

The Torah AnyTimes

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Rabbi YY Jacobson

My Angel

Sol Teichman of Los Angeles, California was a beloved man, known to the community as someone who had an open heart and open door to anyone in need. Someone once asked him, “Why are you always so giving? Why does no one leave your home empty handed?” He shared the following.

“I came from Munkatch, Ukraine, and it was 1944. We were sent to Auschwitz aboard cattle cars, and I was but a seventeen-year-old boy. We were in line, and I had no idea that at the end of it all was a selection, where I’d either be sent to life or to my death. Joseph Mengele would make that decision.

“A man approached me, a beard and yarmulke framing his face, but I had no idea who he was. “Where are you from?” he asked. “I’m from Munkatch,” I said. “When were you born?” “1927,” I replied again. “No you weren’t,” the man shot back. “You were born in 1925.” “No, no,” I corrected him, “I was born in 1927.” “I remember your bris!” he countered, his voice growing deeper and forceful. “You were born in 1925!” But I knew otherwise, and how would this stranger know more than me? “It was 1927,” I said yet again, matching his intensity. But the man wasn’t ready to let it go.

“How do you know it was 1927?” “My father told me!” I said. “Your father made a mistake. I was there, when you were born in Munkatch and you were born in 1925.” There I

was, standing in line in Auschwitz, arguing with a man I never met before about my birthday. At some point, the man turned to me, and said with more care and authenticity in his voice than anyone had ever spoken to me, “Trust me, you were born in 1925.” I froze. But then the man went on. “And now I’m going to ask you again: when were you born?” “1925,” I responded. And then he looked at me, yet again, and said, “Remember, you were born in 1925.”

The man then disappeared.

A few moments later, I was standing in front of Joseph Mengele ym”s.

He looked at me and said, “When were you born?”

“1925,” I said.

He then motioned with his thumb for me to go to the right, where I was taken to the barracks to work.

A few hours later I learned that those who were born in 1927 or later were sent immediately to the gas chambers.

I realized that this man I had met – who never told me who he was and claimed that he was at my bris – was an angel who saved my life. And I’m here today, and I have a family because of him.

And then Sol continued:

“Some time ago, I was thinking, ‘What is my wish for myself in my life?’ I said to myself, ‘I had an angel who appeared at my feet, in Auschwitz, and took me out of death and brought me to life. I still don’t know who that person was. But it’s almost

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irrelevant. For me, he was an angel.

“I want to be such an angel. I want to be that angel for other people. Just like I had an angel who at that bleak moment in history was there for me, I want to be that angel, so that other people, when they think back to their

greatest moments in life, should know that they had an angel too who was there for them, to save their lives.

“That is when I made a decision that no one is going to leave my home without encouragement, without

love, without help. Nobody will be left alone. I want to be an angel for others as I had an angel there for me.”

Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky

The Little Big Things

Shmuel once knocked on a door in Israel, only to be met by a man who asked if Shmuel had something in mind to ask. “Excuse me sir for disturbing you, but is that your car over there?” Shmuel’s arm was now outstretched, pointing to a car situated some twenty feet away. “Yes, that is mine. Is something the matter?” “No, not at all,” Shmuel continued. “In fact, I wanted to thank you.” The man looked back at Shmuel surprised. “Thank me? For what?”

“I want to thank you for helping me become a baal teshuva.” The car’s owner, who by now had introduced himself as Ron, didn’t understand. “How could I help you become a baal teshuva if I don’t even know you?” “You see,” went on Shmuel, “there’s a sticker on the back of your car which says, ‘Ein od milvado,’ and refers

to there being no one else but Hashem in the world.” “Okay..” prolonged Ron, still unsure where Shmuel was going with this all.

“Years ago, I was going through a really tough time. Business was going downhill, I wasn’t religious and my life was falling apart. I tried everything I could, but nothing helped.”

“Until one day, my friend and I were driving down the highway and we were behind your car. I saw the bumper sticker and asked my friend what the words meant. ‘It means that G-d is in control of everything and takes care of everyone,’ he replied. ‘There’s no Other. It’s only Hashem.’”

“My friend continued talking to me about this concept, and I was hooked. It enthralled me. ‘It means that if you place your problems on Hashem, they will be solved,’ he told me. I had never heard of this

before, and it blew my mind. I immediately told my wife about it, who was also taken by it.”

“That was the beginning of a life-changing journey for me and my family. We all became baalei teshuva and our lives underwent a transformation like no other. And it was all thanks to your car.”

“Just today I was driving by and recognized the sticker, and I couldn’t believe it, but it was the same car. I knew it was you! And I just had to come here and tell you. I needed to thank you for being the one who helped me and my family come to a Torah observant life.”

What did Ron do, asked Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein after recounting this story? He simply placed a sticker on the bumper of his car. It was a little reminder, but look at the monumental impact it made.

When you reach out to someone, however small, it goes far. Very far.

Rabbi Uri Lati

Coincidence

We’ve heard it more times that we can count: there are no such things as coincidences. Not ironically, the Hebrew letters for coincidence – mikreh –

are the same letters as rak me’Hashem, only from G-d.

You woke up one morning, stepped out onto your porch and noticed another man walking on the sidewalk. You saw that man be-

cause you were supposed to see him.

One afternoon, you received a phone call from a friend you haven’t spoken to in months. This happened because it was supposed to. Why? That’s for each of us to dig deep and

discover. But not having an immediate reason doesn't mean there isn't a reason. There is; there always is.

You received a text message one morning because you were supposed to. Hashem orchestrated that you'd receive it and read it because there's something there for you. He is telling you something. You are reading this too right now too at this very moment in your life ... and there's a reason. It's not a coincidence.

An organization calls you, asking you to donate to an important cause. Yes, they are calling hundreds of others, but they are calling you for a reason.

The Torah tells us that Yisro "heard" everything that had hap-

pened to the Jewish people as they left Egypt and entered the desert. When Yisro heard this, he asked himself, "What does G-d want of me? If I heard it, there must be a reason." That's the attitude of a Jew. There's purpose, there's rhyme and reason, and I'm going to respond in kind. The rest of the world heard the same news, but only Yisro took action.

People hear things all day, from morning to night. But there's a vacuum gap, an open space between hearing something and acting on something. Bridging the two is what counts. Yisro was that kind of man, and we all can be too.

When someone shares a message

with us or asks that we recite Tehillim on behalf of another, do we brush it off or take action? It might take a few minutes or a few hours. But how we react is the question.

The Jews at Har Sinai proclaimed, "Naaseh v'nishmah – We will do and we will hear." The Jewish mantra is that even before we've gathered all the information, read through the entire article or heard the full story, we're already acting. We're already reaching deeply into our pockets and peering closely into our hearts to find ways we can better another life, and with that, the world.

Rabbi Yossi Bensoussan

Real Action

If you want to effect change in your life and become great, it happens in one way and one way only: action. Uncompromising commitment to action.

You decide to begin attending a Torah class. You go for two months and then, with the increased workflow and juggling of life, you drop out. There is something here to notice about yourself and be honest about. Did you show up

for two months, on a scale from one to ten, as a ten? Did you "try" or were you "doing"? They are worlds apart.

Many people say, "I'll try my best" and that is code for "I'll give it a little effort." But to truly make it in life, it takes far more than trying. It takes doing. It takes an undeniable effort; a force within you that will not be denied pushing forward no matter the barriers that come your way. Your commitment to the task at hand must be uncompromising and unyielding.

mising and unyielding.

Action is the vehicle of growth, the engine of success. Once you give your word to something, there's no looking back, no turning around. There's only one way to go: forward.

Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov

Reach a Little Higher

My son once walked over to me, and with an innocent and pure

look in his eyes, said, "Abba, can you please lower the mezuzah for me? It's too high and I can't reach it." A

great request and a beautiful aspiration. But the answer wasn't yes.

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The mezuzah should not be lowered to fit a child's height, even though the act of touching it and kissing it would be more feasible. And there's a lesson embedded in this: in life, we don't lower our standards. We don't look to lower the Torah down to our level and make it easy. It's about rising up, raising ourselves to the Torah's high standards and growing through the rigor and challenge that we are called to.

We must fight for a relationship with Hashem. It takes hard work and effort, just as any real relationship does. Sometimes, we need to climb to reach the heights we are capable of, and it's that difficulty which makes us great. It's not about giving up when it's hard or contorting Jewish life and practice to conveniently fit our comforts. We become great by doing great things and stretching beyond our limits; not lowering the bar and scaling it with less effort.

We raise the Torah high in shul for the same reason. It's a consistent message to us all: we raise ourselves up to the Torah and aspire upwards.

We are not going to lead a lifestyle that is simply convenient for us, the mezuzah reminds us. We are going to reach up and touch the upper limits of our potential.

And we all can.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

Open Book

Imagine that right now, at this very moment, a book is being written about you and your life. You've made it into the pantheon of the greats and earned a place among those honorable many.

The truth is, it's not hyperbole. A book is being written about you ... in Heaven. This very moment, being inscribed in Heaven is every thought passing through your mind, every

word communicated to another, and every action you take. It's all being recorded. But there's something I haven't yet mentioned.

It's going to be published. The date?

The day your soul returns to Heaven.

We all have the choice to make. What do we want the book to be about? What are we going to fill it

with? After one hundred and twenty years, what do you want your book to be titled?

How you want to be remembered is determined by what you do with your life. And you don't live once; you live every day.

Make every one count. Because, truthfully, it is being counted – up There.

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