

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Reflections on Recovery

Allow me to share with you a remarkable story about the Sfas Emes. Many of you are familiar with the illustrious lineage of the Ger dynasty: the first Ger Rebbe was the Chiddushei HaRim, the second was the Sfas Emes, and the third was the Imrei Emes.

The story goes as follows. Chassidim of the Imrei Emes once approached him with a question. "Your father, the Sfas Emes, once told us that if we have proper kavanah (intent) when reciting Ana Hashem in Hallel, our prayers would be answered. Yet, on many occasions, we have fervently said Ana Hashem Hoshiah Na, but our prayers have not been fulfilled. What did your father truly mean?"

The Imrei Emes explained that the Chassidim were mistaken in their understanding. "The Sfas Emes was not referring to Ana Hashem Hoshiah Na. Everyone has kavanah when saying that—after all, who doesn't want to be helped? That's not where the emphasis lies."

The Imrei Emes clarified: "The true Ana Hashem that requires kavanah is in the verse Ana Hashem Ki Ani Avdecha—'Please, Hashem, because I am Your servant.' When a person sincerely declares their identity as a servant of Hashem, with genuine humility and devotion, that is when their prayers ascend and are answered."

This explanation profoundly moved me, and I'll share why.

If you delve into Tehillim, you will notice that Dovid HaMelech says not just Ana Hashem Ki Ani Avdecha, but continues with additional words: Ben Amasecha—"I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant." Why does he add this detail? He is expressing gratitude for the spiritual foundation instilled by his mother, acknowledging that his service to Hashem is deeply rooted in her influence.

I believe this message carries great relevance to us. When prayers are answered, it is not only because of the petitioner's merit, but also because of their connection to those who came before them. It is the Ben Amasecha, the influence of a devoted and righteous parent, that bolsters the efficacy of tefillah.

I feel this lesson personally. My mother a"h came from the Ackerman family in Philadelphia, and her sincerity, her unwavering commitment to mitzvos, and her profound yiras shamayim were truly extraordinary. Despite the challenges of living in a city that lacked a Bais Yaakov or vibrant yeshiva environment, she remained steadfast in her emunah.

As a testament to her influence, I recall R' Dovid Trenk zt"l, who took my mother's book "The Way it Was" and used it as a mussar text for his students. He emphasized that even in an environment devoid of frumkeit, a family could remain anchored in Torah and tradition, ensuring that the mesorah was never compromised.

This, to me, is the essence of Ani

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Avdecha Ben Amasecha. It is a recognition that our spiritual achievements are intertwined with the merit and legacy of those who came before us. When prayers are answered, it is not solely due to our own merits, but because of the Ben Amasecha—the foundation laid by our righteous ancestors. And for me, for the past many weeks, I have been shown tremendous kindness from the Ribono Shel Olam in my recovery not because of the first part of my name—Paysach Yosef—but because of the last part—ben Hinda.

Let me share with you a remarkable story about my mother—a story I only learned much later in life. For many years, my mother enjoyed relatively good health, but she passed away on the second day of Sukkos. My nephew, Hudi Gutman, who lives in Lakewood, was with her at Kimball Hospital on that day.

That day, my mother was unresponsive, and it was clear that her time was nearing. Yet, Hudi, ever thoughtful, asked her, “Bubby, would you like to recite the blessing on the lulav and esrog?” She didn’t respond, so he gently placed the lulav and esrog in her hand, and shook the lulav in all six directions. When he tried to take the lulav and esrog back, something unexpected happened—she held onto them and wouldn’t let go.

Hudi was surprised. Until then, she hadn’t shown any signs of awareness, but now she seemed resolute. Understanding how much it mattered to her, he let her keep them. What followed was deeply moving: she slowly brought the lulav and esrog to her lips, kissed them with love, and then handed them back.

Hudi couldn’t understand why she insisted on kissing the lulav and esrog, but I later realized it was something she had taught me as a child. I always kissed the lulav and esrog

after the blessing—something she must have instilled in me. And now I see how much that act reflected her own profound love for mitzvos.

This beautiful practice is not just a family custom. It’s rooted in tradition. Let me read to you from the Be’er Heitev, (Orach Chaim 477:1), where he references the Shlah HaKadosh. He writes:

“I saw individuals of great spiritual greatness who would kiss the matzos and maror during the Seder. They would kiss the walls of the Sukkah when entering and leaving. And so, too, with the Arba Minim (the four species), kissing them as an expression of love for the mitzvos. Fortunate are those who serve Hashem with joy!”

When I was ill and had to undergo physical therapy, I found myself integrating Torah into every aspect of my healing. If I had to repeat an exercise seven times, I would recite verses with seven words, such as, “Hodu la’Hashem ki tov ki l’olam chasdo—Give thanks to Hashem for He is good; for His kindness lasts forever.” When my hand struggled to move, I would say, “Po’seach es yadecha u’masbia le’chol chai ratzon—You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Something which I had already been doing for years is saying the Pasuk from Tehillim (121:5): Hashem shomrecha Hashem tzilcha al yad yeminecha—“Hashem is your guardian; Hashem is your shadow at your right hand.” This practice became a nightly routine of mine. I kiss the mezuzah every night while saying those seven words. Now my children and grandchildren do the same.

Everyone knows that the blessing “Hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz” consists of exactly ten words: Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz. While I was davening one day, though, I came

across another set of words that struck me deeply: “Ki Keil ko’el poel yeshuos Atah u’vanu v’charta mikol am v’lashon. These words mean so much: “For G-d is the one Who performs salvations; He has chosen us and sustained us from among all nations.” If I needed to do an exercise ten times, I would recite those words, taking to heart their meaning.

Let me share something I hope you’ll carry with you for the rest of your lives. When a person is ill or enduring hardships, they often feel an extraordinary closeness to Hashem, constantly turning to Him in tefillah. The Maharal offers a profound insight about this. He explains the origin of the word tefillah, tracing it to the poignant story of Yaakov Avinu.

For twenty-two long years, Yaakov did not see Yosef. When they were finally reunited, Yaakov exclaimed, “Ra’o panecha lo pilalti—I never even imagined I would see your face again.” The word pilalti, as Rashi explains, means, “To think the thought.” The root of the word tefillah (pilalti) carries this sense of thinking about the words you are saying.

This is what tefillah truly is: a conversation with Hashem. It’s not a mechanical recitation of words, but a thoughtful, intentional exchange, where each word is chosen with care and imbued with meaning.

To truly connect in prayer, you must understand what you are saying. Whether through an interlinear siddur or another method, take the time to learn the meaning of the words. Every word of tefillah is infused with layers of meaning, and understanding these layers deepens your connection with Hashem.

Each of us should have our own

Siddur and personalize it by underlining words or phrases that resonate deeply. Your Siddur becomes your companion, your guide, and your confidant. Mine is filled with underlined sections and notes, reflecting insight I've learned from others. Let me share an incredible story to illustrate this point.

Years ago, I was at a restaurant in Eretz Yisrael, and a man I'd never met before approached me. He introduced himself as someone who worked in the food service industry and said, "Because of you, I've developed a whole new approach to davening."

I was surprised. "Because of me?"

He explained, "I remember you teaching us about Matnat Basar Va'dam—the gifts of flesh and blood—and how we should recognize Hashem's kindness in providing sustenance. You taught us to think about, 'Hu Nosen Lechem Lechol Basar Ki Le'olam Chasdo—how Hashem provides bread to all living creatures. It made me see food in a whole new light. What type of bread do you use if you want to eat a hot dog? A bun. What about cheese? A bagel. A falafel? A pita. Hu Nosen Lechem Lechol Basar—Hashem has created the right kind of bread for every type of meal. Whether it's a hot dog on a bun, cheese on a bagel, falafel in a pita, or any other dish, every meal reflects Hashem's incredible kindness. I now underline that phrase in my Siddur as a reminder."

This is the power of making the Siddur your own—it becomes a source of inspiration tailored to your own your life, your own spiritual journey.

Now, let me share a transforma-

tive experience tied to 9/11, a day that forever changed the world. When the Twin Towers fell, and 3,000 lives were tragically lost, I received a call from Mrs. Reifer, the principal of Shevach High School. She asked me to address the students the following day to help them process the tragedy.

I told her, "Rebbetzin, I appreciate the request, but I need time to prepare. I need to consult Rabbanim and study the sources before I can speak meaningfully." After thoughtful preparation, I arrived at the school the next morning. Before I spoke, Mrs. Reifer introduced me with a message.

She told the students, "Every morning we recite, Al Tira Mi'pachad Pitom U'misho'as Resha'im Ki Savo—'Do not fear sudden terror or the destruction of the wicked when it comes.' Girls, no matter what happens in life, always remember that Hashem is with you. Do not be afraid."

Her words moved me, and I immediately underlined that verse in my Siddur. Years later, when she tragically passed away in a car accident, I was asked to speak at her Shloshim. At that gathering, I shared something I hope you'll never forget.

If you open your Siddur to the third paragraph of Alenu, you'll find the words Al Tira. Look closely at the last verse, where Yeshaya Ha-Navi quotes Hashem who says Ani five times: "V'ad Zikna Ani Hu, V'ad Seiva Ani Esbol, Ani Asiti V'Ani Esa V'Ani Esbol V'amalet—Until your old age, I will be; until your elderly years, I will carry you; I have made you and I will bear you; I will carry you and save you" (Yeshaya 46:4).

What is Hashem telling us here?

Eventually we will reach old age, but Hashem assures us that He will be there. He will always be there, from youth to old age, through every stage of our life. The repetition of Ani—"I"—is Hashem's way of saying, "I am here for you. I will carry you, sustain you, and save you."

At the Shloshim, I emphasized this message: life isn't about I—what I want, need, or crave. We are to reflect to ourselves, "What am I? What is my 'self' to be focused on? Not my own needs, but on others. "I" is about what I can do for others. Hashem's Ani teaches us to focus outward—to help, to care, and to sustain.

In my Siddur, I've underlined those five Ani's in Alenu for every Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv. They remind me every day that we are here not for ourselves, but to contribute to others.

Always remember, the true secret to life is to focus on others. When you think of others, Hashem will think of you. And that is what this time recovering has allowed me to do—to focus on Hashem's unbelievable kindness to me, the kindness of others to me, and what I can do to internalize my appreciation and extend it back to them. May we all always carry within us the ha'karas hatov we have for Hashem and our fellow Jews, and express that gratitude through our thoughts, speech and action.



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Rabbi Aryeh Kerzner

Something Special

When my wife and I were married and had our first child, we were quickly faced with a daunting challenge. A few months after our daughter was born, she suddenly began refusing to eat, struggling to sleep, and vomiting every single night. We were at a loss, and despite our efforts to find a solution, nothing seemed to help. We consulted with numerous doctors and specialists, but none of them were able to offer any answers. After months of uncertainty, when our daughter was 11 months old, we made the decision to travel to Bnei Brak to seek a blessing from the Gadol Hador, Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt"l.

It was the height of summer—one of the hottest days of August—when we made our way to Bnei Brak. I presented our issue to Reb Chaim, asking for a bracha for my daughter's complete recovery. Reb Chaim, with his characteristic sparkle and gentle smile, looked at me thoughtfully and said, "You know,

your daughter is not dressed in a tznius'dik manner."

I was taken aback. "Does the Rav know that she is only 11 months old?" Reb Chaim nodded and acknowledged that he did indeed know her age. I asked again, "Is it required to dress an 11-month-old baby girl in a tznius'dik way?" To which Rav Chaim replied, "No, it is not halachically required. In fact, for future children, it is not something you need to be concerned with. But I would like to share with you a powerful mesorah, a tradition that I hold dear. When facing a challenge, when we are in need of salvation, there is a very effective way to secure that salvation. If we commit to taking on something special in the realm of sanctity and purity, if we make an effort to elevate the level of kedusha in our home and in our family, Hashem responds in kind and grants us unbelievable salvations."

Reb Chaim then made a promise: "If you commit to this level of tznius and kedusha for your daughter, I

guarantee you will receive tremendous bracha and success, and your daughter will experience a full recovery."

In a state of shock, I left Reb Chaim's presence, and my wife and I decided, together, to follow the guidance of the Gadol Hador.

Within just one week, our daughter was completely fine.

This experience taught us an invaluable lesson about earning salvation. When faced with difficulties and challenges, and when we are in desperate need of a yeshuah, we can find a powerful segulah by taking on something, no matter how big or small, that enhances the kedusha in our lives. Whether it's a personal commitment to an increased level of sanctity or purity within our home, this act becomes a profound way for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to reciprocate and offer His blessing. When we do something special for Hashem, He in turn does something special for us.

Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov

Green Light, Red Light

Let me share with you a story about R' Elyashiv zt"l. One day, he entered a taxi, and the driver, noticing the rabbi's beard, immediately turned to him with a question. "Rabbi," he said, "I've been wondering, why is religion so restrictive? You can't do this, you can't do that—you can't do anything! What's the point of all these restrictions? I just don't understand this whole religious thing."

R' Elyashiv, sensing the driver's confusion, decided not to answer immediately. He waited patient-

ly, and as they drove along, he said nothing. Then, as the cab came to a stop at a red light, Rabbi Elyashiv saw an opportunity and turned to the driver. "Let me ask you something," he began. "How do we know when we will reach our destination?"

The driver responded, "It will take some time, of course. We have to stop at a few more red lights along the way."

Rabbi Elyashiv then asked, "Why do we have to stop at these red lights? Who decided we need them? If there were no red lights, wouldn't we get to our destination faster?"

The driver, now perplexed, replied,

"Rabbi, you know very well that red lights are essential! Without them, there would be accidents. We need them to ensure everyone knows when to go and when to stop. They are there for our safety."

Rabbi Elyashiv smiled. "May your ears hear the words coming out of your mouth." He continued, "Just as we need red lights to protect us on the road, so too do we need restrictions in the Torah. These limitations are not to hinder us, but to protect us. Without boundaries, if everyone did as they pleased, there would be chaos and harm. The red lights keep us safe; the Torah's restrictions safeguard our well-being. That is why the Torah gives us these restrictions. It is to protect us."

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 23 Tevet)

שמות חיילים פצועים לרפואה שלמה

אביתר מנחם חיים בן זהבה
אברהם מרדכי בן יעל
אהרן בן שרה הנדל
אופק בו אלינור
אורי אברהם בן הדסה
אייל אליעזר בן חנה
איתן אשר בן דבורה
אלון בן מרים
אלחנן יאיר בן דבורה
אליה בן רות
אלישע יהודה בן רות
אלעד בן שרית
אמיר בן אלה
בנימין בן ריינה
בנימין יצחק בן שרה
בר חיים בן נורית
גלעד איתי בן אפרת
דוד בן זיוה
הראל בן חנה
חיים מרדכי בן שרה איטה
טל גרשון בן שרה
יאיר יונה בן דרורה צפורה מלכה
יהודה אהרון בן מרים אסתר
יהונתן יאשיהו בן כרמית
יהונתן יוסף בן שירה
יואל בן אילה
יוחאי יהודה בן סיגל חוה
ירין אליהו בן סיגל
ישראל בן ענבל אסתר
כפיר חיים בן מירה מרים
מיכאל בן פריידל
מישל בת אנג'ליקה
מנחם דוד חי בן מרים
משה אהרן בן לאה בילא
משה צבי בן עירית
מתן בן דבורה
נועם אברהם בן עטרה שלומית
ניר בן אורנה
עדי מנחם בן מורן מירה
עודד אפרים בן ויויאן
עוז חי בן סמדר
עידו בן ענבל
עידן בן טובה
עמיחי בן סיגלית רחל
עמית יהונתן בן מאיה
רואי בן עופרה
רון בן אבישג
רון בן שרון
רועי חיים בן מירב
תום שאול בן דניאל
תומר בן צפורה

אבינתן בן דיצה תרצה (אור)
אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
אוהד בן אסתר (בן עמי)
אוהד בן קרן (יהלומי)
אור בן גאולה (לוי)
איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
אלון בן עידית (אהל)
אליה בן סיגלית (כהן)
אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
אלכסנדר סשה בן ילנה לאה (טרופנוב)
אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)
אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)
בר אברהם בן גיוליה (קופרשטיין)
גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)
גיא בן מירב (גלבע דלאל)
גלי בן טליה (ברמן)
דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבע)
זיו בן טליה (ברמן)
טל בן ניצה (שוהם קורנגולד)
יאיר בן רות אידית (הורן)
יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)
יצחק בן אנטה חנה (אלגרט)
יצחק בן דבורה (עידן)
ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)
כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)
לירי רבקה בת שירה (אלבג)
מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)
מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)
מתן בן ירדנה עינב (צנגאוקר)
נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)
נעמה בת איילת (לוי)
עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)
עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)
עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)
עופר בן כוכבה (קלדרון)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
קית' שמואל בן גלדיס חוה (סיגל)
קרינה בת אירנה (ארייב)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
שגיא בן נעמית (חן דקל)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)
שלמה בן מרסל (מנצור)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 23 Tevet)

INJURED SOLDIERS

Evyatar Menachem Chaim ben Zehava
Avraham Mordechai ben Yael
Aharon ben Sarah Hendel
Ofek ben Elinor
Ori Avraham ben Hadassah
Eyal Eliezer ben Chana
Eitan Asher ben Devora
Alon ben Miriam
Elchanan Yair ben Devorah
Eliya ben Ravit
Elisha Yehudah ben Rut
Elad ben Sarit
Amir ben Ella
Binyamin ben Reina
Binyamin Yitzchak ben Sarah
Bar Chaim ben Nurit
Gilad Itai ben Efrat
David ben Ziva
Harel ben Chana
Chaim Mordechai ben Sarah Itta
Tal Gershon ben Sarah
Yair Yonah ben Drora Tzipporah Malka
Yehuda Aharon ben Miriam Esther
Yehonatan Yoshiyahu ben Carmit
Yehonatan Yosef ben Shira
Yoel ben Ayala
Yochai Yehudah ben Sigal Chava
Yarin Eliyahu ben Sigal
Yisrael ben Inbal Esther
Kfir Chaim ben Mira Miriam
Michael ben Freidel
Michelle bat Angelika
Menachem David Chai ben Miriam
Moshe Aharon ben Leah Beila
Moshe Tzi ben Irit
Matan ben Devorah
Nir ben Orna
Noam Avraham ben Atara Shlomit
Adi Menachem ben Moran Mira
Oded Efraim ben Vivian
Oz Chai ben Smadar
Ido ben Inbal
Idan ben Tova
Amichai ben Sigalit Rachel
Amit Yehonatan ben Maya
Roi ben Ofra
Ron ben Avishag
Ron ben Sharon
Roi Chaim ben Meirav
Tom Shaul ben Danielle
Tomer ben Tzipporah

Avinatan ben Ditzza Tirtza (Ohr)
Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Agam bat Meirav (Berger)
Ohad ben Esther (Ben-Ami)
Ohad ben Keren (Yahalomi)
Ohr ben Geula (Levi)
Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)
Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)
Alexander Sasha ben Yelena Leah
(Tropanov)
Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)
Ariel ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)
Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)
Gad Moshe ben Sarah (Mozes)
Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)
Gali ben Talya (Berman)
David ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Daniella bat Orli (Gilboa)
Ziv ben Talya (Berman)
Tal ben Nitza (Shoham-Corngold)
Yair ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)
Yitzchak ben Aneta Chana (Elgarat)
Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)
Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)
Liri Rivka bat Shira (Elbag)
Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)
Matan ben Anat (Angrest)
Matan ben Yardena Einav (Tzangauker)
Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)
Naama bat Ayelet (Levi)
Oded ben Bilhah (Lifschitz)
Omer ben Niva (Venkrat)
Omer ben Shelley (Shemtov)
Ofer ben Cochava (Kalderon)
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Yitzchak ben Devorah (Idan)
Keith Shmuel ben Gladis Chava (Segal)
Karina bat Irena (Ariav)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Brasalevsky)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Sagi ben Naamit (Chen-Dekel)
Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)
Shlomo ben Marcelle (Mansour)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)