

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum

The Leaf of Resurrection

The Midrash Tanchuma (Parshas Chukas) relates a remarkable story.

A Jew was once traveling from Jerusalem to Babylonia, a journey that spanned a great distance. Along the way, he stopped to rest. But as he sat down, he noticed two birds engaged in a fierce struggle. At times, one bird would gain the upper hand, and then the other would take control. Eventually, one bird killed the other.

Curious, the traveler continued watching. To his astonishment, the surviving bird flew to a nearby bush, plucked a leaf, and gently laid it on the body of the dead bird. Immediately, the lifeless bird was revived. It was a display of techiyas ha'meisim, the resurrection of the dead, before his very eyes.

Astonished, the man realized that he had merited witnessing what seemed to be the key to resurrection. Eager to test this miraculous phenomenon, he walked over to the same bush, plucked a similar leaf, and began searching for a dead body on which to try it. Further down the road, he came upon a dead lion. He approached, touched the lion's nose with the leaf, and incredibly, the lion was revived.

But the story does not end there.

The newly resurrected lion immediately pounced on the man and killed him.

It's a breathtaking story. But what is its purpose? Why does the

Midrash share this tale with us? What deeper lesson are we meant to take from it?

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l explains that Chazal are conveying a profound message. This man had in his possession an extraordinary gift: the key to resurrection. With just a bit of wisdom, he could have used it for an unimaginably elevated purpose.

Imagine. He could have returned to Yerushalayim and gone to the Me'aras Ha'Machpelah, perhaps even attempting to awaken the Avos. Or he could have continued on to Bavel, where the grave of the prophet Yechezkel is, and sought to resurrect him. After all, he held the very key to techiyas ha'meisim.

But tragically, he failed to recognize the value of the gift he had been given. He misunderstood its purpose, misapplied its power, and in the end, it cost him his life. He used it not to elevate, but to revive a lion.

Each and every one of us is faced with the same choice, said Rav Elyashiv.

Every Jew is endowed by Hashem with extraordinary gifts and abilities. But equally so, we can fail to recognize them. We can overlook the vast spiritual potential within us. When life presents challenges and tests, we can doubt our own strength and capability. But Hashem has planted within every soul remarkable power.

We must awaken to that truth.

As Reb Aharon of Karlin once said, "The greatest tragedy is when a

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Esther bat
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prince believes he is a peasant.”

We are not commoners. We are

children of the King; we are royalty.

And with Divine assistance, we can

rise above every challenge.

Rabbi Uren Reich

Heavenly Navigation

The Gemara (Makkos 10b) offers a striking insight into the compassion and guidance of Hashem. It discusses the case of a rotzei'ach b'shogege—an accidental killer—who must flee to an Ir Miklat, a City of Refuge. The Torah commands, “You shall prepare the road” (Devarim 19:3).

The Gemara explains that clear signs must be posted at every intersection so the individual can find his way without confusion. From this, the Gemara derives a profound message, connecting it to the verse, “Hashem is good and upright; therefore, He guides sinners along the path” (Tehillim 25:8). Even someone who killed another, Hashem still helps him.

But the Gemara says even more.

If Hashem provides direction to sinners, how much more so does He guide the righteous. We all receive signs, signals, and spiritual

nudges throughout our lives; messages that help us stay or return to the proper path. Sometimes that signal might come in the form of a message, a comment from a friend, or even a moment of reflection. But the lesson is the same: “This is the way; follow it.”

The Chofetz Chaim was known for drawing spiritual lessons from the technology of his time, such as the telegraph and the telephone. In our era, we too can extract profound meaning from our tools, perhaps none more relatable than the GPS navigation system of Waze.

Waze tells you where to go, offers optimal routes, and gently recalculates when you take a wrong turn. And here's the remarkable part: even when you completely ignore its instructions, it doesn't get angry. It doesn't shut off. It simply recalibrates. Again and again. It adjusts its plan based on your new location

and circumstances, and it provides you with a new, updated route.

The patience is infinite. The guidance is constant. It never gives up. This, in essence, is the message of the Pasuk: Hashem, in His goodness and fairness, continues to guide even those who have strayed far.

There are moments when a person might feel: “Surely Hashem has given up on me. I've ignored too many opportunities. I've disregarded too many signs.” But the Torah tells us otherwise. Just like Waze doesn't stop rerouting, Hashem doesn't stop offering us direction, encouragement and renewal.

And if we choose to say, with sincerity, “What was, was. From now on, I'm turning back toward the right path,” then, with Hashem's help, we will one day hear that silent but powerful Bas Kol in our hearts: “You have reached your destination.”

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Everything from Hashem

On September 6, 1970, Trans World Airlines Flight 741, en route from Tel Aviv to New York City, was hijacked by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The terrorists forced the plane to land in Jordan. While the majority of the 310 passengers were eventually transferred to Amman and released on September 11, 56 Jewish passengers were separated and held hostage.

It was not until more than three

weeks later, on September 30, that the Jewish hostages were finally freed.

Among them was Rebbetzin Harari-Raful, who, throughout the ordeal, remained notably calm and became a source of inspiration and strength for the others. At one point, someone asked her how she had managed to stay so composed during those three harrowing weeks, facing the constant threat of death, with a gun pointed at her.

“Whenever I felt panic beginning

to rise in my throat,” she replied, “I would ask one of the terrorists for a glass of water. And when he handed it to me, I would take the cup and recite the blessing with all the energy and focus I could muster: “Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam, Shehakol Nihyah Bidvaro—Blessed are You, Hashem, King of the universe, by Whose word everything comes into being.”

When I reached the word hakol—‘everything’—I concentrated with all my heart. Everything—even this terrifying moment—is coming from G-d. Shehakol nihyah bidvaro—it all exists by His word.”

That truth gave me the strength to carry on.

Look around you. Everything is the word of G-d. There is nothing else. Every challenge you face—every difficulty, every moment of fear or confusion—has been sent directly by G-d. We, the Jewish people, do not believe in dualism. We do not believe in competing powers. We do not believe that the evil inclination is some autonomous force. Nothing oper-

ates independently. Nothing exists outside of His will. If it's in front of you, it's because G-d placed it there.

The Mesillas Yescharim teaches that one of the very few reasons for our existence in this world is to endure and overcome tests. Life's challenges—whether in the heart of Manhattan, in your neighborhood kosher supermarket, or behind your desk—are all bidvaro, by His word.

Today, our tests may not always come about in dangerous places.

Sometimes the most significant test is right here, in the quiet routines of our daily lives. But when we internalize that each and every test is sent from G-d Himself, in His infinite love, to draw us closer to Him, how much easier it becomes to respond with strength. And even more than that, how much more meaningful.

Shehakol niyah bidvaro. Everything comes into being by His word.

Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel

Respected by the President

The New York Times features a column called The Ethicist, in which a supposed expert in moral reasoning weighs in on contemporary ethical dilemmas. One particular column, dating back to 2002, stands out for its insight into the cultural tensions between modern secular values and religious conviction.

At the time, The Ethicist was authored by Randy Cohen. A letter was submitted by a woman who had recently completed a real estate transaction. She described being represented by an Orthodox Jewish broker and someone she praised as exceptionally competent, gracious, and helpful throughout the process. As a gesture of appreciation, she extended her hand to thank him. However, he respectfully declined the handshake, explaining, "Please forgive me. Due to my religious beliefs, I do not make physical contact with any woman other than my wife."

The woman admitted in her

letter that she felt insulted by the gesture. "I believe in non-discrimination," she wrote. "And his refusal to shake my hand felt deeply offensive. I'm even considering tearing up the contract." She concluded her question to The Ethicist by asking for his view.

Randy Cohen responded unequivocally: "You're absolutely right. You should tear up the contract."

Now fast forward three weeks. I was invited to the annual White House Chanukah celebration hosted by President George W. Bush. As is customary, guests were given the opportunity to pose for photos with the President and First Lady. While waiting in line, a member of the White House staff approached those of us who were visibly Orthodox; those wearing yarmulkes or otherwise appearing observant. He said, "The President and First Lady are very mindful and respectful of your religious principles. If you are a man who does not extend his hand to the First Lady, she will not offer

her hand to you. Likewise, if you are a woman who does not wish to shake the President's hand, he will not offer his."

I stood there, struck by the contrast. The Ethicist in the New York Times says, "Tear up the contract." But the President of the United States says, "We respect your beliefs."

And that is the point. Yes, we stand for something different. If the world is uncomfortable with that and chooses to walk away—tear up the contract, if you must. That is their decision. But know this: the highest office in the land—the presidency of the United States—acknowledges and honors our values.

The refusal to conform is not a sign of intolerance or backwardness; it is a quiet but powerful declaration of spiritual dignity. It earns the respect of those who truly understand integrity. As the Torah says, "Rak am chacham v'navon hagoy hagadol hazeh—Surely this is a wise and understanding people, a great nation" (Devarim 4:6).

We are not swayed by passing trends or popular opinion. We live by a higher code, and those with wisdom will recognize that—and respect it.



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Rabbi Aryeh Kerzner

Do What You Can

The Belzer Rebbe once fell seriously ill, and following his recovery, his doctor issued a strict medical directive: he was to take extreme precautions to avoid exposure to germs. He was told to avoid places with high risk of contamination in order to prevent any recurrence of illness.

Included in this directive was a particularly painful restriction. He was forbidden from using the mikveh, the ritual bath. For the Rebbe, this was more than a mere inconvenience. Immersing in the mikveh was a source of profound spiritual elevation, a moment infused with holiness and purity. To be cut off from it was a heavy spiritual burden.

A few weeks later, a close confidant of the Rebbe was walking to shul one morning when, to his astonishment, he saw the Rebbe entering the mikveh building. Troubled and knowing full well the doctor's orders, he refrained from making assumptions and

instead resolved to quietly observe what was truly happening.

The next morning, he arrived at the mikveh early, around the time the Rebbe would usually be on his way to shul. He watched closely.

Sure enough, the Rebbe entered. He walked over to the shelves, removed his coat and clothes, approached the mikveh pool, stepped down to the edge, paused, and then turned around. He dressed again and walked out, never having immersed in the water.

Perplexed, the man was left to wonder: Why go through all that? Why come to the mikveh, undress, step toward the water—only to walk away?

And then the message became clear. The Rebbe was embodying a lesson about how we ought to approach life as a Jew.

Too often, we fall into the trap of all-or-nothing thinking. Whether in the workplace, at home, or walking down the street, we may think: If I can't completely overcome this challenge... what's the point of even

trying? Either I win completely or I've failed entirely.

But the Rebbe was modeling a different path: do what you can, and entrust the rest to G-d.

If entering the mikveh was no longer possible due to health concerns, so be it. But that wouldn't stop the Rebbe from doing everything within his power to pursue *ruchniyus*, spiritual elevation. Every day, he would go to the mikveh, prepare himself, approach the water, and stop just short of immersing. In doing so, he demonstrated his unwavering yearning for *kedushah*. The final outcome was in Hashem's hands.

And so it is with us. In life, we are called not to perfection, but to sincere effort. If you do something for one hour a week, or one hour a day, that is an achievement. Our task is not to win every battle, but to show up to the fight and do what we can.

Sometimes, you cannot enter the water, but you can get as close as possible to it. That act alone proclaims to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, "I want to be holy. I am trying. And I know You will help me with the rest."

After all these generations, the message is: Why have we not yet learned to follow the example of the flock? Why have we not embraced unity? As the saying goes: United we stand, divided we fall.

The Torah echoes this sentiment: "You are all standing today before Hashem, your G-d..." (Devarim 29:9). The word "standing"—*nitza-vim*—connotes strength and stability. But that only happens when we stand together.

Let us return to the shepherds' path. Let us walk together, as one flock. And may that unity bring us closer to the redemption we so long for.

Rabbi Uri Lati

Visit the Sheep

There is a verse in Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs): "If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, go out in the footsteps of the flock, and tend your young goats near the shepherds' dwellings" (Shir HaShirim 1:8).

This verse speaks to the Jewish people, and it carries profound meaning, especially during our long exile. One of the most pressing and painful questions that Am Yisrael asks in the diaspora is: Why hasn't Mashiah come?

And Shlomo HaMelech—King Solomon—offers a timeless response in Shir HaShirim: "If you do not know, O most beautiful among women..." The Jewish people are referred to here as the most beautiful of all nations—"the fairest among women." But if we don't understand why redemption is delayed, the verse gently urges: "Go out in the footsteps of the flock."

Look at the sheep. Observe how they move—together. They walk in unison, bound by instinct and connection.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 10 Iyar)

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
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
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
ניר בן אורנה
עדי מנחם בן מורן מירה
עודד אפרים בן ויויאן
עוז חי בן סמדר
עידו בן ענבל
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)
איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
אלון בן עידית (אהל)
אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)
גיא בן מירב (גלבע דלאל)
גלי בן טליה (ברמן)
דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
זיו בן טליה (ברמן)
יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)
מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)
מתן שחר בן ענת (אנגרסט)
מתן בן ירדנה עינב (צנגאוקר)
נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 10 Iyar)

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
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
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)
Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
Ariel ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)
Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)
Gali ben Talya (Berman)
David ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Ziv ben Talya (Berman)
Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)
Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)
Matan Shachar ben Anat (Angrest)
Matan ben Yardenia Einav (Tzangauker)
Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslevsky)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)