



Be A Dreamer

Israel has raced ahead in their vaccination program. What is the secret to their success?

Israel's Vaccine Success

Over the past few weeks, the world has watched in astonishment as Israel has sped ahead in the race to vaccinate the world's population. To date, close to two million Israelis have been vaccinated. In a country of nine million people, that is more than twenty percent of the population.

In addition, we should take into account that two million Israeli citizens are under age 16 and will not be vaccinated and another half-million already contracted the virus and have antibodies. All in all, Israel is way ahead, and a very large portion of its population is now relatively safe from the virus.

They have become a case study. They are the first country to test the vaccine on the ground and see how effective it is and what percentage of the population needs to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity. They also keep a log of information on every person that receives the vaccine in order to track its long-term effects (does it really cause Alzheimers, and so on). Basically, Israel has become the center of vaccine research, and the entire world is waiting to hear what its impact will be.

A Jew is a Dreamer

Why has Israel been so successful where the rest of the world has so miserably failed?

The first answer lies in the verse that the Rebbe would so often repeat: "The eyes of G-d are upon the land, from the beginning of the year until its end." The Rebbe would say that G-d pays extra attention to what goes on in Israel, so, no wonder they have been exceptionally successful with the vaccines.

But there is also something else to it.

Several months ago, Italy held a conference called "Awakening," or, "The Rebirth of Italy." The purpose of the gathering was to figure out how to boost the Italian economy. The keynote address was given by the Israeli ambassador to Italy, Mr. Dror Eydar, who was asked to share some of the wisdom the Jewish people gained when building the Jewish state.

Mr. Eydar spoke about the name of the conference, "Awakening." What is the difference, he asked, between a person that is dead and a sleeping person? (Besides the physical difference that the one who is sleeping, is breathing and his heart is beating.) The difference, he explained, is that sleeping people have dreams.

When the Jewish people were exiled from their land, they knew that they would return home one day. They constantly dreamed of their return, and held on to the vision that one day they would be reestablished in their homeland. That dream is what kept them from assimilating with their neighbors.

They even incorporated it into the prayers. Normal people pray for health, wealth and happiness, but Jewish people pray for something else too: for the merit to return to our homeland with Moshiach. In other religions, they thank G-d for providing them with their needs, but the people of Israel, in addition to thanking G-d for food, they also

pray that G-d rebuild their Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

From the moment the Jewish people were exiled, they held onto the dream of their return, and that is what helped them retain their identity. As the Rebbe once said at a Farbrengen, “Jews are dreamers.” Otherwise, we wouldn’t have the wherewithal to survive.

Think Out of the Box

What exactly is a dream?

Normally, a person is grounded in reality. There are limits to what is actually possible for him to accomplish. But in our dreams, we rise above those limitations.

A well-known Chassid, imprisoned in the Siberian gulag, was dispatched with a group of prisoners to chop wood in a forest. That day was Simchas Torah. He decided to ignore his surroundings; he closed his eyes and began to dance and sing. Thinking that he was dancing for their entertainment, the other prisoners gathered around him and began to clap along. But really, his mind was in an entirely different place; he was dancing with his Chassidic friends in the shul, holding the Torah scrolls tight.

Dreams give us the power to transcend limitations. Jews are dreamers, and we therefore think out of the box. We don’t let reality get in the way of fulfilling our dreams.

How has Israel been so successful with the virus distribution?

Every container of the Pfizer vaccine contains one thousand bottles of the vaccine. You have five days from the moment the container is opened until the vaccines go bad. Now, Israel has many small settlements with a much lower population. Not wanting the vaccines to go to waste, they figured out a method—with Pfizer’s agreement—to break down the containers into smaller portions.

Every bottle contains five or six doses. From the moment you open the bottle and mix the saline, it must be injected within six hours. And what if the elderly people don't show up for their appointment? In Israel, the nurses pull in young people from the street and vaccinate them on the spot. The main thing is to ensure that not a single vaccine goes to waste.

That is called thinking out of the box.

Will the Jewish People Have Faith?

This brings us to this week's parshah, which continues the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Last week, we read how G-d at the burning bush begged Moses to return to Egypt and redeem his enslaved brethren. Moses hesitated. "They won't believe me," he told G-d. He didn't trust the Jewish people.

At that moment, G-d showed him a miracle. "Throw your staff to the ground," G-d said, and the staff immediately turned into a snake.

Why a snake, of all things? Rashi says that G-d was hinting to the fact that he had spoken ill of the Jewish people. "*Lashon hora* is the occupation of the snake," he says, referring to the story of the Tree of Knowledge.

G-d showed Moses another miracle: "Put your hand in your chest," he said. Moses did so, and his hand came out white with leprosy. Again, Rashi explains, it hinted to the words Moses had said earlier. Leprosy is a punishment for *lashon horah*.

Indeed, when Moses came to Egypt and told the leaders that G-d had sent him, they actually believed him. The people rejoiced that G-d's salvation was at hand.

Kotzer Ruach

However, things changed in the opposite direction.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and demanded, “Let my people go.” In response, Pharaoh became even more heavy handed. Until then, the Jews would receive straw from the government to manufacture bricks, but then Pharaoh decreed that they would have to obtain the bricks on their own—while fulfilling the same quota as before. The situation of the Jewish people worsened considerably.

Moses turned to G-d and said, “Why have you harmed these people? Why did you send me? From the time I came to Pharaoh, their situation has only gotten worse...” G-d said in response, “You will now see...with a strong arm, he will send them out.”

And here, our Parsha begins.

G-d tells Moses that He remembers the covenant of the forefathers; “Tell the people of Israel that...I will take you out from the Egyptian bondage, and I will save you...and I will redeem you...and I will take you to be my nation...and I will bring you to the land...” G-d gives the Jewish people a wonderful promise, a statement which we don’t find earlier at all.

However, when Moses gave it over to the Jewish people, they ignored him. “They didn’t listen to Moses because of their hard labor and *kotzer ruach*.”

What does *kotzer ruach* mean? Literally, it means “shortness of breath.” The Jews were—quite literally—out of breath from their labor and suffering and weren’t able to listen to the promises brought by Moses.

However, those words have another meaning: “shortness of vision.” They couldn’t see past their grim physical reality. Moses came to them

with the news that G-d would take them out of Egypt and bring them to the promised land, but they were so sunken in their sorrow that they lost the ability to dream of anything beyond their day-to-day misery.

Be a Prophet ; Dream Big

The Talmud says, “A dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy.” In other words, everyone can be a minor prophet. We each have the ability to envision the impossible.

The Psalmist says, “Do not touch my Mashiachs, and do not cause evil to my prophets.” Our sages say that ‘Moshiach’ in this verse refers to Jewish children, and ‘prophets’ refers to Torah scholars. Every Jewish child is a little Moshach who can bring salvation to the world. Every adult—who may have come to the realization that he’s no Moshiach—can still occasionally be a prophet.

When you have a dream to build, to create, to make a difference in the world, don’t give up hope. Very often, dreams come true.

May we very soon merit the ultimate fulfillment of our dreams, with “the return of the exile of Zion—we were like dreamers, *hayinu kicholmim*,” with the coming of Moshiach, very soon.