



NEVER GIVE UP

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Toldos Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5782

It has been accepted as common wisdom that it takes approximately 10,000 hours or 10 years of intensive practice to become a true expert in a craft or skill (based on Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell 2008). This applies to the arts, athletics, scholarship or computers. Since achieving such a world-class level of excellence is reserved for the outstanding few, what does this lesson in perseverance hold for the rest of us?

We believe that Hashem has endowed each individual with unique talents, strengths and abilities. We need to discover that greatness within ourselves and our children and actively nurture it and develop it. What role does perseverance play in determining the right path in one's life? Can lofty goals, even those that seem beyond us be achieved through hard work or do we need to deal with what we perceive to be our limitations, in effect, settling for less.

“What role does perseverance play in determining the right path in one's life?”

An insight into this issue can be gleaned from a most unusual series of pesukim in this week's Parsha. The Torah devotes no fewer than ten pesukim (Bereishis 26:13-22) to the matter of Yitzchak Avinu's wells. When an entire body of Halacha can sometimes be built on one word or even one letter in the Chumash, what is the lesson that needs to be taught that justifies the Torah's spending ten pesukim on a seemingly obscure and non-relevant series of events?

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l, in Sefer Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah, asks this question and says the following: “When one sets out to achieve something, he must act with alacrity and without weakness. He should not be dissuaded by detractors and never give up hope of achieving success. He should not be deterred by setbacks and never express hopelessness. When he stumbles, he immediately gets up and begins anew.”

“This is what the Torah details for us. Yitzchak confronted the reality of his father's wells having been sealed up and rendered useless by his enemies. His reaction – he dug a new well. His adversaries clashed with him over the new well – he dug another well. When they contested this one as well – he dug a third well which was not contested and thereby he achieved success.”

“He should not be dissuaded by setbacks and never express hopelessness.”

Yitzchak's difficulties with lowly, jealous and quarrelsome neighbors did not cause him to give up on doing what he needed to do. He was neither scared off nor convinced to abandon his plans. Setbacks did not weaken his attitude or focus on the task. Yitzchak's actions impart to his descendants one fundamental and incredibly important lesson – “Never give up!”

This lesson is crucial for the success of any parent, mechanech or child. Once you clarify your goal in a matter or situation, keep plugging away until Hashem crowns your efforts with success. We never give up on a child. We never give up on a student. We must always show our children through our actions and mindset, that we never give up.

Growing up in a world of instantaneous results and gratification, perseverance is a hard to find value and attribute. We owe it to our children to imbue them with the faith in Hashem that He will help us ultimately find success, if we try hard enough and show we really are devoted to achieving a goal. We need to examine our own attitudes of being 'realistic' and question if perhaps we are too quick to take the easy path out and fall short of the encouragement the child needs to complete a mundane task or pursue his or her dreams.

“Yitzchak's actions impart to his descendants one fundamental and incredibly important lesson – “Never give up!”

As the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, we must be attuned to the life lessons they are constantly teaching us in these parshiyos. By passing these secrets of successful living along to our children, we become true heirs to the priceless legacy and successful path our Avos have blazed for us.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann