

The Torah Any Times

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Mr. Charlie Harary Candy-Coated Diamonds

One of the great impediments to success is understanding your challenge. If you don't understand it, it's hard to overcome it. In life, one of the greatest challenges is taavos, desires. We don't really understand what they are, and we think that unholy taavos is an indication that we are unholy. But that brings its own level of disgust and despair.

What is taava?

I want to share with you an insight that changed my life, from a Rav named Rav Itche Meir Morgenstern in his sefer B'yam Dark-echa. Let me give you an example.

Years ago, I read about this drug cartel that was evading the authorities. The authorities didn't know how this gang had so much money. Even after blocking every bank account and watching everything about these guys, somehow, they still remained wealthy and were able to corner the market in drugs. Until the authorities got tipped off to the real secret behind their success.

The gang was offering peasant farmers the ability to cross the border, but wasn't feeding them until they got extremely hungry. Then, on the vans, they would pass out candies that the farmers would eat. The gang would continue crossing the border, passing through without the slightest cause of alarm, where the farmers would get sick. The gang would then bring them to

special, private facilities where some would heal and some would die.

Why were the farmers getting sick? Because the gang was taking diamonds and congealing a candy shell around them. The farmers in their hunger would consume several of these candies and get sick from them. Then, once across the border, they extracted these diamonds. Under such surreptitious conditions, they were able to maintain their illegal activities.

You want to know what taava is? Rav Itche Meir Morgenstern explains that everything in this world is sustained by Divine sparks (nitzotzos). They contain a bit of Hashem, a bit of light. Sometimes you can access the light through positivity called mitzvos, but sometimes Hashem puts the light in a candy shell, in something that is forbidden. The reason why you want that isn't for the candy, it isn't for the taava. You want it because your neshama wants that Divine spark; it wants that spiritual pleasure. As such, you're drawn toward that thing.

But when your eyes and heart see it, you say, "I know why I want it. I want the shell, I want the candy." For so many people, they go for the shell and grow spiritually sick.

But some people get it. They say, "Why is the yetzer hara giving me all of these taavos?" These people look at the shell and don't go for it. And by not going for the shell, you know what they do? They unlock it. They

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unlock the outside and they release the spark, accessing much more pleasure than they ever could have gotten from the outside shell. "Through overcoming the challenge, a person receives the Divine Spark and experiences extreme pleasure," writes Rav Morgenstern. You gain that spark,

that deeper pleasure. When you feel taava, don't think, "I'm unholy." Think, "Hashem is going to give me a spark. I'm about to be satisfied spiritually." All you need to do is not take the candy and just take the diamond. Can you imagine if one farmer would have taken a whole bucket of those

candies and stuck it in his pockets? He would be a millionaire.

Every day, Hashem says, "I'm sending you candies left and right. Don't take them. Resist. Because if you do, you will get much more than candies. You'll get diamonds."

Rabbi Joey Haber

The Deciding Factor

Decisions are tough, but ultimately, our lives are in Hashem's hands. He decides how things will go. You can sit and grow frustrated, wondering and worrying about a myriad of concerns, but that will not resolve problems.

The solution?

Sit down, weed out the insignificant information, focus on what is important, and then make a decision.

When you are then done making a decision, turn to Hashem and say, "Now, it's in Your hands. I'm ready to move forward." Whatever area this may be in your life, make that decision and move your life forward. Because once you move ahead, you start to create momentum.

"A man of wise heart takes mitzvos" (Mishlei 10:8). Such a per-

son generates positive motion and movement in their life. Don't remain in a state of indecision. If you do, you'll be putting yourself in a state of frustration. Make a decision and build momentum.

You'll thank yourself that you did.

Rabbi David Shelby

There are No Mistakes

Nothing is impossible for Hashem. When you pray, don't settle for less. Pray from your heart even though it seems like it is impossible.

An elderly woman lived in a nursing home. Her children, fortunately, would visit her often and show her great love and respect.

One day, the family received a phone call that she had passed on. Knowing what the next steps were, the family began with the funeral proceedings and shiva arrangements.

A few days into the shiva, the phone rang, and the daughter picked up. Instantly, she heard her mother's voice. Not believing her ears, she fainted. She had gone to hospital, participated in the funeral, been at the cemetery. She knew her mother was no longer alive. How

could she be hearing her voice?

Seconds later, one of the grandchildren picked up the phone as well. And there the grandmother was, beginning to grow disheartened. "Why hasn't anyone come by in the past week? I'm all alone!" The family couldn't believe it. They began bawling with tears, falling into each other's arms and embracing one another like they never had before. Immediately, they raced to the nursing home, wondering what on earth had happened.

As was soon discovered, the nursing assistants erred. The roommate of the grandmother had passed away, not the grandmother. Mistakenly, they phoned the wrong family. Suddenly, all the regrets they voiced at the grandmother's funeral and all the things they wished they had told her could be spoken.

But now, a nightmare dilemma arose for the nursing home. How would the nursing home management inform the other family that their loved one passed away four days ago? Finally, the nursing home manager called the woman's son.

"I hate to share bad news, but your mother passed away." "Mr. Manager," replied the son, after composing himself, "my mother was an older woman. As we have documented, please proceed with the process of cremation as arranged." But the manager knew otherwise. "I'm sorry to tell you, but four days ago, we went ahead with a Jewish burial in a Jewish cemetery." The son grew instantly silent. The manager could only surmise that the son was fuming at this news.

"Sir, I'm sorry. We have never made such a mistake..." But before the manager could continue, the son interrupted. "Don't worry about

the mistake. There are no mistakes. There really is a G-d." The manager urged the son to continue.

"My mother was a religious woman who use to recite Tehillim all the time. My sisters and I, unfortunately, turned irreligious and disavowed our belief in the after-life. We thought it was all old-fashioned. But our mother never failed to tell us that she wanted a Jewish burial the way it is supposed to be. We continued to chide her, telling her that her request was nonsense.

But she remained persistent. 'I am going to pray for a Jewish burial, and Hashem is going to make it happen,' she'd always say.

"After a while, I grew so incensed that my mother was so adamant about this. I told her that no matter what, I'd be certain to make sure she'd be cremated, no matter what. My mother's request went unheard. It was a done deal, in my mind. But my mother never stopped praying or giving up on her desire for a Jewish burial. And now, I see, she won."

Looking at this story from the out-

side, we'd assume that the son's wish would have prevailed. But, in truth, even what seems impossible is not impossible. A Jewish woman prayed and prayed, and Hashem answered her.

We can ask Hashem for anything. There are no limits. There is nothing beyond His reach. There is no such thing as impossible.

Just ask.

Rabbi Avi Slansky

A Simple Life

At a time when our world is divided and we need peace, let us do our part to infuse it into our personal lives, our families, our communities and our society at large. Life is too short to embroil ourselves in strife and conflict. Pick up the phone and say you are sorry. If it's with your spouse, give in; if it's with your child, show them understanding and perhaps grant them their request. And within your own life, calm the raging storms of inner turmoil and tension. We all have these inner forces within us clashing,

and it is time that they stop fighting more than they need to.

In the world at large too, the countless options we have haven't made life any simpler. If any, it's made life more complicated and caused more conflict and confusion in navigating a successful lifestyle.

It's been said that "Variety is the brainchild of America." There is an abundance of choices everywhere we turn. From clothing to cars to houses, there are innumerable choices. If we've learned nothing other than one thing from our lives until this point,

let it be that all the variety we have is not necessary.

Variety creates confusion and doubts. When we set aside those doubts and boil down our focus to the very core of what life is about, what is ultimately important to us crystallizes and we realize that the essentials are far and few between. All of a sudden, it's not difficult to decide what to wear for Yom Tov, because all we have is one suit. Suddenly, it's not hard to choose what to do, because there are no other options.

A simple life is a good life.

R' Yitzchok Aryeh Epstein

Bad News is Good News

David, a computer scientist living in Petach Tikvah, received a call one day from his boss, who asked that he come into the office on a particular day and time. An informal hearing would be held, he explained. This wasn't good news,

David knew as much. Most likely, they would ask him some questions, deliberate together, and then fire him. The most that he'd get would be severance pay.

Although David was naturally anxious about life, when he heard this, he knew that it was the beginning of

the end. He was sixty years old at the time, and he wouldn't be able to land another job if he'd be let go. Feeling sick to his stomach with nerves, he decided to call it a day and head home early. He couldn't handle it. Once he arrived home, he went to sleep.

The next day, he didn't even go to work. But that's when things compounded. He received a mes-

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sage from the company noting that if he chose to not attend the hearing, they would proceed without him and make the decision as to his position without him. If David was out of sorts before, this tripled it. His heart raced with palpitations and he felt physically sick. Worried for his health, he decided to head to his doctor to make sure the news he had received was not endangering his well-being.

“You need to go to a cardiologist,” David’s general practitioner said. Making the referral, the next day David was having his heart monitored. “We can administer a stress test,” explained the doctor, “but if you’d like, we can do an angiogram, and that will give us a better indication of what’s going on with your heart.” David had been leaning toward a stress test, and informed the doctor that he’d think about it for a few minutes. In the meantime, he’d call his wife and see her thoughts.

But she didn’t pick up. Left to his own thoughts and decision, he

finally decided that he’d go along with the doctor’s suggestion. An angiogram it would be.

Soon enough, the results came in: one artery was totally gone, and the other artery was almost entirely blocked. When the doctor saw this, he looked at David as if he was a walking dead man. “I have no idea how you’re alive. You need emergency open heart surgery.” David agreed, but added that he wanted to first consult with Rabbi Elimelech Firer, the medical expert in Israel.

After giving the name of a certain specialist, a phone call was put in to see when the surgery could be scheduled. “Three months” was the reply. But that was not possible. “Well, if you come into the hospital tomorrow, the doctor has a few surgeries lined up. I can put you on schedule for surgery after those are completed, and you should be able to be seen. Come today and take care of the pre-ops.” David did just that.

David would have died within days if he hadn’t undergone that open heart surgery as soon as he did.

How did this all come about? We need to look back to the beginning. Hashem orchestrated that a difficult situation would come about—David would be called to a hearing. But David couldn’t deal with the hearing, so he experienced heart pain. From there, he went to his doctor who recommended an angiogram, despite David being inclined to take a stress test. Thankfully, his wife didn’t pick up the phone, for she might have led him to decline the angiogram in deference to the stress test. Thankfully there also, he didn’t take the stress test, because that would have caused too much trauma to the heart and might have killed him. And then, based upon the guidance of Rabbi Firer, the surgery was scheduled for the very next day at the hospital.

Hashem wanted to give David life. He was a good man and had his heart in the right place, and Hashem wanted to save his heart.

There is always a plan in life. Hashem sees it. Just sometimes it takes time until we see it.

Rabbi Yoel Steinmetz

Angels

Life works on a certain metric. You work for G-d, and He’ll work for you. We often don’t see this clear-and-cut, and it takes true trust in Hashem, but when we take this path forward, He delivers.

Yossi had a heart of gold. He didn’t have unlimited funds, but he loved to help others. On one occasion, he was preoccupied with setting aside \$10,000 for certain tax purposes and things had been progressing well to that end. Until, around that same time, he

was approached by a chesed organization which was looking to support a poor family. \$10,000 would do the job, Yossi was told. That was just the amount that would help rise out of the hardship.

Yossi, taking to heart the family’s aching predicament, proceeded to write a check for \$10,000, confident that Hashem would arrange for him to obtain what he needed for his own, personal tax purposes in some other way.

He was right.

The very next day, Yossi received a

check in the mail from his insurance company. He had been waiting for months to receive this payment from his insurance, and it was long in coming. In fact, he had given up all hope of ever receiving any reimbursement. The amount the check was made out to? You guessed: \$10,000.

Yossi wanted to help, and Hashem made it possible for him to do so. Indeed, his desire, his drive, his dream to help another family in need created those very angels who served as G-d’s messengers to return him the deed the very next day.



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Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 4 Adar II)

רומי בת מירב (גונן)	לירי בת שירה (אלבג)	אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)	אבינתן בן דיצה (תרצה (אור)
רון בן חנה (בנימין)	מישל בן סולמירה (ניסנבאום)	בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)	אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)	מקסים בן טלה (הרקיון)	גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)	אברהם גלעד בן ליאת (מונדר)
שגיב בן נעמית (חן דקל)	מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)	גיב בן מירב (גלבווע דלאל)	אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)	מתן בן ירדנה (צנגאוקר)	גלי בן תמר (ברמן)	אוהד בן אסתר (בן עמי)
שלומי בן רוזיטה (זיו)	נדב בן חנה (פופלוול)	דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)	אוהד בן אסתר (יהלומי)
שלמה בן מרסיל (מנצור)	נועה בת ליאורה (ארגמני)	דולב בן יעל (יהוד) דורון בת סימונה (שטיינברכר)	אור בן טלי (לוי) אורי בן עינב (דנינו)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)	נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)	דניאל שמעון בן שרון (פרץ)	אוריאל בן נעמי (ברוך)
	נעמה בת איילת (לוי)	דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבווע)	איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
	עדן בת שירית (ירושלמי)	דרור בן דורית (אור)	איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
	עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)	הירש בן רחל (גולדברג פולין)	אלון בן עידית (אהל)
	עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)	זיו בן תמר (ברמן) חיים בן נחמה (פרי)	אליה בן סיגי (כהן) אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
	עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)	חן חנן בן ורד (יבלונקה)	אליקים שלמה בן אבישג (ליבמן)
	עומר מקסים בן אורנה אסתר (נאוטרה)	טל בן ניצה (שוהם) קורנגולד)	אלכס בן אוקסנה (לובנוב)
	עידו בן כוכבה (קלדרון)	יאיר בן רות אדית (הורן)	אלכסנדר סשה בן ילנה (טרופנוב)
	עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)	יגב בן אסתר (בוכשטב)	אלכסנדר בן נינה (דנציג)
	עידן בן דלית (שתייו)	יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)	אלמוג בן אורית (מאיר ג'אן)
	עמירם בן שרה (קופר)	יורם בן בלה (מצגר)	אלמוג בן נירה (סרוסי)
	עמית אסתר חיה בת אילנה אלון (בוסקילה)	יצחק בן אנטה (אלגרט)	אלעד בן חנה (קציר)
	עמרי בן אסתר ורה (מירן)	יצחק בן גילה (גלרנטר)	אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
	צחי בן דבורה (עידן)	ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)	אמילי תהילה בת אמנדה פרנסיס (דמארי)
	קית' שמואל בן גלדיס (סיגל)	כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)	אנדריי בן יבגניה (קוזלוב)
	קרונה בת אירנה (ארייב)	כרמל בת כנרת (גת)	ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)
	רום בן תמר (ברסלבסקי)	ליאור בן מיכל (רודאוף)	אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 4 Adar II)

Omer Maxim ben Orna Esther (Neutra)	Yegev ben Esther (Buchachev)	Amelia Tehilla bat Amanda Francis (Damari)	Avinatan ben Ditza Tirtza (Ohr)
Ido ben Kochva (Kaldron)	Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ohana)	Andrea ben Yavgania (Kosolov)	Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)	Yoram ben Belah (Metzger)	Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)	Avraham Gilad ben Liat (Mundar)
Idan ben Dalit (Stevey)	Yitzchak ben Enta (Algert)	Ariel ben Sylvia Monika (Kunyo)	Agam bat Meirav (Berger)
Amiram ben Sarah (Cooper)	Yitzchak ben Gila (Gelernter)	Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)	Ohad ben Esther (Ben- Ami)
Amit Esther Chaya bat Ilana Allen (Buskila)	Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)	Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)	Ohad ben Esther (Yahalomi)
Omri ben Esther Verah (Miran)	Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)	Gad Moshe ben Sarah (Muzas)	Ohr ben Tali (Levi)
Tzachi ben Devorah (Idan)	Karmel ben Kineret (Gat)	Guy ben Meirav (Galboa Dalial)	Ori ben Inav (Danino)
Kityah Shmuel ben Galdis (Segal)	Lior ben Michal (Rudaeff)	Gali ben Tamar (Berman)	Uriel ben Naami (Baruch)
Kreina bat Irana (Iriv)	Liri bat Shirah (Elbag)	David ben Sylvia Monika (Kunyo)	Eitan ben Ruth Adit (Horen)
Rum ben Tamar (Borsalevsky)	Mishel ben Solmirah (Nissenbaum)	Dolav ben Yael (Yehud)	Eitan ben Efrat (Mor)
Rumi bat Meirav (Gonan)	Maxim ben Tellah (Herkin)	Doron bat Simona (Steinbrecher)	Elon ben Idit (Ohel)
Ron ben Chana (Benjamin)	Matan ben Anat (Angres)	Daniel Shimon ben Sharon (Peretz)	Elya ben Sigi (Cohen)
Segev ben Galit (Kalafon)	Matan ben Yardena (Zangauker)	Daniella bat Orli (Galboa)	Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)
Sagi ben Naamit (Chen- Dekel)	Nadav ben Chana (Popplewell)	Dror ben Dorit (Ohr)	Elyakim Shlomo ben Avishag (Liebman)
Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)	Noah ban Liora (Argamani)	Hirsch ben Rachel (Goldberg-Polin)	Alex ben Uksana (Lobanov)
Shlomi ben Rosita (Ziv)	Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)	Chaim ben Nechama (Parry)	Alexander Sasha ben Yalena (Tropnov)
Shlomo ben Marcel (Mansour)	Naama ban Ayelet (Levi)	Chen Chanan ben Vered (Yavlunka)	Alexander ben Nina (Dantzig)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)	Eden bat Shirit (Yerushalmi)	Tal ben Nitza (Shoham- Corngold)	Almog ben Urit (Meir-Gan)
	Oded ben Bilhah (Lipschitz)	Yair ben Ruth Idit (Horen)	Almog ben Nira (Sarusi)
	Omer ben Niva (Weinkraut)		Elad ben Chana (Ktzir)
	Omer ben Shelly (Shemtov)		Elkana ben Ruchama (Bochbut)