Parashat Vayeishev provides us with details of the height of Yosef’s success. The Torah tells us, "וַיְהִי ה' אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ", G-d was with Yosef and he was a successful man.

Why are both statements necessary? If G-d was with him, he must have been successful, and if he was successful, surely it was because G-d was with him?

Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, one of the great Chassidic masters of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, explains as follows: we have a tendency to reach out to G-d primarily when things are going wrong, yet we should also naturally reach out to Him when we are happy and successful.

In this vein, the Chafetz Chaim commented on our Rosh Chodesh benching, which we recite on the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh. We repeat the first request – תִּיְמַּלֵא הַמִּשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבֵּנוּ לְטוֹבָה – Please, G-d, give us a life in which the requests of our heart will be answered for the good.

I would like to suggest a different explanation. It is possible for G-d to be with someone and for that person not to succeed. Because in the midst of our failure or disappointment, the door closed in front of us can open many other doors of opportunity. An initial setback may bring unexpected blessing.

This too is a sentiment we express in our Rosh Chodesh benching. We conclude with the request, 'וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם מִשְׁקַל ה', Please G-d, give us a life in which the requests of our heart will be answered for the good.

Here we acknowledge that we do not really know what success is. While we might presume that something in our lives constitutes a great achievement, it might ultimately lead to our downfall. We therefore place everything in the hands of G-d and recognize that sometimes what is considered to be a failure might actually be the best thing for us.

Yosef understood this profound lesson. When he was failing, when he was a victim of attempted fratricide and when he was thrust into prison despite being innocent, G-d was with him. He felt the presence of the Almighty just as he did when he was riding on the wave of success. He never lost sight of the light at the end of the tunnel.

Or as Winston Churchill put it, “Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”