevatel machshavto*- he pushed aside his own ideas and instead did what HaShem told him to do.

We must understand that all decisions that we make must be based on HaShem and His Torah. If what our heart tells us is different from the Torah's perspective, we must be willing to push aside our own ideas and realign them to follow the Torah's. Once a person comes to the level of being able to accept the Torah as the be-all and end-all, and

realize that we aren't the ones that are calling the shots, we begin to look at things differently. We now can understand that any success that we experience is solely because HaShem has decided to grant it to us, and not due to our own personal expertise or greatness.

Yosef HaTzaddik as well had this same constant awareness. After being pulled out from incarceration because he had successfully interpreted the dreams, Pharaoh exclaims that he had heard of his great abilities. One could just imagine that this was the lucky break that Yosef was waiting for. He now had his moment to take the credit and finally gain his freedom. Yet, with complete mindfulness of the source of all talent and ability, *ויען יוסף את פרעה לאמר בלעדי אלקים יענה* - Yosef responds to Pharaoh, saying, "Not I! Hashem will see to Pharaoh's welfare."

When one is aware of this, an elevated position or newfound wealth will not cause a person to change, because it isn't the person's accomplishment, but rather HaShem that has bestowed it. This is why Yitzchak and Yosef didn't change, and this is what greatness is all about. Greatness is not based on what one has but rather how he deals with it and the realization at all times of where it comes from.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפּעל



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