

בשבת

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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

AGAINST ALL ODDS

The terrible story of the Golden Calf takes place in *Parshas Ki Sisa*. A little over one month after *Klal Yisrael* received the Torah, the people sinned by creating an idol and worshipping it.¹ This occurred at the end of the 40 days that Moshe was spending in *shamayim*, learning all of the Torah to better give it over to the Jewish nation.

Instead of coming down to the people amidst great fanfare, Moshe is told by Hashem that he must descend, as the nation has sinned. And when he indeed saw the terrible transgression in front of him, he shattered the *Luchos*, having reasoned that the Jewish people were not worthy of being given the Torah.²

We find that Moshe did many things in response to the Golden Calf. He broke the *Luchos*, burned and ground the calf, called the tribe of Levi to do battle with the wrongdoers, and *davened* to Hashem that He not destroy the *Bnei Yisrael*.

However, there is one thing that Moshe Rabbeinu did not do. He did not give up. Moshe studied night and day for the Jewish people, not eating, not drinking, not sleeping; he risked his very life responding to angels who challenged his presence in *shamayim*, and everything came crashing down when the people sinned.

He could have agreed with Hashem when Hashem suggested that He destroy the nation, and rebuild a new one from Moshe. Yet, he didn't surrender, and he didn't despair. Moshe did what needed to be done - ridding the nation of those who led them astray, and pleading with Hashem to give *Klal Yisrael* another chance.

In our own lives, we sometimes work hard on creating something and it gets ruined, or we put great effort into studying for a test and don't do as well as we wanted, or perhaps we even try to change our bad habits, but we find that we aren't making any progress. Our response may be to desist from trying again, after all, what's the point?

However, we can take inspiration from Moshe - at the bleakest point in our nation's history, facing a terrible situation, he was not discouraged. He stood up, and did what had to be done. We, too, have that ability in our genes. Let us never stop trying.

1 *Shemos* Chap. 32

2 *Rashi* on *Shemos* 32:19 s.v. וישלך מידו

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's very easy, and normal, to get discouraged when something is not working out the way we wanted it to - especially if we've put a lot of effort into the final product. What strategies can one employ to reinforce our ability to persevere?

There are two ideas that might be helpful. In regards to spiritual pursuits, it is important to keep in mind that one gets rewarded in relation to the effort expended.¹ Therefore, even if one doesn't accomplish what one set out to do, there is still value in the effort put forth.

Additionally, even when pursuing mundane interests one should be aware that the more we use our trait of persistence, the greater that trait becomes, and the easier it becomes for us to persevere in other areas as well. Even if we don't get what we want, we haven't worked for nothing. We've grown as a person, becoming a person who has learned how to persevere.

1 *Avos* 5:23

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In my view it's necessary to analyze and evaluate one's avodas Hashem daily - just as any merchant constantly audits his business so as not to destroy his investments - *Mesillas Yesharim* Chap. 3

TRY, TRY AGAIN

Rabbi Elimelech Silver* looks like any other learned rabbi. He has a long black beard, wears a long coat, and is a well known *talmid chochom*. However, not many people know Rabbi Silver's background, nor what it took for him to accomplish what he has accomplished.

Rabbi Silver grew up in a small American community in the Midwest, going to a school where, although Jewish, most of the students were not observant. Consequently, it was very difficult for young Eli Silver to create a meaningful relationship with Hashem when everyone around him flatly denied the ability to do so.

As a young teenager, Eli decided to spend his weekends in the local park, taking in the nature around him. Accompanied with the English translation of *Chovos Halevovos*, Eli set out to convince himself that there is indeed a Creator. It took many months of thought, contemplation, and perseverance, but Eli finally felt comfortable with his confidence in Hashem. Going forward, Eli no longer felt dissuaded or discouraged by his classmates.

In fact, this was the foundation of Eli's relationship to Hashem. As Eli grew older, he grew in his understanding of Torah, *Halacha*, and love of Hashem. Eventually he moved to Eretz Yisrael, where he currently serves as *mashgiach* of a prominent yeshivah. He still travels back to the United States from time to time, and enjoys sharing stories of his earlier years; stories that accentuate the importance and value of perseverance.

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**Name has been changed, based on a true story.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- One should never despair, even if a prophet says that there is no hope.¹
- Hashem specifically assists those who choose to better themselves.²
- Every person, no matter how righteous or pious, has periods where they think that it's better to stay in bed than to keep on trying.³
- People think that the great personalities never fail. To the contrary, failure is an integral part of success.⁴

1 *Berachos* 10a

2 *Yoma* 38b

3 *Ruach Chaim* on *Avos* 2:1 s.v. או יאמר אייו

4 *Pachad Yitzchak Iggeres V'Ksavim*, Letter 128