

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l Crossing the River

The Gemara (Chullin 7a) recounts how R' Pinchas ben Yair traveled to perform the mitzvah of ransoming off captives (pidyon shevuyim). On the way, R' Pinchas ben Yair encountered the Ginai River, which was too deep to cross. R' Pinchas ben Yair said to the river, "Ginai, split your waters for me and I will pass through!" The river responded, "You are on your way to perform the will of Your Creator, and I too am on my way to perform the will of my Creator. Why should I split before you? You are doubtful if you will be able to successfully perform your Master's will of freeing the captives, whereas I am certain that I will be able to perform my Master's will." R' Pinchas ben Yair responded, "If you don't split, I decree upon you that water will never again flow through you!" Hearing this, the water split.

The question is as follows. What changed once R' Pinchas ben Yair threatened the river by saying that if it doesn't split, he will decree that it will dry up and never again flow with water?

Rav Hutner zt"l, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Chaim Berlin, explained that R' Pinchas ben Yair intended to tell the river that he has it wrong. Whereas the river believed that it was superior to R' Pinchas ben Yair—because it would certainly perform G-d's will whereas R' Pinchas ben Yair may or may not—the

truth was the opposite. When weighing which is greater with regard to reaching a goal, although we would assume that certainty is better than uncertainty, R' Pinchas ben Yair taught the contrary. We all would naturally do something if we know that for sure we will be successful and our goal will come to fruition. But if we are endeavoring to do something which may not be successful, and we still push ahead and move forward with it, that is a far greater accomplishment. We are more hesitant to pursue something we may not succeed at. As such, if we still surge forward despite that doubt and uncertainty, it speaks volumes.

Imagine you ask your daughter to pick up a gallon of milk from the store at 1:00 p.m. Your daughter simply goes to the store, picks up the milk and returns home. But if you ask her at 9:15 p.m. to do the same thing—go to the store for some milk—it's a different story. "Mom, the grocery store closes at nine o'clock." "I know, but sometimes there are a lot of customers and they stay open a bit later than nine. Maybe they'll be open tonight." Considering both of these circumstances, which instance is greater? The latter, even though by the time she gets to the store, it's very possible that it'll be closed and she'll return home emptyhanded. In the scenario when she goes at one in the afternoon, she knows the store will be open and she'll get what she needs.

R' Pinchas ben Yair was impress-

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ing this very message upon the river. “You think you’re greater than me because you’re one hundred percent sure you’ll accomplish that which Hashem wants of you. But that’s wrong. I’m still willing to travel to redeem the captives even though I may not be successful, and that’s greater.”

In addition to this, R’ Pinchas ben Yair continued that if the river would not split, he would decree that it dried up. At that point, the river would certainly not be performing the will of Hashem in contrast to R’ Pinchas ben Yair who would possibly be carrying it out. And of the two—certainly not doing Hashem’s will and perhaps doing so—which is better? Of course the possibility! That was R’ Pinchas ben Yair’s intention as he spoke to the river.

When we set out to do something, we tend to become dispirited when there are doubts as to whether we’ll succeed. We want to feel confident, reassured and guaranteed that we’ll accomplish it. We don’t want to take the risk that we’ll fail. We want certainty that we’ll succeed. But the way we think is not the way Hashem thinks. In truth, when we are unsure if we’ll be able succeed, and yet we still try and give it our best, that is greater in Hashem’s eyes.

The Gemara continues by relating how along with R’ Pinchas ben Yair, there was another man nearby who was carrying wheat in order to bake matzos for Pesach. Seeing this, R’ Pinchas ben Yair said further to the river, “Split for this man too and let him cross! He is also going to perform a mitzvah!” The river remained split for this man too.

Along with this other man, there

was also an Arab merchant around too. R’ Pinchas ben Yair said to the river, “Split for him too, so that people won’t say this is how Jews deal with their traveling companions! It’ll be a chillul Hashem if people say that they split the river for themselves, and leave the others alone.” The river split.

R’ Yosef, in reflecting on the above, commented, “How great is R’ Pinchas ben Yair! For Moshe Rabbeinu and the six hundred thousand Jews leaving Egypt, the water only split once. And for R’ Pinchas ben Yair it split three times!” The Gemara clarifies: “The river actually only split once; it simply remained split for these three people.”

What is the message of this Gemara?

Judaism is not goal oriented. If it was, the river wouldn’t have needed to split. The river was otherwise accomplishing its goal, which was to be a flowing body of water. R’ Pinchas ben Yair couldn’t have argued with that. If you need to be the best in class or in your company, you will always look to succeed and look to reach your goal. But what R’ Pinchas ben Yair told the river was a truth that may seem counter intuitive. It’s not about reaching your goal. It’s just the opposite. It’s about the effort.

The effort to do something which you may fail at is much greater than the effort when you know that you’ll be successful. This is true about anything in life. This notion has been done away with in our world today. In our day and age, effort has no meaning. Take the Olympics. There is one gold medal winner. All you know about is the one winner; everyone else fades

to the sidelines and isn’t looked at with importance. In every contemporary sport we have, there is a winner. This is how we are brought up. You can play dozens upon dozens of games, work every day, fly across the country, and unless you win, it doesn’t count.

Such an education has seeped into our inner circles. We all want to be winners, and unless we are, we feel like failures. But that isn’t how Hashem measures success. We must try. And if you do, and you don’t reach your goal, you didn’t fail with regard to trying. You may have failed the test or not come in first place, but you performed unbelievably in effort. But if you don’t try, then you failed in effort, and that you’re not allowed to do.

This is what R’ Pinchos ben Yair was telling the river. “You’re right, I may end up not accomplishing my goal.” The daughter may end up going to the store at 9:15 and it’ll be closed. But she’s going to the store. And if that store is closed, she’ll try to find a different store.

So many people feel down about where they are in life. “I didn’t get the best shidduch,” “I didn’t get married at nineteen.” There is a race to the top. And yet when you get to the top, there’s nowhere to go. The lesson of this Gemara is that as long as you’re trying, you’re doing more than the person who is going to be one hundred percent successful.

Always remember that. Success in G-d’s eyes is very different from success in the eyes of people.

So let’s think like Hashem.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Invest Like a Millionaire

I received a call one Friday. “Rabbi Krohn, I hear you’re speaking about your brother, R’ Kalman, in Lakewood on Motzei Shabbos.” “I am,” I replied. “I’ll tell you a great story about me and him, but you need to promise that you won’t use my name.” “Of course,” I said. He then relayed to me the following.

“I come from a very frum family. I was a teenager, eighteen years old, and was sitting in yeshiva and doing nothing. I ended up spending half the day at home, and my parents were going crazy. I just didn’t want to learn; I wasn’t interested. So I decided that I’d enroll in college.

“I registered for some classes, and I knew my parents would have a hard time with my decision to do so. But I went ahead anyway.

“It was the first day—the opening day of orientation—and I saw the type of boys and girls that I would be sitting in class with. Now, even though I wasn’t learning anything, I was frum and it struck me—how could I be in such a place like this? I felt so out of place, so uncomfortable.

“I came home and said to my parents, ‘You know, I want to try learning again.’ My father looked at me confused. How could it be that I wanted to try learning again? But I had made my decision. ‘But I can’t do it here in America; I need to go to Israel,’ I said. My father then said to me, ‘I don’t have the money to send you to Israel. It’s too expensive to pay for all the costs involved in getting to Israel and then studying there.’ ‘I know, but I’m telling you,’ I emphasized, ‘I want to change.’ My father was

happy that I wanted to return to learning, but he simply didn’t have the wherewithal to support such a decision. ‘I’m going to go to Rabbi Kalman Krohn in Lakewood,’ I said.

“I came to R’ Kalman, who knew of my family, and he sensed that I needed extra attention and care. He then told me that I should come back at two in the morning and we’d speak further. I had no idea why he’d want to meet with me at such an outrageous hour, but I think he thought that if I was really serious, then I’d show up no matter when, even at two in the morning! So I did.

“Look,” I said, “I was in college for one day during orientation, and I don’t want to be there. I want to get out of there. ‘Where do you want to go?’ R’ Kalman asked me. ‘I don’t know,’ I honestly replied. ‘Where can I go? Do you think they would take me at the Mir in Israel?’ ‘Well, how are you going to get there?’ asked R’ Kalman. ‘That’s what I’m here for. I need a ticket and I need a chavrusa.’ After speaking for about an hour, R’ Kalman said that he’d help get me a ticket and chavrusa. ‘But you can’t let me down,’ he finished off. And with that, I left, preparing myself for my next chapter in life.

“I went to Israel, and actually went to see Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt”l, Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir. At the time, Rav Nosson Tzvi was unfortunately sick and lying on a couch. Rav Nosson Tzvi asked me to tell him a dvar Torah, and he quickly figured out that I’d need more personalized attention would I learn at the Mir.

“I’ll accept you on two condi-

tions,” said Rav Nosson Tzvi. “Firstly, you need to learn the blatt (page) Gemara bekiyus.” This was a great suggestion, because Rav Nosson Tzvi knew I wouldn’t be able to spend an extended period of time learning a single section of Gemara b’iyun (in depth). Hearing this from Rav Nosson Tzvi, it inspired trust in myself. Secondly, anything I would need from the yeshiva, I was to come directly to Rav Nosson Tzvi and no one else. I agreed to these conditions, and I began to learn with my chavrusa.

“Things were going well, until after two months, I slipped. I did something I shouldn’t have done, and I heard that R’ Kalman found out about it. I was so beside myself and nervous that R’ Kalman would call me. He had invested a lot of time and money into me, and here I was acting in such a way. Sure enough, R’ Kalman called me.

“When he called, I could barely get the words out of my mouth that I was sorry. But before I said anything much, R’ Kalman asked, ‘Do you know how to become a millionaire?’ ‘I don’t know what you mean, Rabbi Krohn.’ ‘Do you know anything about business?’ he asked further. ‘I’ll tell you how to become a millionaire,’ he said. ‘What you do is buy stock that you believe will do well, and you keep it. Sometimes, the stock will go down, but the millionaires are smart. They don’t sell it because they know it’s going to go back up. Eventually, it does go back up, and that’s how they make their millions.

“Listen to me. I invested in you, and you’re my stock. You went down a little bit, but I’m not giving up. I expect you to come back and you’re going to be right on top, and I’m going to be a millionaire because I invested

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in you.”

This man ended up staying at the Mir for ten years after that. Today, he is a family man with children and a Torah home. Why? Because R' Kalman could see beyond the external appearance of a boy who was strug-

gling and believed in him.

Not every one of us may be able to buy someone a ticket to Israel and pay for tuition, but every one of us can say Shalom Aleichem to someone else and feel for him or her. Many of those who look out of place are sim-

ply asking for us to show them that we care. That's all they want. And it's our role and responsibility to hear their call and respond.

Just ask R' Kalman how far it can go.

Rabbi David Ashear

Controlling Our Footsteps

One summer, a man from Israel came to collect tzedakah in Brooklyn. He was soon to get married, and he needed help raising funds in order to pay for the wedding expenses. The problem was the timing. Everyone was away, primarily either in New Jersey or in the Catskills. Especially with it being a Friday afternoon, the chances of coming out with a good amount of tzedakah was slim.

But the young man remained determined. “Is anyone going to either of these places and I can catch a ride?” Fortunately, someone was heading to the Catskills and agreed to take the fellow along.

Only once they arrived in the Catskills did the man realize the layout. There were a bunch of bungalow colonies, and there'd be no room for him to stay. It was now only a couple hours before Shabbos, and that didn't make it any easier. Where would he be for Shabbos? He knew no one and hadn't arranged a place to stay ahead of time.

“They're having a Shabbaton in that hotel there,” one of the locals told the man collecting. Thanking him, he began heading for the hotel, hopeful that he'd be able to make a reservation. But that idea fell through. “I'm sorry, but we're com-

pletely booked,” said the front desk secretary.

At this point, the man had no place to stay and it was an hour before Shabbos. Sitting in the lobby and waiting the time out, he began crying. Until the musician who was scheduled to perform that Motzei Shabbos entered the lobby and took notice of the man. “Is everything alright?” After relaying his situation, the musician was quick to offer help. “You can be with me! I'm the only one in my room; why don't you stay with me?” The fellow, of course, graciously accepted the offer.

Shabbos and the Shabbaton proceeded beautifully. At one point, in passing, the musician mentioned the name of the hotel owner's, Mr. Yosef Weiss. As soon as the musician mentioned the name, the man from Israel perked up. “Mr. Weiss? I can't believe it! Would it be possible to arrange for me to speak at Seudat Shelishit later today?” The musician couldn't guarantee it, but he said he'd try. Sure enough, he was able to get the man a few minutes to speak.

So there he was, standing at Seudat Shelishit. “I'd like to share a story with you all,” he began.

“I came here yesterday and I didn't know where to go. I didn't have any place to stay. And I ended up here.

Twenty-five years ago, my father

was standing at the Kotel crying when someone came up to him. ‘Is everything alright?’ asked the fellow. ‘Nothing is wrong,’ my father replied. ‘I'm crying tears of joy and gratitude. After ten years of marriage, my and I were finally blessed with a healthy child. I'm here to thank Hashem for this miracle.’ The man who heard this was very touched. ‘You inspired me,’ he said. ‘If you ever need anything in life, come to me, and I'll help you.’ He then told my father his name—Yosef Weiss.

“Before I left Israel to come here, my father said to me, ‘I know Yosef Weiss once said he's going to help me. He's somewhere in America—I have no idea where—but if you need someone to help you, go to him.’ I thought to myself, ‘How in the world am I going to find Yosef Weiss?’ I came to Brooklyn, and I was directed to come here, to the Catskills. And lo and behold, who do I end up in front of? Yosef Weiss.’

That trip, Yosef Weiss went on to help the young man from Israel very generously.

This is what it looks like for Hashem to control our footsteps and putting us in the places we need to be.



CELEBRATING 18 YEARS
OF SPREADING THE MOST
TORAH IN HISTORY

SAVE THE DATE
MAY 27, 2024

GET INVOLVED!

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 26 Nissan)

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

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 26 Nissan)

Idan ben Yael (Alexander)	Yoram ben Bella (Metzger)	Francis (Damari)	Avinatan ben Ditza Tirtza (Ohr)
Idan ben Dalit (Shtivi)	Yitzchak ben Aneta Chana (Algret)	Andrei ben Yevgenia (Kozalov)	Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Amiram ben Sarah (Cooper)	Yitzchak ben Gila (Gelerenter)	Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)	Avraham Gilad ben Emunah (Mondar)
Amit Esther Chaya bat Ilana Alin (Buskila)	Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)	Ariel ben Sylvia Monika (Konyo)	Agam bat Meirav (Berger)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)	Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)	Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)	Ohad ben Esther (Ben- Ami)
Tzachi ben Devorah (Idan)	Carmel bat Kineret (Gat)	Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)	Ohad ben Gad Moshe ben Sarah (Mozes)
Kieth Shmuel ben Gladis	Lior ben Michal (Rudaeff)	Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)	Ohr ben Geula (Levi)
Chava (Segal)	Liri bat Shira (Elbag)	Gali ben Talya (Berman)	Ori ben Einav Efrat (Danino)
Karina bat Irena (Ariav)	Mishel ben Solamira (Nissenbaum)	David ben Sylvia Monika (Konyo)	Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Brasalevsky)	Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)	Dolev ben Yael (Yehud)	Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Romi bat Meirav (Gonen)	Matan ben Anat (Angrest)	Doron bat Simona Sarah (Steinbrecher)	Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Ron ben Chana (Binyamin)	Matan ben Yardena (Tzangauker)	Daniella bat Orli (Gilboa)	Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)	Nadav ben Chana (Popplewell)	Hirsch ben Perel Chana (Goldberg-Polin)	Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)
Sagi ben Naamit (Chen- Dekel)	Noa bat Liora (Argamani)	Chaim ben Nechama (Perry)	Elyakim Shlomo ben Avishag (Liebman)
Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)	Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)	Chen Chanan ben Vered (Yablonka)	Alexander ben Oksana (Lubanov)
Shlomi ben Rosita Ira (Ziv)	Naama bat Ayelet (Levi)	Ziv ben Talya (Berman)	Alexander Sasha ben Yelena Leah (Tropanov)
Shlomo ben Marcelle (Mansour)	Eden bat Shirit (Yerushalmi)	Chaim ben Nechama (Perry)	Alexander ben Nina (Dantzig)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)	Oded ben Bilhah (Lifschitz)	Chen Chanan ben Vered (Yablonka)	Almog ben Orit (Meir-Jan)
	Omer ben Niva (Venkrat)	Tal ben Nitza (Shoham- Corngold)	Almog ben Nira (Sarusi)
	Omer ben Shelly (Shemtov)	Yair ben Ruth Idit (Horen)	Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
	Omer Maxim ben Orna Esther (Neutra)	Yagev ben Esther (Buchashtev)	Emily Tehilla bat Amanda
	Ofer ben Cochava (Kalderon)	Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)	