

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Destiny of Humanity

My brother, Rabbi Simon Jacobson, recently shared with me a striking email he received.

It was from a man identifying himself as a musician living in upstate New York. He primarily performs secular rock music, and on Thursday, June 12, 2025, he was scheduled to play a concert at a bar in Poughkeepsie.

That same night, in the early hours of Friday morning Israel time—around 3:00 AM—news broke that Israel had launched a surprise military operation targeting Iran's nuclear facilities. While this unfolded halfway across the world, it was still early evening in New York.

The musician recalls: "As I stood performing on stage, the news began circulating. Israel had struck Iran. I looked around the room—no one appeared to be Jewish—but something stirred in me. I couldn't remain silent. I paused the music and spoke from the heart. I told the audience what had just happened and asked everyone, regardless of background, to pray in their own way for peace. I then asked them to commit to one act of kindness to help heal a fractured world."

The next night—Friday night—he had a vivid and unusual dream. In it appeared Rabbi Leibel Groner, the longtime personal secretary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory. In the dream, Rabbi Groner spoke directly to him:

"The Rebbe asked me to come to you and thank you—for what you did on the night the war began. Your announcement in that bar stirred the soul of a Jewish woman. She decided, that very Friday evening, to light Shabbat candles for the first time since her Bat Mitzvah, over 50 years ago. Her mitzvah helped fortify the success of the Israeli Air Force. It brought protection to the people of Israel, and drew more divine blessing into the world. The Rebbe sends his gratitude."

The musician woke up stunned. "It was a pleasant dream," he wrote to my brother, "but I dismissed it as just that—a dream."

Until Sunday.

On Sunday, he received an email from a woman he did not know. She had found his contact information through social media. Her message was simple, but profound:

"I was at the bar in Poughkeepsie when you performed. I was deeply moved by your words. I hadn't lit Shabbat candles in 50 years, not since my Bat Mitzvah. But that Friday evening, I did. Because of you."

We often view the world through a purely external lens, unaware of the invisible threads binding us all together. But as Jews, we know otherwise.

The Midrash describes the world as a *guf gadol*—a single, unified body. Every soul, every action, is a limb in this vast spiritual organism. What one person does—however small it

TheTorahAnyTimes is a publication of



Compiled and Edited by Elan Perchik

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may seem—ripples across the entire system. A woman lighting Shabbat candles in Poughkeepsie can uplift and protect soldiers thousands of miles away. A man wrapping tefillin, a person

holding back from a destructive impulse, each of these can tilt the scales of existence.

We do not always see the results. But they are real. When we recognize that each mitzvah reverberates

across the *guf gadol* of humanity, we begin to understand the extraordinary power we hold: to influence not just our lives, but the destiny of humanity.

Rabbi Shlomo Horwitz

Stubborn as a Mule

Something perplexing happens in this week's Parshah. Bilam is on his way, at Balak's request, to try and curse the Jewish people. He is riding his donkey, accompanied by two attendants and the noblemen of Moav.

Suddenly, his "vehicle" breaks down—three separate times. First, the donkey veers off the path. Then, it presses his leg against a wall. Finally, it just lies down in the middle of the road.

We know why this is happening. The donkey sees the malach—the angel standing in the way—but Bilam doesn't. So what does Bilam do? He hits the donkey with his stick, trying to get it to move.

Then suddenly, Bilam's eyes are opened. He sees the malach, and the angel says to him, "Why did you strike your donkey these three times?"

The Kedushas Levi, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, asks the obvious. Why is the malach upset? Bilam didn't see the angel. From his perspective, the donkey was acting completely irrational when it wandered off, crushed his leg, and lay down in the middle of the road. Of course he hit it. That's what anyone would do when an animal suddenly becomes uncooperative.

It must have been incredibly embarrassing. Everyone else's ride was moving along just fine,

and there's Bilam—his donkey sprawled on the ground in front of all the Moabite dignitaries. Naturally, he responded the way people do. It happens every day in horse racing.

So what was the angel even asking?

The Berditchever gives a beautiful answer. The malach wasn't upset that Bilam hit the donkey. He was upset that Bilam didn't stop to think.

Hashem had already made His will clear. First He told Bilam, "Don't go." Then He allowed him to go, but only on the condition that he say exactly what Hashem tells him. Bilam knew he was walking a very fine line. He had permission, but limited permission.

So when his normally obedient donkey suddenly acts up—not once, not twice, but three times—you would think he'd stop and ask himself, "Maybe Hashem is sending me a message. Maybe I'm not supposed to be going. Maybe this journey isn't what He wants."

But Bilam doesn't pause. He doesn't reflect. He doesn't question. He just gets angry—and hits the donkey.

That is why the angel rebukes him. Not because he was cruel, but because he was oblivious. Because he ignored the signs.

I think this is a powerful lesson for all of us.

When we commit to some-

thing—a job, a relationship, a move, a major decision—and we keep running into closed doors, delays, and obstacles, we have to stop and ask: Is this what Hashem wants from me? Or is He trying to get my attention?

When the Mir Yeshiva escaped Lithuania during the Holocaust, Rav Leizer Yudel Finkel zt"l was doing everything he could to get visas for the bachurim and to preserve the yeshiva. But things weren't working. He kept hitting wall after wall. Eventually, he decided to travel with his rebbetzin to Eretz Yisrael, hoping he could help more from there.

They boarded a plane from Riga, Latvia. But the plane developed a mechanical issue and had to turn back. Then, his rebbetzin got sick. Rav Leizer Yudel looked at these events and said, "Hashem is sending me a message. This is not the path I'm supposed to take."

So he changed course. And *baruch Hashem*, the Mir Yeshiva was saved in its entirety.

It's the same idea with Bilam. Hashem sent him signs, but he refused to see them.

The opposite is also true. When we pursue something with sincerity—and the path opens up, doors start unlocking, help shows up unexpectedly—that can also be a sign from Hashem. That He's guiding us and supporting what we're trying to do.

The key is to pay attention. To be sensitive to the messages. To recognize when He's closing a door, and also when He's opening one.

Rabbi Eli Scheller

The Fun That Lasts Forever

It was a long Shabbat afternoon in camp; the kind that stretches endlessly. To make the most of it, the learning director came up with a special initiative: a Shabbos learning raffle.

The rules were simple. Learn for 30 minutes with a chavrusa, and you earn one ticket. Learn for an hour, two tickets. Two hours, four tickets. The prizes? There were two.

First, a coveted opportunity to drive the head counselor's golf cart for an hour; a serious prize by camp standards. The second? A horseback riding trip.

Now in the fifth-grade division, there was a boy named Avrum from Antwerp. He had never been horseback riding in his life. It was something he had always dreamed of doing. And now, he was determined to win. "I've got to win that prize," he kept repeating to his bunkmates, his excitement becoming

ing contagious.

But realistically, what were the chances? With 400 campers in the raffle, the odds weren't in his favor. Still, Avrum did his part. He showed up that Shabbos afternoon and learned diligently.

When Motza'ei Shabbos arrived and it was time for the raffle, anticipation filled the air.

And then—his name was called.

The winner of the horseback riding prize: Avrum from Antwerp.

He was ecstatic, as his friends cheered and celebrated alongside him. It was a highlight of the summer.

But the real story came later.

At the final banquet, on the last night of camp, the camp director got up to speak. "There's something I want to share," he began. "That raffle last week—Avrum from Antwerp winning the horseback riding prize—it moved me deeply. Everyone knew how badly he wanted it.

But now I know how he actually won."

It turns out that Avrum's bunkmates—all of them—had quietly decided to give up their own chance at the prize. They wrote his name on their raffle tickets instead of their own. Avrum didn't have just one or two entries in the raffle. He had over 40. That's how he won.

Kids come to camp to have fun. But there's a deeper kind of fun, and that is one which doesn't fade as quickly as a popsicle on a hot summer day.

The ice cream you ate last summer? You don't taste it anymore. But the joy of giving someone else happiness—that's a pleasure that lasts.

So as you go through the summer, of course, enjoy yourself. Laugh. Play. But also look for moments to bring joy to others. Get someone else involved. Make another kid feel like they belong.

Because that's the kind of fun you'll remember forever.

Rabbi Dovid Ozeri

I Am Not Afraid

Shortly before one summer, I traveled to Israel with our seminary. We were taking the students for a trip, and I told my wife, "You know what? I'm going to go a day early."

"Why go a day early?" she asked.

I wasn't really sure. Maybe I thought I'd get there first to prepare, to organize things. Maybe the flight schedule or timing of

the prayers worked out better. Or maybe, if I'm being honest, I just didn't feel like flying with thirty seminary girls. Whatever the reason, I went a day ahead.

As I landed in Israel and was picked up from the airport, the person driving me suddenly received a phone call. He turned to me and said, "Rabbi Eliyahu Abba Shaul—son of Chacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul—just passed away."

"What? That can't be."

I was stunned. He was a dear friend of mine. A gaon olam, a brilliant Torah scholar, and Rosh Yeshiva. I couldn't believe it. I started making phone calls, hoping it was just a rumor.

It wasn't.

The levayah (funeral) was scheduled to take place that afternoon at 4:00 p.m. in front of his yeshivah. They shut down major streets in Jerusalem—those familiar with the area will understand the scale: Rechov Shmuel HaNavi and Rechov Bar Ilan were com-



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pletely closed off. Thousands gathered to honor this great man.

I was standing quietly among the crowd when a few people who recognized me—knowing of my friendship with the Rav—came over and urged me to come forward. I refused. “Please,” I said, “just let me be.” The crowd was thick, and I didn’t want to push through.

They came back a few minutes later—with a police officer.

“Come, we’ll take you.”

They escorted me to the front, where the rabbanim were standing. I didn’t expect anything else, but then, in typical Israeli fashion, I suddenly heard my name over the loudspeaker—they were calling me up to speak. I said a few brief words. It was overwhelming.

And it was in that moment that I realized why I had come to Israel a day early. I was meant to be there. I was meant to say goodbye.

Two days later, I went to the *beit avel* (house of mourning). The family was large—many sons, all *talmidei chachamim*. The place was packed. You couldn’t make your way up the stairs. Once again, someone recognized me, and I was brought to the front, where the mourners were seated.

The eldest son, now the new *Rosh Yeshiva*, looked at me and said, “Do you know how my father passed away?”

I said, “Yes—he collapsed.”

He gestured to one of his younger brothers who had been with their father that morning and said, “Tell him.” The son shared the following story:

“It was Monday morning. We were home before heading out to *yeshivah*. My father turned to me and said, ‘Bring me scissors.’ I asked, ‘Abba, scissors? For what?’ He replied, ‘To cut my nails.’

‘But Abba,’ I said, ‘it’s not Friday. You never cut your nails on a Monday.’

Still, he repeated, ‘Bring me scissors.’

So I brought them to him. He sat at the table and clipped his nails—very out of character. Then he cleaned everything up and said, ‘Bring me a *Mishnah Berurah*.’ I brought the volume he requested. He opened it, read a section, and said, ‘It says that one who cuts his nails and does not wash afterward will be fearful the entire day.’

Then he said, ‘Bring me water.’

We were surprised. He never asked us for anything—he would get up and do it himself. But he insisted: ‘Bring me water.’

We brought him a washing cup and a basin. He washed his hands thoroughly.

And then he said, ‘Now, I am not afraid.’

A moment later, he said, ‘Bring me

paper.’ I gave him a small piece.

He filled in the center with ink and wrote on each of the four corners in Hebrew:

“*Eineni me’fached klal*—I am not afraid at all.”

“I am not afraid at all.”

“I am not afraid at all.”

“I am not afraid at all.”

He stood up, looked at me, and said once more, ‘*Achshav, eineni mefached klal*. Now I am not afraid at all.’

And at that moment, he collapsed—and died.”

I looked at the son, stunned. I was speechless. He reached into his pocket and said, “Here—take a look.”

He handed me the very paper his father had written on that morning. The words were still there, in his own handwriting, in all four corners: *Eineni mefached klal*.

My friends, we speak often about how to live. But here was a man who showed us how to die.

He was only 70. Not sick. Vibrant. Leading a *yeshivah*. A member of the *Moetzet Gedolei HaTorah*. And yet, somehow, he knew.

His final words were: I am not afraid at all.

A *peleh*, a wonder beyond words. A soul in complete control. A man who understood that when you live a life of Torah, of *emunah*, of clarity—there is nothing to fear.

Rabbi Meir Simcha Sperling

Just One

In life, we often think small actions don’t matter—**One** word of *lashon hara*, one moment of *shmiras einayim*, one minute of Torah learning. What’s the big deal? But the Torah teaches us that a person with *tzara’as* doesn’t become a *metzora* until the kohen

declares one word: “*tamei*.” Without that word, nothing changes. He remains fully permitted in all areas of life. But the moment the kohen utters that single word, everything shifts. He becomes a *metzora* with all the halachic consequences. A doctor could say, “This is the worst case I’ve ever seen”—and still,

nothing. Even a great Torah scholar can diagnose it—but only the kohen’s declaration transforms his status. One word. One action. One moment. That’s all it takes. Don’t underestimate the impact a single choice can make. In the spiritual world, every small act carries enormous weight.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 14 Tammuz)

שמות חיילים פצועים לרפואה שלמה

אביתר מנחם חיים בן זהבה
אברהם מרדכי בן יעל
אוהד בן ליאת
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
חיים מרדכי בן שרה איטה
חיים עידו בן ענבל
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
יותם בן מיכל
יעקב חניאל בן מיכל אביבה
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 אהרון 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
עמיחי בן סיגלית רחל
עמית יהונתן בן מאיה
רואי בן עופרה
רון בן אבישג
רון בן שרון
רועי חיים בן מירב
שלמה זלמן בן מרים
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)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)

עמירם בן שרה (קופר)
אריה בן צבי (זלמנוויץ)
אסף בן אילן (חמימי)
דניאל שמעון בן דורון (פרץ)
דרור בן יובל (אור)
איתן בן סול (לוי)
אליה בן דבורה (מרגלית)
גיא בן מישל (עלוז)
הדר בן שמחה (גולדין)
עידן בן אלי (שתיבי)
אילן שלמה בן אברהם (וויס)
ענבר בת חיים (היימן)
איתי בן ראובן (חן)
ג'ושוע בן לויטו מולל
ליאור בן גיורא (רודאף)
מני בן יעקב (גודרד)
מוחמד אל אטראש
עומר בן רונן (נוטרא)
עוז בן עמיר (דניאל)
רונן בן תומר (ענגל)
רן בן יצחק (גוילי)
סהר בן אהרון (ברוך)
סונטאיה אוקארסרי
סותטיסאק (רינטלאק)
טל בן זהר (היימן)
תמיר בן משה (אדר)
אוריאל בן אמיר (ברוך)
יאיר בן אלפרד (יעקב)
יוסי בן רצון (שרעבי)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 14 Tammuz)

INJURED SOLDIERS

Evyatar Menachem Chaim ben Zehava
Avraham Mordechai ben Yael
Ohad ben Liat
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 Ido ben Inbal
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
Yotam ben Michal
Yaakov Chaniel ben Michal Aviva
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
Amichai ben Sigalit Rachel
Amit Yehonatan ben Maya
Roi ben Ofra
Ron ben Avishag
Ron ben Sharon
Roi Chaim ben Meirav
Shlomo Zalman ben Miriam
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)
Bipin Joshi
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)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslevsky)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)

Amriam ben Sara (Cooper)
Aryeh ben Tzvi (Zalmanovich)
Asaf ben Ilan (Hamami)
Daniel Shimon ben Doron (Perez)
Dror ben Yuval (Or)
Eitan ben Sol (Levy)
Eliyahu ben Devorah (Margalit)
Guy ben Mishel (Illuz)
Hadar ben Simcha (Goldin)
Idan ben Eli (Shtivi)
Ilan Shlomo ben Avraham (Weiss)
Inbar bat Chaim (Haiman)
Itai ben Reuven (Chen)
Joshua ben Luito Molei
Lior ben Giora (Rudaeff)
Meni ben Yaakov (Godard)
Mohammad El Alatrash
Omer ben Ronen (Neutra)
Oz ben Amir (Daniel)
Ronen ben Tomer (Engel)
Ran ben Yitzchak (Gvili)
Sahar ben Aharon (Baruch)
Sonthaya Oakkharasri
Sudthisak ben Thong Ma (Rinthalak)
Tal ben Zohar (Chaimi)
Tamir ben Moshe (Adar)
Uriel ben Amir (Baruch)
Yair ben Alfred (Yaakov)
Yossi ben Ratzon (Sharabi)