

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Avrohom Asher Makovsky Even if Undeserving

A woman who had been childless for years once came to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l for a blessing. Rav Shlomo Zalman was known to be an "Av Harachaman," a father of compassion to all, in credit to the immense care and compassion he showed toward others. The woman's hope was that her words would fall on listening ears and elicit a blessing that would in turn yield Heavenly compassion.

But shortly after the woman entered inside and began expressing why she was there, Rav Shlomo Zalman picked up on something. She had complaints. "How could Hashem not have given me children! How could He do such a thing!" Taking this in, Rav Shlomo Zalman responded pointedly. "I don't know if I'm able to give you a beracha because it seems as if there is a misunderstanding here. You're alive and breathing and are well. That alone—that Hashem gave you health—is more than He owes you. Hashem doesn't owe you anything." The woman couldn't believe her ears. She was dumbfounded at Rav Shlomo Zalman's response, especially knowing how compassionate he always was.

As the woman remained sitting still, Rav Shlomo Zalman went on. "Hashem doesn't owe you anything... my blessings, what are they worth? But I'll tell you something that you can do to merit to

have children. We know that the way Hashem does everything is measure for measure. The way a person acts in his life is how Hashem acts toward him. Therefore, if you start doing steady chesed to somebody that you owe nothing to, that will elicit that Hashem will respond in kind to you—middah k'negged middah—and give you children, even though He owes you nothing."

One of Rav Shlomo Zalman's nephews personally attested that this woman immediately went on to become a volunteer at the Hadassah Hospital and visit the patients on a steady basis.

Within a year, she had a child.

Rav Elimelech Biderman shlita relayed this story, adding that he knows many first-hand stories of people who needed a yeshua (personal salvation) and accepted upon themselves to begin doing chesed to others that they owe nothing to. And indeed, in doing so, they merited a yeshua.

The Baal Shel Tov explained the words, "Hashem tzil'cha—Hashem is your shadow" to mean that just as a shadow reflects a person, so too does Hashem reflect back to us the same way we act in our life. When we express our kindness and extend our help to someone who doesn't deserve it, we are creating the vessel for Hashem to in turn respond to us the same—by helping us, even though we don't deserve it.

Grab on to this important advice,

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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
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R' Zechariah Shimon ben Yitzchok
L'refuah Sheleima
Deena bat Shoshana
Chaya Raizel bat Dena
Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva
Reuven ben Rochel

and with G-d's help, may Hashem grant you the yeshua you are looking for in your life.

Rabbi Shlomo Landau

The Can of Tuna

Early one morning, Yitzchak Horowitz, an Israeli journalist, was joining a particular platoon as they davened Shacharis. Fortunately, they even had a Sefer Torah to make use of. As the Torah was laid to rest on a makeshift bimah, one of the soldiers asked if he could be called up for an aliyah so he could recite the Ha'Gomel blessing (recited in the aftermath of being saved from a dangerous situation).

After davening, the soldier approached Yitzchak Horowitz and said, "You can't believe how many miracles we've experienced! But here's the one that I made the blessing over.

"We were in the refugee camp called Al-shati, located in northern Gaza. As we sat there eating our lunch of canned tuna, I did what I had done so many times before. Usually, these cans of tuna are

filled with oil, and the soldiers—not during wartime—put a match to the bottom of the can and it ends up smoking the tuna. To anyone who has been in the army, this is standard practice.

"But this one time when I put the match to the can, the entire can flared up. As I did so, one of my friends began yelling out, 'Put it out! Put it out! There's live ammunition here!' Panicking, I threw the can of tuna as far as I could. It probably flew a hundred to two hundred feet until, suddenly, we all heard a huge explosion. My entire platoon grabbed our guns and aimed it straightaway at the sight of the explosion, opening fire. After a lull in the shooting, a white flag emerged from the ground. It was a terrorist with his hands up in the air, surrendering himself. After he came up from the ground, a whole bunch of terrorists followed suit, raising their

hands and surrendering.

"The can of tuna had landed inside a hole that led to a tunnel, where several terrorists were waiting in ambush and planning to pop up and open fire on the Israeli soldiers. When the can of tuna fell through the hole into the ground and into the tunnel, the terrorists' ammunition exploded, which caused the huge noise. The terrorists in turn assumed that the Israeli soldiers were right above them and had overtaken them, and they chose to turn themselves over."

Here, among many, many incidents, Hashem saved the lives of our Israeli soldiers in the most unexpected and miraculous of ways. Such a story is nothing other than the unbelievable expression of Hashem's hand and Hashgacha Pratis.

Rabbi Avrohom Stulberger

Your Small Actions

Years ago, I remember hearing Rav Shlomo Brevda zt"l share the following thought in the name of Rav Elya Lopian zt"l, who in turn quoted the Nefesh HaChaim.

Sometimes, incidents happen in different parts of the world and we don't necessarily connect them. In example, you can have a couple going to a hospital in Germany for the wife to give birth,

and miles away a yeshiva student in Lithuania is returning from a late-night wedding.

The scene for the yeshiva bachur in Lithuania looks as follows. He is in his room, resting his head against the cool side of the pillow, about to drift off to sleep. Suddenly, he remembers that he made a kabbalah (commitment) last Yom Kippur to learn five minutes before he goes to sleep. He hasn't missed a night

yet. But tonight, after a long and tiring wedding, he is beyond fatigued and can barely keep his eyes open. An internal battle, though, rages. Should he get up to learn for the five minutes he committed to, or does he tell himself that he'll allow himself to fall asleep and he'll make it up tomorrow? One day won't make such a big difference, after all.

As all this occurs, 807 miles away in Germany, the doctor emerges

from the hospital room to a worried husband. "I'm sorry to tell you, but your wife is experiencing some severe labor complications. She's momentarily stable, but I'm not sure what will happen both to your baby and wife."

Two events, two places... and they are connected, says the Nefesh HaChaim. It all comes down to one decision: does that young man decide to pull himself out of the comfort of his bed and tell himself, "I made a kabbalah and I'm going to learn for five minutes. It makes no difference how I feel." Such an action of Torah study, even for these few minutes, can be transported to Germany... and the result are the doctor's next words: "I'm not sure how it happened, but your wife just gave birth and she and your baby are perfectly fine." The doctor can't explain how, but understanding the mechanics which Hashem utilizes to run the world does explain how.

The effect of these few minutes of Torah learning are so great that at the end of this yeshiva bachur's life—when he enters the Heavenly realms and he is shown a review of his life—he will be shown dozens of Jewish families living and learning in Germany all due to his credit. The yeshiva bachur never set foot in Germany his entire life; how is it possible that he is owed any credit for so many Jewish lives learning Torah?

It all comes back to that one night. The one night when he wanted to cast aside his commitment, and yet he strengthened himself, persevered, and followed through despite the difficulty. Those fam-

ilies are able to perform mitzvos years later and raise their children because of what he did.

Such is the power of our actions. We often don't appreciate the full extent and scope of power that our actions carry, even if indirectly effective onto others. Every single action, especially when difficult and out of our comfort level, reverberates. And as you commit to these small actions, have in mind, "Every single action I take should serve as a zechus for our brothers and sisters in Israel."

A Israeli couple had planned to take their son to a doctor's appointment at 4:30 one afternoon. Enough time had been planned ahead to take a bus and account for traffic, but as it turned out, when they arrived at Yirmiyahu Street, they were still ways away from the doctor's office and it was nearing 4:30. The best resort at this point was to hail a cab and shoot over to the hospital. But once in the cab, it didn't inch any farther than the bus did. The boy began growing agitated until the mother remarked, "I know you're agitated, but remember that we are in traffic because that's how Hashem planned it. Everything is going to be good. If we are not going to make it to the doctor, there's a reason we shouldn't make it there. We always need to have bitachon in Hashem."

These soothing words about the most fundamental principle of bitachon calmed the boy. Eventually they arrived, and the family stepped out of the cab. With them, the taxi driver exited too. Pulling aside the mother and father, he asked if he could share a few words.

In fluent Yiddish, he began. "I just want you to know that I am forty four years old. I grew up in a Chassidish home, and at nine years old, I walked away and gravitated to the outside world. For the last thirty five years, I have not done anything relating to Judaism and I've completely lost my relationship with Hashem. But your words, simple yet powerful, penetrated my heart. Hashem runs the world and everything happens for a reason. Hashem loves us, everything is going to be good, and He's with us every step of the way. These words entered my heart and moved me profoundly. I feel like I need to go back and rediscover my roots."

Sure enough, the taxi driver phoned the father later on and related how he had gone to daven at the Zichron Moshe shul and began crying like a baby. Some time later, he called back again and relayed how he had begun to study the sefer Chovos HaLevavos.

Moments like these become monumental. They can shift someone's life and shape a new path forward. They need not be big moments. Small actions, small statements, small commitments. When we push ourselves, even a small amount, the impact it has on the rest of the Jewish nation is profound.

It lasts forever and reaches from one end of the world to the other.

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.

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

Yearning for the Light

We stand with Israel” has become popular phrase seen on posters at solidarity rallies, spotted on store windows, and placed on front lawns. I would like to add to it... “We stand and pray with Israel”.

Yes, we stand and support our nation, but we also daven for our people. The tefilla of “Acheinu kol bais Yisroel – Our brothers, the entire house of Israel... hanesunim b’tzara – who are pained, afflicted.... u’vashivya – and in captivity. HaMokom yeracheim aleihem, may HaShem have compassion upon them, V’yotzieim mitzara lir’vacha, and take them from stress to comfort, mei’afeila l’ora, from darkness to light.”

Mei’afeila l’ora, from darkness to light. Words that describe the battle found in this week’s parsha of Vayishlach. A battle between Yaakov and the malach of Eisav. A battle that lasted through the night, until the break of dawn, from darkness to light.

In his introduction to the parsha, the Ramban writes regarding Yaakov’s meeting with Eisav: “There is a message for future generations that everything that happened to our forefather Yaakov with Eisav, will continually occur to us with Eisav’s descendants”. Earlier in Bereishis, the Ramban writes, “Ma’aseh avos, siman l’bonim, everything that occurred to the Patriarchs is a sign for the children”. The lives of our avos are one with ours.

In parshas Vayishlach, Yaakov and his family leave Lavan’s house, journeying to Yaakov’s

birthplace. It’s nighttime when Yaakov realizes that he forgot some “pachim ketanim, some little vessels”, and he goes back on his own to retrieve them.

“And Yaakov was left alone, and a man (maalach of Eisav) wrestled with him...” (Bereishis 32:25) As we have witnessed throughout history, “Hein am levadad yishkon, we are a nation that stands alone.” Today, once again, we are alone, fighting for our survival. Our people were attacked barbarically, brutally murdered, and suffered atrocities that are not comprehensible.

The pasuk tells us that Yaakov’s battle with the malach of Eisav continued until “the break of dawn”. A battle between good and evil, the eternal battle between Yaakov and Eisav, until the break of dawn, the coming of Moshiach. The Torah’s recounting of the confrontation between Yaakov and Eisav concludes with Yaakov asking the angel for his name. To which the angel responds, “Lama zeh tishal?, why do you ask,” – what difference does it make? This question haunts us to this very day. Eisav appears and reappears with different names, different languages, and in different guises. Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Cossacks, Communists, Nazis, and now Hamas and Hezbollah. The name is always changing, but the goal remains the same. To break us, to destroy us.

Sforno comments that this too, is a message for generations. We, the Jewish people, take a page from the story of Yaakov. Yaakov was injured during his confrontation, and walked away limping, yet resilient in spirit, and strong with his faith. So too, we

have been oppressed at the hands of tyrants and dictators. We have sustained many bumps and bruises. We have endured unimaginable pain, suffering, and even massacres. But it has never broken us. And it never will. Our oppressors through the ages are gone. But we are here. Am Yisroel Chai! Our commitment to HaShem’s Torah and mitzvos has kept the flame of Yiddishkeit alive. It is our sacred obligation to continue this dedication, and to transmit these eternal values to our children and grandchildren

Mei’afeila l’ora, from darkness to light. Chanukah is just around the corner. It falls during the darkest time of the year. The shortest of days, the longest of nights. A time of choshech, darkness, of both day and soul.

If one takes the Hebrew letters of choshech – ches, shin, chof, and changes the order to shin, chof, ches, we have the word shochach – forgot. During Greek rule that preceded the miracle of Chanukah, there were those who temporarily “shochach – forgot” their Torah and their mitzvos, and lived a life of choshech, darkness. But, like the lights of the menorah that were kindled once again in the Bais HaMikdash, their inner lights, their neshamos were reignited and shone once again.

Shochach. Forgot. With time, and as we get back into our day-to-day routines, it is natural to forget. After almost two months of war in Israel, we must be vigilant not to fall into the trap of war fatigue. Of slowly losing the great achdus amongst ourselves, and increased connection to HaShem that this war has brought us to. Within the word shochach is the word koach – chof, ches – strength. To find the strength to keep on davening and to stay connected to HaShem.

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Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 18 Kislev)

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