

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The Vocation of Israel

The day after I heard that one of my family experienced a tragic accident, I remember waking up and before I even knew who I was, I was filled with tremendous sadness. When something terrible happens to us, G-d forbid, it follows us around like a dark shadow. It seeps into every fiber, into every corner of our subconscious. There's no moment of the day or night—even in our sleep—that we don't carry that burden. I cannot imagine what it must be like now to have a loved one held captive in those dark satanic tunnels under Gaza. Or, worse, to be there. As much as I try and empathize, it's all too easy for life to just go on.

That's not good enough.

A Jew has a mitzvah to be nosei b'ol im chaveiro, literally, to share the burden of his friend. And that's not just a nice platitude, because someone who fails to do this is considered to have been 'poresh min ha'tzibur,' separated himself from the community, and according to the Rambam, he has no portion in the World to Come. He may keep all of the mitzvos, pray every morning with the dawn, be scrupulous in his business dealings, and give vast amounts of charity. But if he does not share the agony of his fellow Jews, share his grief, empathize and feel deeply, he has no position in the Next World.

I can tell you that this is a very dif-

ficult thing to do. I know that myself here in Jerusalem, Baruch Hashem, we've been spared so far the worst of this terrible onslaught. And long may it continue that way. But how do I keep the pain of my brothers and sisters uppermost in my heart?

During the whole of the Second World War, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, one of the great rabbis of the last hundred years, never slept in a bed. He said, "How can I sleep in a bed when my brothers and sisters in Europe are living and dying in torment?" The Jewish people are not a religion. We're not a community. We're not a race. On the mystical level, we are one body, one soul. And because of this, at a time like now, when there's a decree against the Jewish people in Heaven, a time of pain and tragedy for Israel, if we share that pain, those hostages, their families and the soldiers on the front will suffer less.

For example, let's say each one of us takes upon ourselves to lessen physical pleasure, even just a little. Let's say we sleep with one pillow instead of two. Or, when we reach into our pocket to have a candle, we stop ourselves. Or if we're learning Torah, we learn something very difficult for an extra ten minutes or so a day. Or we wake up ten minutes earlier than normal. Or we shower with warm water instead of piping hot. Even those small inconveniences add up, and Hashem puts all that in the balance of the suffering of the Jewish people in general. And that alleviates

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the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters who are really suffering.

But as the shock of that day recedes, another insidious and threatening specter rears its ugly head once again.

Anti-Semitism.

Why is it that far from being a thing of the past, anti-Semitism continues to fester beneath the surface, ready to erupt whenever there's the slightest pretext?

In early 1941, almost the entire Mir Yeshiva escaped from Vilna to Kobe, Japan, and then to Shanghai, China. One day, one of the Torah students was making his way through the market in Shanghai and above the many voices speaking in Chinese, he heard a voice bellowing in a language he understood. It was coming from a radio in an upstairs apartment. The voice was screaming like an animal. It was saying, "Come, let us rid ourselves of this people who will not let us live in peace!" And

behind the voice, there rose up in a rhythmic chant, thousands of voices. "Sieg heil (Hail Victory)! Sieg heil (Hail Victory)!" The boy was shaken.

He ran back to the Yeshiva and he told Rav Yechezkel Levenstein what he'd seen. Rav Levenstein said to him, "This time he's telling the truth... This time he's telling the truth."

The Jewish people will not let the world live in peace. Hermann Rauschning in his book *Gespräche mit Hitler* writes that Hitler said to him, "The tablets of Mount Sinai have lost their validity. Conscience is a Jewish invention. Like circumcision, it mutilates man. Conscience comes from Sinai." The Torah mandated a revolution in human behavior. Education for all; the sanctity of human life; equality before the law; a vision of world peace where nations would beat their swords into plowshares; the moral imperative to care for the sick, the aged, the orphan, the widow. The Jewish people will not let the

world live in peace.

Our Sages teach us that Mount Sinai or Sinai in Hebrew is connected to the word *sin'ah*, or hatred. When the Torah descended to this world, it was accompanied by anti-Semitism. Catholic theologian Jacques Maritain wrote, "Israel is to be found at the very heart of the world's structure, stimulating it, exasperating it, moving it like an alien body, like an activating ferment injected into the mass. It gives the world no peace. As long as the world has not G-d, it stimulates the movement of history. It is the vocation of Israel that the world hates."

Our brothers, the entire house of Israel who are languishing in pain in captivity, may Hashem have mercy on them and bring them out from anguish to relief, from darkness to light, from captivity to redemption. Now, speedily, and soon—and let us say, Amen.

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

A Light by the Window

As Chanukah reaches its crescendo, before washing into the woven fabric of our seasonal cycle, let us take a moment to sit with the lessons we are moving forward with as we march into the coming winter days...

Who doesn't love Chanukah? Family gathering around the menorah, basking in its light, singing together the age-old melodies of Haneiros Hallalu and Ma-oz Tzur. Soon after, it's time to take seats around the table, enjoy some hot sizzling latkes, and play a game or two of dreidel. Memories that warm our hearts and souls.

Antiochus IV, leader of the Syri-

an-Greek empire, wished to spread his power and influence. His goal was to Hellenize our nation, making them one with the Greeks. He brought Greek culture to the Holy Land, and wanted the people to participate in Greek entertainment, take on Greek names, dress in Greek styles, and study Greek philosophy. To act and even think "Greek". Antiochus waged a war against the Jewish soul. He tried to destroy our connection to HaShem, crush our spirit, and break down the Jewish home. To rob us of all things Jewish, a Holocaust of the Jewish soul.

He enacted edicts forbidding Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, Bris Milah, and Torah study. All of them, mitzvos

that solidify family and home. Perhaps, for this very reason, while we light the menorah in shul, the Gemara (Shabbos 21b) tells us of the requirement to light "*Ner ish u-beiso*", to bring the Chanukah lights into our homes.

So we kindle the Chanukah lights in our bayis, our home. We celebrate that it's over two thousand years since the miracle of Chanukah, and the Jewish home still stands strong. The Greeks desecrated the Beis Ha-Mikdash, and left it in shambles. After a major cleansing, the menorah was lit. Despite the tyranny of the Greeks, there were people who never lost their faith, but searched and searched until they miraculously

found a single sealed cruse of pure olive oil. And the great Chanukah neis of the small amount of oil that was sufficient for just one day, yet burned for eight days.

Within the word Chanukah are the letters that spell Kohein – Chof, hei, nun. There is also a letter ches, whose numerical value is eight. The Kohein lit the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash, a fire that lasted for eight days. Each year, come Chanukah, we transform our home into a mikdash me'at, a sanctuary in miniature. We have the great z'chus to be a "kohein" of sorts, by lighting our personal menorah, thereby elevating our souls.

The menorah was lit with pure olive oil – for it is only when the olive is squeezed with great pressure that pure oil is extracted. So too, with Am Yisroel, when we are "squeezed", when we are challenged, when we suffer at the hands of our oppressors, we emerge pure and unadulterated. Like the light of the menorah, our light shines bright and strong.

The words shemoneh, ha-shemen and neshama, are all comprised of the same Hebrew letters, hei, mem, nun and shin. This is not random, but there is a connection between these three words. The miracle of Chanukah lasted for shemoneh – eight days. It was a miracle that came about through ha-shemen – the oil. And Chanukah celebrates the victory of the Jewish neshama, the soul within every Jew, which throughout history refuses to sur-

render to the spiritual oppression and persecution by those who seek to uproot our emunah and bitachon, our trust and faith in HaShem.

Antiochus understood the power of our people. He knew what makes us tick, and forbade Torah study. But this didn't stop many a father and son from hiding in caves to study Torah. When the Greek soldiers would approach the caves, the children would quickly pull out their dreidels and call out "Only playing". The letters on the dreidel, are nun, gimmel, hey and shin, an acronym for neis gadol hayah shom, a great miracle happened there. They are the very same letters that spell the word Goshna – to Goshen. The Torah tells us that Yaakov readied his family to join Yosef in Egypt, by sending Yehudah ahead to Goshen. Rashi cites a Midrash that it was to establish a place of learning. Yaakov understood that the survival of the Jewish people lies within Torah learning.

As the dreidel spins and spins, and then falls, so too is the story of our people. We too have spun and spun, falling down again and again, forced to leave one country and settle in another. But wherever we have landed, we established places of chinuch, Torah learning, for that is the key to our survival. The word chinuch – education, shares a common root with the word Chanukah. How do we survive the golus, the exile? By taking a lesson from our zeide Yaakov, and establishing

places of learning.

Yaakov himself imparted Torah teachings to Yosef, a chinuch that served Yosef well. Yosef was sold as a slave, ending up in the house of Potiphar. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Yosef, it was the "D'mus d'yukno shel oviv, the image of his father", an image that reminded him of all the Torah his father taught him. An image that gave him the inner strength to say no and flee.

Chazal teach that Yosef saw a reflection of his father in a window. By placing the menorah by our window, we are also reminded of our past, the teaching of our avos and imahos. Additionally, the bright lights of the menorah shining through our window sends a powerful message of how proud we are of our heritage, how lucky we are to be Jews.

In the brachos preceding the candle lighting, we say "Bayamin ha-heim, bizman hazeh" thanking HaShem for miracles past and present. Recent events in Eretz Yisroel have inflicted much pain, sorrow and loss of life, but we must also recognize the tremendous miracles that have occurred, sparing many more from death and destruction. While we are now in a time of darkness, let us linger by the Chanukah lights, reciting extra tefillos, beseeching HaShem to illuminate the lives of our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel and Jewry worldwide.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

To Die as a Jew

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.

A soldier in an elite IDF unit who was not Jewish spent the last ten months studying Torah and Judaism in order to undergo a conversion. On October 7th, in the morning, he and his unit were sent to Kfar Gaza. Fierce battles erupted, and it took them two days to clean out the village of Hamas terrorists. In the coming days, the soldier who was identified with a name beginning with an A was sent with his unit to northern Israel, where Israel faces the threat of Hezbollah at the border of Lebanon.

A few weeks ago, the soldier visited the military rabbinic court in charge of conversion in the army. He asked the judges to expedite the process, which he began more than ten months ago. Standing in front of three judges of the rabbinical court, he was asked many questions about Torah, Judaism and his commitment to Jewish observance to see if he was indeed eligible for a conversion according to Jewish law. But then one of the rabbinic judges turned to him and asked him, "Why now? Why are you so eager in middle of a war to expedite the conversion process?" The soldier, in a voice choked with

tears, said this:

"I really wanted to come here today and complete the conversion process because I know that I may die in battle. And if that happens, G-d forbid, I want to die as a Jew." No eye remained dry in the room. On that very day, the conversion process was completed. Today, he's a full Jew.

Times of adversity bring out the worst in some people and the best in others. Some people now are screaming from the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free, calling essentially for the genocide of Jews. Yet others say, "I wish I can be a Jew."

Nathaniel Buzolic is an Australian actor. He has around 4 million followers, and this is what he recently shared.

"I love this nation. I love the Jewish people where we as Christians need to stand with these people who have faced so much." When asked, "Weren't you afraid to lose some followers?" Nathan responded, "In 2016 I was in Iraq volunteering in a place that was bringing emergency aid to people fleeing ISIS. And I remember making a deal with Hashem in that moment of time that whatever it costs to follow You, to serve You, and to be a light to people, it's all Yours. If I lose every single follower, if I lose every

single fan, if I lose my jobs, my career, even my own life, if it's to glorify Hashem, I put it on the table."

When asked further, "What do you think that we, as Israelis and Jewish people around the world need to do better in order for the world to know the truth?" Nathan responded, "I'm going to be honest. It's a tragic reality that Hamas brought this nation together. And I'm glad that that this nation is coming together, because for the last eight months, you've been divided over judicial reforms and politics and left versus right. And it was Hamas that brought you together. And so, if I was talking to the Jewish people now, listening and watching this, I would say, 'Don't let it be Hamas that keeps you together. Let it be Hashem.'"

The clarity of the soul in such challenging moments is awe-inspiring. At these times, you and I realize that all my soul and your soul really wants this to be a channel for truth, light, love, redemption, and oneness. All I really want is to truly be connected to the source of all truth and love. All we really want is to dveikus, oneness with Hashem. All we really want is a world filled with Divine love.

The world of Moshiach.

Rabbi Label Lam

Model Mitzvah

A Chanukah candle is not just a stand-alone mitzvah. It is a model, an example, of all mitzvos as Shlomo Hamelech tells us, "Ki ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr— For a candle is a mitzvah and Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). If someone is

putting on Tefillin, which is made of the skin of a dead cow, he is igniting a candle and generating a sublime light. It is a vehicle for revealing and releasing the deep, hidden light of Hashem. And the Maharal explains that although

the mitzvah itself has parameters and is finite, the light that it produces continues to travel forever.

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Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 3 Tevet)

עידן בן דלית (שתיו)	יותם בן איריס (חיים)	אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)	אבינתן בן דיצה (אור)
עמירם בן שרה (קופר)	יצחק בן אנטה (אלגרט)	אנדריי בן יבגניה (קוזלוב)	אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
עמית אסתר חיה בת אילנה אלן (בוסקילה)	יצחק בן גילה (גלרנטר)	ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)	אברהם גלעד בן ליאת (מונדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורה (מירן)	ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)	אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)	אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
ענבר בת יפעת (הימן)	כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)	אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)	אוהד בן אסתר (בן) עמי)
פרננדו סימון בן טניה (מרמן)	כרמל בת כנרת (גת)	בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)	אוהד בן אסתר (יהלומי)
צחי בן דבורה (עידן)	לואיס נורבטו בן נורה (הר)	גד בן שרה (חגי) גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)	אור בן טלי (לוי) אורי בן עינב (דנינו)
קית' שמואל בן גלדיס (סיגל)	ליאור בן מיכל (רודאיף)	גיא בן מירב (גלבוע דלאל)	אוריאל בן נעמי (ברוך)
קרין בת אירינה (ארייב)	לירי בת שירה (אלבג)	גלי בן תמר (ברמן)	אילן שלמה בן מרים (וייס)
רום בן תמר (ברסלבסקי)	מישל בן סולמירה (ניסנבאום)	דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)	איתי בן אורית (סבירסקי)
רומי בת מירב (גונן)	מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)	דולב בן יעל (יהוד) דורון בת סימונה (שטיינברכר)	איתי בן חגית (חן) איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
רון בן חנה (בנימין)	מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)	דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבוע)	איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
רון בן מעין (שרמן) רן בן טלי (גואילי)	מתן בן ירדנה (צנגאוקר)	דרור בן דורית (אור)	אלון בן דקלה (לולו) שמריז)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)	נדב בן חנה (פופלוול)	הירש בן רחל (גולדברג פולין)	אלון בן עידית (אהל)
שגיא בן נעמית (חן דקל)	נועה בת ליאורה (ארגמני)	זיו בן תמר (ברמן) חיים בן נחמה (פרי)	אליה בן אודל (טולדנו)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)	ניק בן קטיה (ביזר)	חן חנן בן ורד יבלונקה) - נעדר	אליה בן סיגי (כהן) אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
שלומי בן רוזיטה (זיו)	נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)	טל בן ניצה (שוהם) קורנגולד)	אליהו יעקב בן הדסה עדי - נעדר
שלמה בן מרסיל (מנצור)	נעמה בת איילת (לוי)	יאיר בן רות אדית (הורן)	אליקים שלמה בן אבישג (ליבמן)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)	עדן בת שרית (ירושלמי)	יאיר בן פלור (יעקב)	אלכס בן אוקסנה (לובנוב)
תמיר בן יעל (אדר)	עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)	יגב בן אסתר (בוכשטב)	אלכסנדר ששה בן ילנה (טרופנוב)
	עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)	יהודית בת ... (ויינשטיין)	אלכסנדר בן נינה (דנציג)
	עומר בן שלי (שם) טוב)	יוסף בן חנה (שרעבי)	אלמוג בן אורית (מאיר ג'אן)
	עומר מקסים בן אורנה אסתר (נאוטרה)	יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)	אלמוג בן נירה (סרוסי)
	עידו בן כוכבה (קלדרון)	יורם בן בלה (מצגר)	אלעד בן חנה (קציר)
	עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)		