

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Elya Brudny Resemble Hashem

At a time like this, our first and foremost response must be the recognition and internalization that everything is from Hashem. Ein od mil'vado, there is nothing besides Hashem, and the hand of Hashem. Hashem is the One who orchestrates and fights wars (Avodah Zara 2b), and when there are any attacks, it is only because Hashem has allowed it. No one can lay a finger on us unless Hashem, our Av HaRachaman (Father of Compassion), deems it in our best interest. This is the first thing we must internalize.

This doesn't in any way take away from the atrocities and cruelties of Yishmael. But we cannot forget that Hashem allowed Yishmael to do what they have done, as is true for any suffering Klal Yisroel has ever experienced throughout all of history. The first address of our pain and hurt must be to turn to Hashem.

Secondly, this is a test. Do we have the middah of nosei b'ol im chaveiro, to carry the burden of our fellow Jews? Moshe Rabbeinu acted this way and carried the load of anguish and pain of his fellow brothers when he saw what they were experiencing during their bitter exile of Egypt. As Rashi states, Moshe Rabbeinu "placed his eyes and heart to be in anguish over the Jewish people's plight" (Shemos 2:11). My father

z"l related that this is why the last Pasuk in that section of the Parsha states, "Hashem saw the Children of Israel, and Hashem knew" (Shemos 2:25). Rashi comments on these words, "Hashem placed His heart upon them, and did not remove his eyes from them." These latter words of Rashi echo the earlier words of Rashi. Because Moshe Rabbeinu felt the pain and plight of his brothers and sisters, and united with them in their anguish, Hashem responded in the same way, and so to speak, placed His heart upon the Jewish people and kept His watchful eye over them.

When we storm the Heavens to be one with the pain of our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel, we will merit that Hashem responds to us in kind, measure for measure. We need this quality of nosei b'ol im chaveiro year-round. This is the essence of who we are. But now is a time when we are being tested with it, and we must rise to the occasion.

Thirdly, as we move into Parshas Bereishis, we read how Hashem made Adam, a human being, b'tzalmeinu kid'museinu, in His "image and likeness" (Bereishis 1:26). Rav Moshe Cordevero (Tomer Devorah) writes that the physical posture of man is referred to as "tzelem." However, the composition of man's character (middos) is referred to as d'mus. The Tomer Devorah decries how unfortunate it is when a person does not work

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on his middos. By not doing so, he lacks resemblance to the middos of Hashem.

Of the thirteen middos of Hashem is, "Just as Hashem is compassionate, so we are to be." If we hear or see another atrocity, it is not just another news item. It is something which should bring us to tears deep within. When we do so, we are resembling Hashem.

There is a well-known expression, which is used even around the world: "That person is a Mensch." Why is this so well-known around the globe? Because without middos, we are lacking our basic human quality. If everything around us is just news, but it doesn't reach deep into our hearts, we are lacking in our G-dly resemblance to Hashem's middos.

At this time, we are tasked to inculcate an acute awareness that Hashem is in charge of everything in the world, that the pain of our brothers and sisters is our personal pain, and that our middos of compassion and empathy touch the deepest parts of our hearts. In this merit, may Hashem bring us salvation and have compassion on us, His beloved children.

Rabbi Zev Leff

With Your Eyes and Heart

The Pasuk says, "Es tzara hi'Yaakov u'mimena yi'vashei'ah—It is a time of trouble for Yaakov, but he will be saved from it" (Yirmiyah 30:7). These words do not only mean that a person needs to have emunah and bitachon in a time of war, and through that, the salvation will occur. There is an added dimension. 'U'mimena yi'vashei'ah,' underscores that when the very anguish and pain of such a difficult time is utilized properly, unto itself it becomes the very catalyst for the salvation.

How can we approach and utilize this time of challenge to create the salvation?

The Midrash tells us that throughout the entire holiday of Sukkos, we brought many sacrifices in order to protect the nations of the world. Logically speaking, at the end of Sukkos, the world should love us. We did so much for them in order to provide them atonement and protection. And yet, at the end of Sukkos, they still hate us. This is one of the reasons we should be happy on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

What does this Midrash mean? Why should it be that because the non-Jewish world hates us, we should be happy?

The answer is as follows. Lest one think that the goyim hate us because

there is something wrong with us, all we must do is examine how they relate to us after the holiday of Sukkos. After an entire Sukkos has gone by, during which we have done everything for them and logically they should love us, if they still hate us, it is obviously not because of our own doing. Rather, it is because evil hates good, and darkness despises light. This should therefore give us the reason to celebrate and feel proud of who we are. They hate us because we are the antithesis of what they are.

During the Holocaust, before one of the kedoshim was murdered, he asked for permission to say some last words. The Nazi granted him that minute. He used that minute to recite the blessing, "Baruch Atah Hashem... shelo asani goy—Blessed are You, Hashem... Who has not made me a gentile." He would never choose to switch places with someone who would commit such atrocities. When you make this bracha during these days, feel proud and thank Hashem that you are so distant from those who act in such sub-human ways.

The Torah describes Yishmael as a "perch adam," wild man (Bereishit 16:12). The Chofetz Chaim notes that the Torah doesn't say that Yishmael "is a perch adam," but rather "will be a perch adam." This is because for

all time, Yishmael and his generations will be this way. The Brisker Rav adds that the Torah does not refer to Yishmael as "adam perch," a man who is wild. His wildness is not an adjective describing the kind of man he is. Rather, he is a "perch adam." Yishmael is wild. That is his defining quality and characteristic. It is only secondary to that that he is human. His feature of being a "man" is a mere adjective. He may be a doctor, lawyer or philosopher, but he is comprised and consumed with wildness and simply acts as a doctor or lawyer.

We must be proud that we are not like this. Baruch Hashem, Hashem has not made us like these types of goyim. Not all goyim are bad, G-d forbid. But these goyim are. The joy of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah therefore revolves around our appreciation of who we are as Hashem's nation. A person must develop a hatred for that which is pure evil, and come to love that which Klal Yisroel represents, namely the exact antithesis of this evil.

The Gemara (Berachos 5a) tells us that if a person sees yissurim (afflictions) coming upon him, he should examine his actions. The Gemara notably uses the word "see" to describe the manner in which a

person experiences the afflictions. Why doesn't the Gemara say that he "feels" the afflictions?

"Seeing" does not mean to merely see something with your eyes. It rather means to understand and think deeply about it. "What is going on? What are these afflictions?" This is the question we must ourselves during these days. Moreover, the yissurim of any Jew are the yissurim of every Jew. Moshe Rabbeinu merited to be the redeemer of the Jewish nation because he "went out to his brethren" (Shemos 2:11). In regard to this, Rashi comments, "He placed his eyes and heart to be in pain with his brothers." Moshe Rabbeinu didn't merely sympathize with them; he empathized with them. A person must see with his mind and heart how our brothers and sisters are suffering.

The Gemara (ibid.), in explaining what one should do when yissurim are coming upon him, uses two expressions: 'yefashfesh b'maasav' and 'yemashmesh b'maasav.' What is the difference between these? The Mesillas Yesharim (Ch.3) explains that the former means that a person should examine if he is doing anything wrong and needs to be corrected. In addition, the latter means that even though there may not be things which you are doing which are negative, there are still things upon which you can improve. One should examine those aspects of himself and seek to rectify them.

But perhaps we can add another explanation. The Mishnah uses the

terminology 'yefashfesh' to refer to a small window, as in 'pishpshin.' The gates in the Beis Hamikdash contained such small windows, in example. Therefore, first and foremost, a person must hone in and focus on specific aspects of his life. This is a time to awaken and make a cheshbon ha'nefesh, a self-assessment of your life. Each and every person knows where they need to improve. We need a Navi (prophet) to be able to tell us what Klal Yisroel needs, and yet we do not have that in our days. However, that which relates to ourselves on an individualistic level, we can arrive at an understanding of what needs to be changed through honest self-evaluation.

The second step is yemashmesh b'maasav. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 7:3) writes that a person must not only do teshuva (repentance) in relation to actions which he has wrongly committed, but also with regards to middos ra'os (bad character traits). No action occurs in a vacuum. It is a result of some character trait which needs to be corrected and improved. Yemashmesh b'maasav means that we must search through our characteristics and discover what is lying beneath.

Every improvement helps Klal Yisroel and makes a tremendous difference. When we perfect ourselves, we contribute toward the destruction of evil and darkness that exists in the world.

Chazal, however, continue in the above directive. What if a person went about a process of self-evalu-

ation, but didn't find anything that he can connect to what is currently going on? Then, he should pinpoint the source in bittul Torah. There are two meanings to this. Firstly, if you didn't find anything that you can improve upon, it is not because it doesn't exist. It is rather because you haven't searched thoroughly enough to discover what it is. In other words, such a person hasn't learned enough Torah—i.e. is guilty of bittul Torah— and therefore lacks knowledge to know what is right and what is wrong.

But more than this. Talmud Torah k'negged kulam—Torah study is equivalent to all other mitzvos. Every letter of Torah is a mitzvah. If you therefore want to build an arsenal of protection and ammunition that can destroy the evil spiritually, Torah learning is an excellent way. And there is no limit to bittul Torah. Even if someone is learning day and night, perhaps a person can learn one minute more. And if a person can only learn one minute, perhaps you can focus better for that one minute. This is not true of only men, either. Women, too, can value Torah and can encourage their husbands and children to learn more. We all can strengthen ourselves in Torah study.

In merit of the steps we take to appreciate who we are as Jews and the self-introspection we undertake to improve ourselves, may Hashem bring relief to the pain of our brothers and sisters and redeem us with the final redemption.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Tied to Above

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.

In the aftermath of Rav Yosef Sonnenfeld zt"l losing a few children, those around him noticed that he always remained happy and uplifted. "How are you happy when you've lost your beloved children?" he was asked. "When an earthquake occurs," he replied, "everyone panics and runs here and there. But why are they running? The same way that there is an earthquake here, there is an earthquake there too. Why is it safer there?"

What's therefore the solution when it comes to an earthquake? If you're tied to something above, you're not touching the ground, and you're safe. The solution is to be tied to 'Above,' to Hashem, and with that I can be settled."

If with every earthquake and fear in your life, you're connected to Hashem, you don't touch the ground. We connect to Hashem by believing in Him and trusting in Him.

Commenting on the Pasuk (Tehillim 34:23), "All those who take refuge in Hashem will not be condemned," Rashi says that the meaning of 'will not be condemned' is that no one ever regretted believing in Hashem. A person who placed his trust in Hashem never condemned his decision to do so. No one ever said 'Ashamnu'—I was wrong—for

believing in Hashem. You only gain by believing and trusting in Him. We tie ourselves to Above by doing so, and through this, we are secure.

The "Shir Shel Pegaim" (Song of Plagues), a reference to the 91st Chapter in Tehillim, is known to be a chapter in Tehillim which guards us from all harm. Dovid Hamelech states there, "Because 'You, Hashem, are my refuge...' no evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent. He will charge His angels for you, to protect you in all your ways" (vs. 9-11). Rashi identifies an oddity in how the Pasuk is worded. Dovid Hamelech is speaking and yet he omits the words, "You said." The Pasuk says, "Because 'You Hashem are my refuge...' when it should have said "Because you said, 'You, Hashem, are my refuge.'"

The answer is that the Pasuk is shortened to emphasize that by simply expressing two words and two words alone, "Hashem machsi—You, Hashem, are my refuge," Hashem will watch over you. The Pasuk is truncated because we're not being asked to finish saying the whole Tehillim. Just say two words: "Hashem machsi." Live with Hashem and then you will be secure.

Rav Avrohom Gonochofsky once traveled from Bnei Brak to Yerushalayim with his son on a bus. As they

boarded the bus, his watch fell to the ground and stopped working. When they eventually reached Yerushalayim, his son said, "Let's go buy a new watch!" But Rav Avrohom Gonochofsky thought otherwise. "It's a waste of money. We can fix it." He proceeded to go to a watchmaker, who told him that he just needed to change the battery and it would then work. Rav Avrohom Gonochofsky, though, was perplexed. "Why is it that when the watch fell, the battery 'happened' to die right then and there?" "Rebbe," replied the watchmaker, "don't you understand? The battery you had was a weak battery. And when the battery is weak, when it falls, it can die."

Rav Avrohom Gonochofsky later came into the Tchebiner Yeshiva and told the students, "I learned something important today. If you have a 'weak battery' in emunah (faith in Hashem), every 'fall' will kill you. If your 'emunah battery' is weak, you will lose yourself when you fall and fail. But if you fill up the battery with emunah, then you can make it through.

At this time, the place to turn to is our emunah that Hashem created the world and our bitachon in Him. With that, He is our refuge and He will protect us and keep us secure.

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein

Every Jew a General

With the Jewish nation at war, it's human nature to say, "I'm not a soldier and I'm not on the front lines." Moreover, one might be led to feel, "Who am I and what am I? Whatever influence I may have is negli-

gible relative to those who are very great." But that's not accurate or true. The root of everything is in Heaven, and what plays out here in our world is an after-effect of what transpired in Heaven. This war is therefore a battle between the spir-

itual forces of Yishmael and Klal Yisroel.

Just as a soldier on the border of Gaza is on high alert, maaminim b'nei maaminim (believers the children of believers) should feel no different. We believe that our mitzvos and good deeds are of the highest caliber and cadre of importance.

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Nowadays, davening Shacharis in the morning is not just a “regular” Shacharis. Mitzvos are never regular or ordinary, but especially now, we must feel the weight that our actions carry. And it’s not only the great tzaddik whose davening and mitzvos cause great effects in Heaven. It’s the actions of everyone.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 37a) tells us that Hashem created many animals in the world, and yet He created only one man. Why was this done? Because man is obligated to say, “The world was created for me.” Think about this. If the world was created for me, that means there is a war in the world right now because of me. And yes, that is so. Every person is obligated to say, “There is a war in the world because of me.” You are obligated to say that. And you are also obligated to say, “My conduct will spell the difference in the war.” This is not just a “good thing” to think about. It’s an obligation. This is how we are to view the situation at hand. Your deeds affect the outcome of the war.

The Gemara (Taanis 21b) relates that there was a fire in one particular city, though the fire did not spread to the neighborhood of Rav Huna.

Everyone thought that it was in the merit of Rav Huna that the fire did not affect his neighborhood. But the Gemara dismisses that conclusion. There was a woman who had an oven, and she would heat up her oven for those who didn’t have one. Therefore, her whole neighborhood was saved because of her.

The individual in whose merit the neighborhood was saved was not a big tzaddik. It was one woman. And what did she do? Hundreds of mitzvos? No. She had an oven and she heated it up for people. That spelled the difference between life and death in her neighborhood.

The Gemara similarly relates that there was a plague in the city, and yet the plague did not affect the vicinity of Rav. And why was this? Because there was one person who would lend out his shovel for those who needed to bury their loved ones.

When the Titanic sank, one of the social critics of the time remarked, “Everyone thought they would be saved by the big ship, but it turned out that it was the small lifeboats that made the difference.” This is how we need to view this situation within Klal Yisroel. It is not always

the big tzaddik or the big gadol who makes the difference. Usually, it is the small deed of any regular individual.

As such, practical takeaways that we must infuse into our daily living are clear. The difference for Klal Yisroel will be spelled very often by a small mitzvah or a small good deed. The Chovos HaLevovos writes, “A small mitzvah on our part looms large in the eyes of Hashem.” Any small thing we can do makes a big difference. But more importantly, you must view yourself as the general of this war, because you are. In the world that you live in—your world—you must say, “The world was created for me.” In order to properly and accurately evaluate the importance and impact of your service of Hashem, you must remind yourself of this every moment. This war is happening because of me, and the war will be won or lost because of me, and what I do makes a difference.

May the Ribbono Shel Olam watch over Klal Yisroel and protect us.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn

United as One

In July 1976, there was a French airline carrying passengers from Israel to France. And then the horrific event occurred. The plane was hijacked. First, it was taken to Athens, and then to Uganda. The leader of Uganda at the time threatened to blow up the plane with all the Israeli hostages.

Jews around the world were davening. In the Mir Yeshiva, a thousand people gathered together, and Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt”l, the elderly Rosh Yeshiva, planned

on saying a few words before Tehillim would be recited. Rabbi Moshe Zucker, a bachur at the time, recalls how everyone could palpably feel the tension in the room as they thought about the Israeli hostages. Rav Chaim entered the beis midrash, and as he began heading toward the front, he began crying. And then he ascended to the Aron Kodesh, kissed it, and then faced the gathered students.

He could hardly get a word out of his mouth, though he said one sentence: “Daven as if it were your father or moth-

er or your brother or sister that is on that plane.” That is all Rav Chaim said. Rabbi Moshe Zucker remembers that Tehillim to this very day.

This is how we need to daven now. Daven to Hashem as if it were your father or mother or your brother or sister under attack. Because it is. Literally. The Jewish nation is one, and that makes us family.

My son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Dov Heber, is a Rosh Yeshiva at Ateres Shmuel in Waterbury, Connecticut. The hakafos just days ago, Motzei Shabbos, were lively and energetic, and accompanying the many boys dancing was an Israeli man, named Levi. He was born in Israel, though

his family since moved to America. After spending years in the states, he decided to go back to Israel and enroll in the army. He went on to move up the ranks until he became a sergeant. After finishing years in the army, he returned to America to study.

But when the news broke on Simchas Torah, his superiors said that they need him back in Israel. Hundreds of thousands of reservists were being called. After being told this, Levi returned to the beis midrash, while many of his friends waited to see the expression on his face.

They figured out quickly. The next day, he'd be returning to the army to the front lines. Realizing this, they placed Levi in the center of the circle holding a Sefer Torah and began singing, "Acheinu kol beis Yisroel—Our brothers, the house of Israel." Everyone knew at that moment that we are all brothers and sisters.

In reflection on the current situation, another thought I have wondered about relating to the Holocaust comes to mind. And that is what those holy Jews who gave up their lives al kiddush Hashem would want someone to think when they enter the crematoriums now years after the horrific years of the Holocaust.

Years ago, my brother, Reb Kalman a"h got into a taxi. The driver was not religious, and was not wearing a kippa. My brother, who was dressed very differently than the driver, called out, loud enough for the driver to hear: "Anachnu achim—We are brothers." The driver, hearing this, grew disturbed. "Anachnu lo achim—We're not brothers... You're religious and I'm not!" My brother then responded, "I had a teacher who taught us that we are all brothers, religious and not religious." "And who is this teacher?" asked the taxi driver. "Hitler," said my

brother.

The driver lost control of the car, and almost got into an accident hearing this. Stopping the car, he turned aside and said, "My brother, you're one in a million." "No," my brother corrected. "Two in a million. Because we're brothers."

That is the message our enemies have been sending us. Whether we are religious, not religious or this or that, our enemies wish to attack us and harm us. Because we are brothers.

In addition, at this time, as many of us reflect as to how such a catastrophe could have occurred, we must remember something very important. The Pasuk in Tehillim (127:1) states, "A song of ascents for Shlomo. If Hashem will not build the house, in vain do its builders labor on it; if Hashem will not guard the city, in vain is the watchman vigilant." Guards can be surrounding a city, fortifying it as best as they can. However, ultimately, our efforts will only work if Hashem wills it as such. Everything is in Hashem's hands.

I'd also like to offer some specific and practical suggestions regarding what we can accept upon ourselves to come closer to Hashem.

One way to come closer to someone is through hakaras hatov, appreciating what you have. Where do we show hakaras hatov to Hashem? In Asher Yatzar, recited after we use the restroom. Every one of us has a whole body that is an entire orchestra. From today on, when you recite Asher Yatzar, stand in one place. For those few seconds, don't be texting or diapering a baby or getting dressed. Stand still and think about hakaras hatov.

Bentching after eating bread is a mitzvah from the Torah. When you

do so, you are saying thank you to Hashem. Do your very best to bentch from a siddur or a bentcher.

We also know the Pasuk, "Tzedakah tatzil mi'maves—Charity saves from death." Who doesn't want to save the lives of those in Israel? Give tzedakah daily. Now is the time to increase in this regard.

Say Tehillim. If you say 5 chapters a day, after thirty days, you will have completed the entire Sefer Tehillim, of 150 Chapters.

Torah study is equivalent to all mitzvos. We must learn how to conduct ourselves as a Jew on a daily basis. Without learning through these laws, it's not possible to avoid making a mistake.

During the week, recite Chapter 137 of Al Naharos Bavel before you bentch. After you had a meal, don't forget about the Beis Hamikdash. The Pesikta Rabbasi (#47) states that Yirmiyahu walked with the Jewish nation who headed along the banks of the Euphrates River into exile. "Heaven and earth are my witness," Yirmiyahu said, "that I told you that had you cried out once in repentance during the time you were in Israel you would never have needed to be exiled."

If we can cry before we bentch over the state of our nation today, without a Beis Hamikdash and in exile, Hashem will bring us home in redemption.

Accept something upon yourself. Do something that will create real change in your life and bring you closer to Hashem.

May the unity that we feel and have been expressing to our brothers and sisters in Israel stir the Heavens and shower upon us relief and redemption. We are all brothers and sisters united with our Father in Heaven. And together, with Hashem guiding us, we will be successful.

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