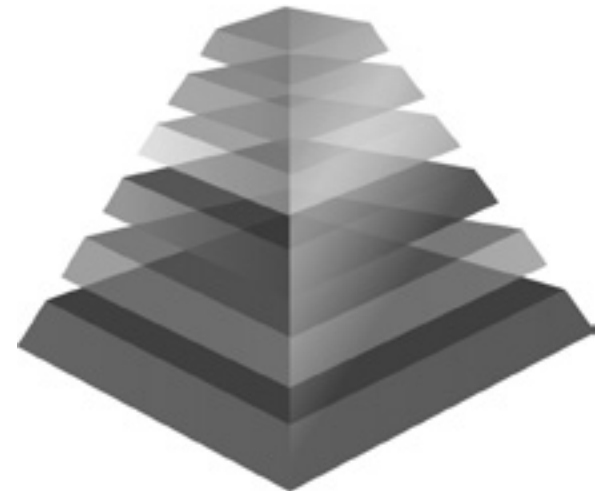


CHAPTER 6: YESOD

HOW TO MAKE SYSTEMS BETTER

EFFY'S STORY
AND
SEAN'S STORY



HOW TO MAKE SYSTEMS BETTER ...

EFFY'S STORY

**“From up here, I can see everything that goes on in
this place ...
... then I go downstairs and mingle.”**

Around the corner from Milo Taphinn's loft sits his city's sprawling industrial district. A hundred years ago, one smoggy factory after another squatted along this mile-and-a-half-long stretch of dirt, just south of downtown.

Decades ago, it had ballooned up from empty dirt fields, due to an invasion of migrant workers in that era and because of its proximity to a busy commercial port. Quite prosperous in its heyday, the area sadly became dark and dingy, belching out smog and nefarious fumes of industry. It quickly became thought of as the bad part of town.

As the decades flew by and the county rewrote labor laws, the area began progressing again. Some factories received facelifts and internal restructuring, while others were promptly demolished. Small office buildings and workshops began peppering the area. Freeway overpasses were cemented up and crisscrossed the empty spaces between buildings. A baseball stadium was erected and the area soon became a more diverse center of commerce, helping the region's economy become one of the strongest in the nation.

However, quite suddenly, around twenty years ago, a short but brutal recession left the area decimated.

Today, the district boasts tall, up-to-date, clean factories, department store headquarters, factory outlets and, as its centerpiece, a gargantuan office building covered in shiny, green tinted windows with gray metal trim that gives it a very modern look. Flush with the building's back stands a full-city-block-long factory, and, at the building's front, a parking lot big enough for an amusement park.

The company inside of this edifice once floundered in crisis, under tremendous pressure. But when one man came in and saved the day, it soon rose to be a leader in the industry. With its subsequent success, it revitalized the entire area.

But just how does one man save a company? We must get to the bottom of this type of oft-heard tale. What makes companies flounder one day and boom the next? In other words, just how do you get a System to work better?

PERSPECTIVE

If you were standing on top of the gargantuan green office building looking down at the adjoining parking lot, my car would look to you like a slow-moving ladybug arriving late to a massive ladybug camp-out. Each row of ladybugs is neatly aligned one in front of the next.

My car halts and I yank out my jangling car keys and put them in my pocket. As I step up into the warm spring air, I peer over the rows and rows and rows of early ladybugs between me and the front door of the building. I stride quickly towards the building and, as I hit the sidewalk, the automatic doors slide open for me. I stop in the cool, well decorated lobby, waiting for my eyes to adjust.

The lobby is full of dark greens and blacks, waxy plants and wide, white doorways. The security guard checks me and brings me through one of the large doors to a carpeted hallway, where an intern is waiting. The smell of new carpet overwhelms my nose.

“You must be the two o'clock,” the young man says with an unexpected air of confidence. He brings me into a large elevator and we shoot up sixteen

flights. I hear a ding and the doors open. We step through the doors and stop right across from the office of William Finkel. At exactly two, as we are about to knock on his door, Finkel calls the intern's cell phone.

"Okay, okay, I'll bring him," the intern says into the phone. He turns to me and says, "He wants you to see all the action."

THE BUSTLE OF LIFE

Even before we enter the heavy blue doors, I can already hear the bustling commotion through the walls. I push open the door with both arms and step onto a small round balcony, much like what you would sit in during an opera performance. Eighty feet below me is a factory production floor. Despite my terrible fear of heights, I tip toe over to the railing to get a better view. An anthill of people swarms below.

Dozens of workers donning light green jump suits weld and snap pieces together in an assembly line that moves from left to right. The soldering guns spray sparks down onto the workers' clothing and shoes. Hundreds of metal and plastic parts clang against each other, filling the cavernous room with a blunt yet symphonic rhythm.

"Pretty cool, huh?" Aghast, I turn back toward the voice. Finkel is standing there, smiling. He is tall and wears a dark green suit and a matching tie that rests comfortably on his crisp light blue dress shirt. His thick brown hair and youthful face show little signs of aging, though he is in his mid-50's. I relax and extend my hand, which he grips firmly. "Call me Effy," he shouts over the noise.

"This is where the action happens," he hollers, pointing to the noisy assembly line. "This is where we change the world; this is where it all comes together." He says those words in a sincere, epic tone, though they may sound quite cliché as you read them. Finkel pulls my bicep and whisks me back to the railing of the balcony. I tremble as our heads bolt out over the edge.

"You see these people," he says pointing down and around, "each and every one of them is integral to our production." I myself can't help but become excited. Impressive, considering that he is referring to a rather boring, run-of-the-mill assembly line. He excitedly describes each step in the process, as I nod and smile politely.

"And y'know how it all happens?" he continues with enthusiasm, "y'know what goes into making it all work? Teamwork and a positive, constructive work environment. From up here, I can see everything that goes on in this place, I'm *aware* of it. Then I go downstairs and mingle with the workers. 'Hey, Bob, what's with the new machine?' and 'Al, any new ideas for the style of a new model?' Then I put the two together and make it all run smooth. I love this place."

He quickly turns his back to me and starts walking back to the door. "Come!" he shouts.

THE OFFICE OF YOUR DREAMS

I follow Finkel back through the doors and down a long hallway, until we reach his office door. Inside, I see a stylish black metal desk with a matching leather chair. At the back of the office a large rectangular window brings warm light into the room. I look down at the top of his desk. It is unexpectedly neat for a man as busy as he.

He sits me down on a comfortable leather chair in front of his desk. "Hot drink? Cold drink? Hard drink?" he asks with a big smile.

I tell Finkel that I'll take a l'chaim, but to make it a soda, because I'm on the job. He laughs.

To my right sit metal shelves neatly filled with books on public speaking, business management, psychology, history and several biographies. To my left squats a water cooler, a small kitchenette where Finkel is pouring the drinks and ...

"... Jewish books?!" I almost shout, unable to hold back.

"Ha-ha, surprised aren't ya?" Finkel remarks, enjoying a good laugh with me. "That's right, a man's gotta learn. Jewish books are a *must*. Some people tell me it hurts my business. Some people are anti-Semitic, they tell me, but who cares. I mean really. I made two major deals based on the fact that they liked me being someone who lives by religious values.

"Here," he says, handing me the drink. My palm is moistened from the wet condensation on the smooth glass exterior of the cup.

Finkel walks behind his desk, sits in his chair, reaches down and says, “I even wore one of these whenever they came in.” He takes out a yarmulke from his drawer. “They loved it.”

With his yarmulke on, Finkel and I share a l’chaim. “To new friends,” he says with gusto.

Finkel turns back to hang his jacket on the back of his chair, loosens his tie and rolls up his sleeves. He plops down in his chair to face me and says, “But enough about me, what about you? What’s happening with you?”

THE INTERVIEW

I tell him about the book that I am writing, the people that I’ve interviewed so far and the basic idea behind the project.

“Great! Sign me up for two copies. Here’s my card, call me when it’s ready. I love books about how people work; human nature’s fascinating isn’t it? Understanding people, networking with them, too. It’s the most valuable tool out there. People always ask me the key to success. I tell them, work hard, pray hard and make relationships with people. Relax hard should be on that list, too, but people like things that come in threes, y’know?” I laugh.

CHARM

As Finkel speaks, I can feel his words melt any of the first-time-meeting tension that may have been there. It’s forgotten now. I feel very comfortable with him. His cool, confident eyes looking at me, I feel good about him and the comments he shares; I appreciate his philosophy of life. I find myself rolling up my sleeves and relaxing, too. I finish my soda, and enjoy some lemonade and a glass of water by the time we’re done with our extended meeting.

THE STORY

**“Look, listen here, I don’t have to pay you ...
... and there’s nothing you could do about it.”**

I ask Finkel how he came to work at IGreen International.

“Well, to tell you the truth, they brought me in to fix the place and then they ended up hiring me. When I was hired, I knew very little about factories or production lines or anything like that. I was brought in because this company was in the red. I mean in *huge* debt. Big time. Chapter 11 on the horizon. *Then* they hired me, after I gave some good advice.

“The lower management called me at first to fix things up a bit. When I first came, I couldn’t understand what was wrong. The company had good products and people wanted to buy. What was wrong? I spent three days just walking around the building and factory here observing the organization as a whole. People thought I was crazy, just walking around and not preaching anything at first. But that’s a good lesson; must be my personality — put that in the book! Send me three copies!

“Then I started to see some of the problems around here. People were not communicating properly with each other. The problem wasn’t the product. It was the people,” he says confidently, leaning back in his chair, as if retelling the story for the first time. It’s probably the 800th time.

“More accurately, it was the way the people interacted. The upper management wasn’t being understood by the factory foreman. The foreman wasn’t explaining the needs of the assembly line to the product orderers. And on and on ... it was a big mess – tragic really.”

“So I set up a meeting with [the owner] Irving Green — you’re scheduled to meet with him after me, right?” I nod in agreement. “I was so excited – it was my first big project! I told him, ‘Listen, Irv,’ and he interrupted me and told me, ‘Call me Mr. Green.’ So I said, ‘Okay, Mr. Green, we need to stop production for a few days in order to fix this place. Now I know it sounds a bit backwards ...’ I couldn’t even finish my proposal; he turned his back on me and started to walk away. He was looking for someone to blame *outside* of himself and my words

slightly implied that he might be related to the problem, just an iota. You can only help people if they want to change.”

Effy’s voice quickly shifts to a louder, stronger tone, as he leans forward in his chair, elbows on his desk, looking at me intensely. “He didn’t want to hear any of it. He started telling me that management consultants like me were no good and they just come in and make problems where there are none, just to make money. But you’ll tell your readers about that after you interview him, I suppose.”

He’s right, I will.

“We didn’t speak for two days. Finally, I took a deep breath and tried to get into his head. How could I get through to him and prevent hundreds of employees from losing their jobs and [being unable to bring] home food to put on the table. I called him and flat-out asked him to let me and my team conduct two days of classes and mini-seminars free of charge and, if things seemed to be progressing, we would be able to add a third day and he only had to pay me if my recommendations paid off. I told him it was his choice, I would never tell him what to do.

“I tried to play his personality, so that he would agree with me. He agreed, I mean, the guy was about to go into major debt – I think that he had to agree to something. But I knew that it had to come from him, he had to feel important like he’s calling the shots. To me it was *obvious* what needed to be done, but that’s the way life goes ... but ... if I was telling him what to do, he’d rather go into debt than be told what to do, that’s just who he is.”

I will bring up this very important dynamic again in the chapter on *malchut*.

“I made him feel like he could point his finger at me and say, ‘Look, listen here, I don’t have to pay you if I don’t see an increase in the next three months and there’s nothing you could do about it.’ He said something like that. That way he could feel like he was telling me what to do and I could take a gamble and see if it paid off.” Finkel pauses for a rehearsed second and then says with a smirk of excitement, “It did.”

“So we [had the workers] drop ... everything here and had a few days of communication seminars. We showed people how to get their point across to someone more effectively. To a higher ranking employee, ‘Sir, may I make a suggestion’ and to an equal, ‘Please let’s talk this over’ – stuff like that. Scripts, you know? We made new forms and new report templates. We made the place a more cohesive entity. That was really the key. Restructuring and helping everyone to know who to call about what and when.”

YESOD EDUCATION

“Overall,” Finkel continues, “most of the people enjoyed the seminars and used their new-found ability to communicate to list a few problems they themselves had. Turns out the major issue was that this company just got too big over the years. It started out thirty years before as a small assembly line with forty workers and grew to over 500 employees in these two huge buildings. We carved up the company into four divisions with each division having no more than 150 people in it and, within each 150, we have groups – called teams – of 25, 30 or so. Five or six leaders of the smaller teams report to the team leader and the team leader reports to the division head and the division head reports to me and I report to the boss.

“This type of new-age structure and communication and ability to express feelings and thoughts sounds corny to people from Green’s generation, the good ol’ boys, the old-school businessmen. But, y’know, things are bound to progress into the future out of that era. It’s that way with every organization – and now,” he leans over and slaps me on the arm, “I’m adding to your book a bit, ha, ha, each successive generation forgets why they do what they do and they just think ‘that’s the way it is’ and ‘listen to the boss’ and ‘take orders’ and what they do becomes inevitably outdated.

“It’s up to the big thinkers of the world and others like us who are not afraid to make changes, to right things [as well as] explain what’s going on. Hey, I’m giving you good stuff for that book of yours!! I’ll order some copies on-demand online when it comes out!

“Now our company is out of the red. We’ve made our departments smaller, as well as diversified our products and, thank G-d, we’ve

THE SEVEN WAYS

become very successful and a leader in cutting-edge technology and equipment production.

“It all happened because my team was able to come in, make an assessment and implement a plan to save this place, thank G-d.”

HOW SALVATION HAPPENS

What Finkel is saying, in essence, is that in order to get a System to work better, you have to get it to stop working. You have to freeze it and dissect its parts. You have to see it from the outside to gain a new perspective. Systems need to be periodically audited and retooled in order to work properly. The master of this is the *yesod*.

YESOD PEOPLE

**“I wanted to make a new chapter
... that night ... I could hardly sleep!
I was so excited”**

People who have the *middah* of *yesod* want to fix Systems and get Systems to work better. They are dynamic, energetic visionaries. They like to facilitate progress in all areas of society. They skillfully lead us and, in their healthy, normal state, do not want to dominate us. They solely want to instruct us. They prefer cajoling to barking orders. They prefer to get everyone to work together, rather than dividing people up and conquering them. They want to lead and develop, but they want to do the task together with those they lead.

Yesod people are able to activate a special charisma that helps make their unique style of leadership possible. They charm you and engage you; they converse with you and interact with you in areas that you like and share their ideas and experiences in that area. Then, before long, they're speaking about their own vision and ideas, soon circling back to more about you. All the while, their charisma is palpable. The Torah says about Yosef, the Shepherd whose name is synonymous with *yesod*:¹³⁴

“Yosef found chein in the eyes [of his master] and [Yosef] stewarded for him and [his master] appointed him over