

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Yechiel Spero

The Little You Do

Arachim, an international organization founded by Rabbi Yosef Wallis and dedicated to instilling Jewish values and beliefs within those distant from Judaism and looking to grow close, has accomplished so much for the Jewish people at large. And yet behind every organization lies not only its financial supporters, but those willing and dedicated to undertaking the burdensome responsibility of fundraising. That man for Arachim is the son of Rabbi Yosef, Rabbi Yishai Wallis.

After Rabbi Yishai Wallis once related a heart-wrenching story about Holocaust humanitarian and hero Oscar Schindler and his incredible sacrifice and love for the Jewish people, a woman approached him. She was deeply moved by what she had heard, and said, "Rabbi, I wish I could give you a lot of money. Unfortunately, I don't have the wherewithal. But I can give you the \$20 I have on me now." And with that, she handed Rabbi Wallis the small donation, which he appreciatively accepted. Rabbi Wallis, of course, knew that her donation would not get him far, but nonetheless it was something significant from her heart. Rabbi Wallis thanked her, after which she walked away.

Moments later, she returned to Rabbi Wallis. "One more thing, Rabbi." She stretched out her hand,

on which rested a plastic watch. Brand new, it likely was \$5; now, having been used, it was perhaps \$3. "I want to give this as well." With that, she handed him the watch.

What was Rabbi Wallis going to do with a plastic watch? But, recognizing her pure sincerity, he knew that it meant a lot for him to accept it. And so, he did. Perhaps, in fact, he'd be able to use it in some way down the line.

This encounter grew on Rabbi Wallis, and three months later, he was giving a seminar and the moment arrived that he never looked forward to: making a pitch for donations.

He recounted the true story of Oscar Schindler and his humanitarian efforts to save thousands of Jews and his regret that he could not save one more, and then he told them the story of the woman who had given him the plastic watch. Within five minutes, the \$3 watch was transformed into \$12,000.

We can't give more than we have. We can only do our part. But if you do your little part, there is no telling where it can lead and what it can accomplish.

And now, when you yourself share this story with others, that \$3 watch will inspire more and more kindness and lead to even more beneficence to the Jewish people. More than the woman would have ever imagined.

TheTorahAnyTimes is a publication of



Compiled and Edited by Elan Perchik

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R' Elchonon Yaakov z"l ben R' Shmuel
Pinchos
Manish ben Esther
Meir Eliyahu ben Yaakov Dov
Bechor ben Rivkah
Shlomo Zalman ben
R' Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi
Esther bat
haRav Avraham Halevi zt"l
Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber
Miriam bat Yeshayahu
Malka Bracha bat Shimon Chaim
L'refuah Sheleima
Deena bat Shoshana
Chaya Raizel bat Dena
Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva
Reuven ben Rochel
To add your dedication, email
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Rabbi Mordechai Kalatsky

Guilt vs. Passion

Amidst the delivery of her second son, Rachel Imeinu knew that it wouldn't end with both mother and child surviving. Her son would make it, but she wouldn't. Her own life would come to a close at this point, and from that moment on, her legacy would continue. With these bittersweet thoughts in mind, before she passed, she declared the name of her newborn son, "Ben Oni," the son of my affliction.

Her husband, Yaakov Avinu, saw it differently. He had a different name in mind. And that name is what this child continued to be called and by which he is identified as one of the twelve tribes – Binyamin.

What is the significance of these two names? What aspects and attitudes do they reflect about the nature of the Jew?

There are two distinct ways of serving Hashem. One is with the attitude of "Ben Oni," the son of my difficulties and struggles. Amidst Rachel Imeinu

dying in childbirth, she identified her son with this very name – Ben Oni – because from this pain, she would die and her son would live and carry on her legacy. He would be charged with the responsibility of continuing the destiny of the Jewish people.

There is a place for this attitude in the life of a Jew. Children of Holocaust survivors are in unique positions to continue the mantle of Jewish history and heritage which harkens back to the gas and death chambers of Europe. The same can be said of children whose parents have undergone extreme oppression and hardship in life. These children, the light of their parents' lives, are the shining beacon into the future, which overshadows the darkness which prevailed for their parents. It is an awesome responsibility.

However, with this deep responsibility of carrying on the legacy of one's family who has undergone such adversity, there is an important caveat. We are charged to face life not with feelings of, "If I don't do it,

I'll feel bad, I'll feel guilty," but rather out of feeling a privileged opportunity to embrace our mission with purpose and passion. Instead of fueling our actions with bitter and hardened feelings of guilty obligation, we live out of an abundance of love for the future, of strength for what is to come and of motivated devotion to fulfilling an honorable calling. We live out of our deepest truth for the greatest of causes.

Yaakov Avinu, upon looking at his newborn son, named him Binyamin. Binyamin is a contraction of two words – "Ben yamin – the son of the right [hand]." Be the son of power, of passion, of purpose.

You can operate as a Ben Oni, as a child of oppression and of sacrifice, built and powered by the guilt from your past, or it can be grounded in dedication to those who dug the well before you, on inspiration from your heritage and on looking towards future greatness.

With all that your past encompasses, there is nothing greater in your life than taking it all and using it as fuel to change the world.

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

Walking in the Shadow

In this week's parsha, Ki Sisa, we learn of Betzalel being designated as the "general contractor", the man in charge of the construction of the Mishkan.

Anyone who ever did construction in their home knows that there are always glitches. Things don't come out exactly

as planned. Materials are delayed, workers oftentimes don't show up, and the job takes longer than anticipated.

Years ago we finished our basement. We found a contractor who was well-priced, able to start work right away, and promised us a quality job. It sounded amazing. We were sold.

It was too good to be true. A few weeks later, all we had in our basement was one big mess – a disaster. We had already paid far beyond the amount of the work done and had no choice but to cut our losses. We sent the first contractor packing, and had to find a new contractor to complete the job.

After sharing the tale with the new

contractor, he promptly drew a pie chart. He divided it into three sections. Quality, quick and cheap. He told me that one never gets all three. You might get two out of three, but never three out of three.

Unlike my experience, when it came to the Mishkan, Betzalel was the perfect builder, a true artisan. Everything came out right – down to the smallest detail. Betzalel never attended engineering school, never took an architectural course, nor did he study the trades of metalworking, wood crafting or weaving.

How was Betzalel able to accomplish a task of such epic proportions like the building of the Mishkan? Not only did the Mishkan come out exactly as planned, but all the holy objects in it – the Aron, Menorah, Mizbeiach, Shulchan and all the vessels – all were completed to the exact specifications described in the Torah. This was nothing short of a miracle.

The Torah tells us “Va-amaley oso ruach Elokim b’chochmah, b’svunah u’vodaas, u’vechol melachah – I (HaShem) bestowed upon him (Betzalel) the spirit of G-d in wisdom, understanding and knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”. (Shemos 31:3)

Betzalel was blessed with the Divine inspiration required to succeed in his task of building a resting place for the Shechinah. A place where Bnei Yisroel can turn to, reach out and connect to HaShem.

The name Betzalel is composed of two words. B’tzail – in the shadow of, and Keil – G-d. Betzalel lived his life walking in the shadow of HaShem.

Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah. Usual-

ly, the Torah mentions only a father’s name (as in “ben – son of”). However, with Betzalel, his lineage is traced back to his grandfather, Chur.

The tragic episode of the Eigel Hazahav, the Golden Calf is described in this week’s parsha. A chapter in the history of the Jewish people that is difficult to comprehend. A story of a misguided group who rose in rebellion against HaShem. Chur tried to dissuade the malcontents from going ahead with their plan, and used every possible argument to stop the rebellion from escalating. The mob would not be deterred, and they rose up against Chur, ultimately killing him.

Chur stood up and fought for the honor and sanctity of HaShem’s name. Chur, was the son of Miriam. Like his mother and grandmother, Yocheved before him, Chur lived his life striving to do the right thing. Just as Miriam and Yocheved as midwives defied Pharaoh’s decrees and brought Jewish life into the world, Chur stood up to those who rebelled and created the Golden Calf.

The Mishkan atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf. The Torah is teaching us that Chur’s death wasn’t for naught. Daas Zekeinim tells us that Chur’s name is mentioned, for he was rewarded with a grandson, Betzalel. A grandson who walked in the shadow of HaShem. A grandson who was the builder and craftsman of the Mishkan. Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur.

At times, we may feel that our tefillos go unanswered. But one should know that HaShem hears every tefillah, every prayer, every request. HaShem sees all our actions, and while we may not experience the reward right away, no good deed is forgotten.

A story is told of a mother of a large family living in Yerushalayim. Unfor-

tunately, her husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and as can be expected, she was totally distraught and brokenhearted. Day and night she turned to her Tehillim and poured out her heart to HaShem. He tears soaked the pages of her Tehillim. How painful it was when her beloved husband passed away.

Armed with her Tehillim, she turned to her rav, a saintly and holy man. She showed him her tear-stained Tehillim. She shared how she had davened day and night, and asked how could this have happened. What was the purpose of all her prayers? Where did her all tears ago?

The rav answered that no prayer goes unanswered, no request goes unheeded. He told her to imagine a giant flask in the Heavens above, collecting all her tears. HaShem is holding on to those tears, saving them for a time when they will be needed. It may not be during her lifetime or even in her children’s lifetimes. But there will be a future generation who will be blessed from Above, a blessing whose source is a mother’s or grandmother’s tears and prayers stored in a bottle.

My mother a”h would often say that we all had bubbies and zaydies who lived for us, did mitzvos for us, and in some cases even gave up their lives for us. While we may not always realize it, our lives are guided in the right direction by their prayers during their lifetime and even after they leave this world, by their continued tefillos on our behalf in the Eternal World.

Thank you for reading this edition of The TorahAnyTimes Newsletter. If you’ve enjoyed, please let us know – we’d love to hear from you! Email info@torahanytime.com.

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Stiff-Necked People

A former president of the United States once asked the Israeli prime minister how things were going. “Oh,” said the prime minister, “I have many problems.” The American president replied, “You think you have problems? You’re the president of 9 million people. I’m the president of 300 million.” The Prime minister replied, “Mr. President, you are the president of 300 million people. I, however, am the president of 9 million presidents.”

The Torah says in this week’s Parsha, “I’ve seen this people, and behold, it’s a stiff necked people.” Notice that the Torah doesn’t focus on the sin of the golden calf per se, with all its severity. Rath-

er, on the stubbornness that it revealed. A negative action can always be atoned for and repaired. A character flaw is much more difficult to fix. But there’s also a positive side to being stubborn.

Edward Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, writes that of all of the nations that Rome subjugated, the only nation that clung successfully to its beliefs were the Jews. All of Rome’s other vassal states managed to infiltrate the Roman gods into their pantheon without batting an eyelash. The Jews, however, were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for what they believed.

In one concentration camp, there was a particularly sadistic Nazi officer. One day he ordered the Jewish

inmates to follow him up to the top of the nearby hill. He pointed to a cloud of dust rising on the eastern horizon. “Jew,” he said, “you know what that is?” “No,” replied the Jew. “That, Jew, is the Russian army. In a couple of hours they’ll be at the gates of the camp. The war is over for you, Jew.” From his pocket, he pulled out some meat and said, “Eat this ham now, Jew, or I’ll shoot you.” The Jew refused on the spot without batting an eyelash and the Nazi murdered him in cold blood without batting an eyelash.

Intransigence is a Jewish gene. We can use our stubbornness to rebel against God, or we can use that same stubbornness to sanctify His name and leave this world with pride.

Rabbi Label Lam

A Cherubic Child

The Mishkan is a microcosm of the entire universe and a person is a microcosm of the whole world. Therefore, the Mishkan resembles a person, and a person re-

sembles the Mishkan. And it’s no mistake that within the Kodesh Kodashim, in the Holy of Holies, and residing in the heart of hearts of every person is a golden, cherubic child, a sweet, innocent, pure, sensi-

tive and curious child that is thirsting for love and attention.

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