

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

### The Sustenance of Life

There was once a beloved series called Bonanza, centered on the Cartwright family and their sprawling Ponderosa ranch. The eldest son, Adam Cartwright, was portrayed by Pernell Roberts.

Roberts made what was considered, at the time, a highly controversial decision: he chose to leave the series. In those days, actors simply did not walk away from successful shows. As a result, he was effectively blacklisted from major roles for years.

A similar fate befell McLean Stevenson, who played Lieutenant Colonel Henry Blake on M\*A\*S\*H. When he decided to leave the series, the writers permanently killed off his character so that there would be no possibility of a return. Leaving a hit show was viewed as almost unforgivable.

Years later, I remember seeing one of these actors in a commercial advertising wine. Holding up a glass, he concluded with the famous words, "Man does not live by bread alone."

I've heard that verse quoted countless times, usually with the implication that bread by itself is insufficient and that a person also needs meat, wine, and the finer things in life. Yet that interpretation is the exact opposite of what the Torah teaches.

Our Pasuk appears in this week's Parsha (Devarim 8:3):

"He afflicted you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you the manna which neither you nor your forefathers had known, in order to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of Hashem does man live." The Torah is not telling us that we need more than bread. It is telling us that we are sustained by something entirely different. Food itself does not keep us alive. It is the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu—the Divine life-force invested within creation—that sustains us.

The manna was the perfect illustration of this truth. Chazal describe it as lechem abirim, the bread of angels. The Ramban explains that it was spirituality clothed in physical form. It was not ordinary nourishment. It was a physical expression of Divine sustenance.

The Torah even refers to it as lechem hakelel (Bamidbar 21:5). Chazal (Yoma 75b) explain that during the forty years in the midbar, the manna produced no waste because it was entirely refined. There was nothing unnecessary to discard. It was pure spiritual nourishment manifest in physical form.

That principle extends beyond the manna. Every food contains both its physical substance and the Divine energy that gives it existence. The food is merely the vessel. The true source of nourishment is the pi Hashem, the word of Hashem that continuously sustains creation.

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#### DEDICATIONS

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R' Elchonon Yaakov z"l ben R' Shmuel Pinchos  
Manish ben Esther  
Meir Eliyahu ben Yaakov Dov  
Bechor ben Rivkah  
Shlomo Zalman ben R' Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi  
Esther bat haRav Avraham Halevi zt"l  
Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber  
Miriam bat Yeshayahu  
Malka Bracha bat Shimon Chaim Rivka Lida bat Sarah  
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Deena bat Shoshana Chaya Raizel bat Dena  
Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva  
Reuven ben Rochel  
Paysach Yosef ben Hinda  
Avrohom ben Leah Golda

It is fascinating how often this verse is quoted while completely reversing its meaning. "Man does not live by bread alone" does not mean that we need bread plus steak, wine, and dessert. It means that we do not ultimately live because of bread at all. We live because of the Divine word that animates every morsel we eat.

Perhaps this idea is reflected in the very nature of different fruits. Some contain considerable waste—a thick peel, a hard pit, or numerous seeds—while others are almost entirely edible. The pomegranate, for example, has long been used to symbolize a Jew who may appear spiritually distant. Much of the fruit consists of rind and membrane, yet hidden inside are countless precious, sweet seeds. Even someone who seems spiritually lacking possesses tremendous inner goodness.

A fig, according to R' Nechemiah, was the fruit of the Eitz Ha'Daas, Tree of Knowledge (Berachos 40a). Aside from its small stem, virtually the entire fruit is edible. Dates contain pits and olives have pits. Grapes traditionally have seeds, although today we even enjoy seedless varieties. Interestingly, "seedless" fruits

are not truly seedless. Through careful cultivation, growers have developed varieties whose seeds never fully mature. Occasionally, you can still see tiny traces of what would have become seeds. Every fruit contains some element that is discarded and some that is retained. Spiritually, that reminds us to recognize the essence and separate it from the external shell.

Ultimately, however, it is not the food itself that gives us life. The food is only the medium through which Haladosh Baruch Hu provides His blessing. It is His word—His sustaining will—that keeps us alive.

I once heard a beautiful story from someone who regularly prepared breakfast for Rav Aharon Feldman shlita during his years at Ohr Somayach. Every morning Rav Feldman ate essentially the same breakfast, including a hard-boiled egg.

One day, someone brought him breakfast and said, "Today we prepared the eggs differently." "I don't mind," Rav Feldman replied. "No, no," the fellow insisted. "These are more like scrambled eggs." "I still don't mind." "They're made with tomatoes and vegetables—almost like a Spanish omelet!" Rav Feldman smiled and said, "It all ends up in the

same place."

He then explained that he ate eggs not because of culinary preference, but because Chazal recommend that a talmid chacham eat meat in the morning, and another Gemara considers eggs comparable to meat in that regard (see Berachos 44a; Beitzah 6b-7a). He wasn't eating for pleasure. He was eating to serve Hashem.

My son shared a similar story he heard from Rabbi Potash, a grandson of Rav Chaim Zimmerman. The Rebbetzin would prepare an elaborate breakfast with a beautiful assortment of foods. Rav Chaim Zimmerman would thank her warmly, mix everything together onto one plate, and eat it. His attitude was simple: "It all ends up in the same place."

What mattered was not the presentation, but the purpose.

Our lives are sustained not merely by the food we eat, but by the pi Hashem that gives every particle of creation its existence. The physical world is only the vessel; the true nourishment is spiritual.

May we merit to recognize that reality and always be sustained by the blessing of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

## Rabbi Fischel Schachter

### The Buttons in Your Life

**A** while ago, we hired a crew to refinish the hardwood floors in our home. By the time they began scraping the floors, the noise and dust were overwhelming.

So we called my mother-in-law and asked if we could spend the night in her basement. "Of course," she said. "Just use the combination on the front door. Please don't ring the bell; I don't want to be awakened." "No problem," we said.

I went out for the evening, met a few people, took care of a few things, and returned around two o'clock in the morning. Miraculously, I still remembered the code—3-5-4-2. Considering my usual relationship with numbers, that was an accomplishment in itself. I confidently pressed 3...5...4...2. Then I realized my mistake.

The keypad for the combination lock was beside the front door. What I had just pressed were the apart-

ment buzzers. At two o'clock in the morning, I had rung the bells for the second floor, the third floor, the fourth floor, and the fifth floor. "I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry!" I kept apologizing as lights began turning on throughout the building.

One of the residents smiled and said, "Don't worry; you'll get a story out of this."

He was right. Life is filled with buttons.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu places us in countless situations and gives us buttons to press. Our task is to press the right ones.

The Rupshitzer Rav had a beauti-

ful custom. Every Friday night, after his tish, he would visit his mother to wish her Good Shabbos. His mother, the Rebbetzin, would use the opportunity to offer him heartfelt mussar.

One week, a curious chassid wanted to hear these conversations for himself. He quietly slipped into the house beforehand and hid beneath a bench. The Rebbetzin looked at her son and said, "Who says you should be a Rav? Your father was a Rav. What makes you think you are worthy of leading the Jewish people?" The Rupshitzer Rav answered humbly, "Mama, I know I am not on my father's level." Then he smiled. "But look at my chassidim. Look at the kinds of people hiding underneath your furniture. For people like them, I can be their Rav."

How often do we tell ourselves that we are not great enough? We compare ourselves to the giants of Jewish history and conclude, "I'm not Moshe Rabbeinu. I'm not David HaMelech. I'm not a tzaddik." To that, HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "I never asked you to be. I chose your generation. I placed you exactly where you belong. I know your challenges and your struggles. Your responsibility is simply to press the right buttons where I placed you."

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

writes that there is not a single moment in a person's life in which Hashem is not actively involved. Whether it concerns the body or the soul, whether it relates to our relationship with Hashem or with other people, every circumstance is orchestrated with precision.

Some time ago, an Israeli pilot was shot down over enemy territory. Immediately, an enormous rescue operation was launched. Satellites, aircraft, and hundreds of soldiers were mobilized because every minute mattered. Ordinarily, a downed pilot transmits his location. But in enemy territory, broadcasting his position would have revealed it to the enemy as well.

I once read that sophisticated technology was used to detect his heartbeat from above, allowing rescuers to locate him without exposing his position. Whether every technical detail is accurate or not, the image itself is powerful. If human beings can search for a heartbeat from miles above the earth, do we imagine that the Ribono Shel Olam does not know exactly where our hearts are?

Do you think He is unaware of your struggles? Do you think He has forgotten what you are carrying? He knows your heartbeat. He knows your fears. He knows every disappointment, every tear, every private

battle. And He is arranging the circumstances around you with perfect precision.

He is placing the buttons before you.

I recently read an article about Spirit Airlines. At one point during the flight, the flight attendants had everyone standing and stretching. "Raise your hands." "Bend your knees." Then they announced, "While you're down there touching the floor, would you mind picking up the garbage?" I remember laughing to myself.

But then I thought of something else. Hashem Hu did not throw us into this world by accident. We were not dropped here without purpose.

The Kotzker Rebbe comments on the Pasuk, "Yemei shenoseinu bahem shiv'im shanah—the days of our years are seventy years" (Tehillim 90:10). A person can live seventy years for one decisive moment.

Never believe the lie that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has forgotten about you. He knows exactly where you are and He hears your heartbeat. He placed you exactly where you need to be.

Your task is simply to press the right button. And when you truly believe that, no matter what is happening around you, your spirit will always remain uplifted.

va bochur suddenly embraced me. He was trembling, tears streaming down his face. I was completely taken aback. He was so overcome with emotion that he could barely speak. My father came outside, brought him into the house, gave him something to drink, and tried to calm him down.

Finally, he looked at me and said,

## Motty Steinmetz

### The Football Player

Two years ago, I had the privilege of releasing a song called "Atah Bechartanu." I want to share with you an extraordinary story that resulted from that song.

It happened on Purim. I was at

my parents' home, and the entire neighborhood was alive with the joy of the day. Suddenly, I received a phone call from a close friend who wanted to bring me mishloach manos. He asked me to come outside. As I walked out the door, a young yeshi-

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"You have no idea what you did for me." He began telling his story.

"Two years ago, I was completely secular. I wasn't keeping Torah or mitzvos. I lived in Herzliya and was a successful football player. One day I traveled to Romania for a training camp, and something happened there. I can't explain it, but I suddenly began asking myself, 'What does G-d want from me? Why am I here? I would run along the beach for hours, thinking about life. One thought kept returning to me: We are called the Am HaNivchar—the Chosen People. I wanted to understand what that really meant.'

"So I typed the words Atah Be-

chartanu Mikol Ha'amim into Google. The very first result that appeared was your song. I clicked on it."

"I watched people dancing with the Sefer Torah, embracing it, learning Torah, radiating happiness. I watched that video again... and again... probably a hundred times. And I kept asking myself, 'Why are they so happy? I want that kind of life. So I left everything behind. I returned to Eretz Yisrael and I decided to change my life. I enrolled in a yeshiva for ba'alei teshuvah in Bnei Brak."

He paused, looked at me through his tears, and said, "Today, I'm a yeshiva bochur. My entire life has

changed, and it all began because of that song." As he spoke, he continued shaking with emotion.

Then he said words I will never forget: "I owe you my life."

I stood there speechless. When I recorded that song, I knew it would require time, effort, and money. But never, for a single moment, did I imagine that someone would completely transform his life because of it.

The experience taught me something profound: never underestimate that something big can happen from something small.

You have a gift Hashem gave you, and when you use it, you never know how you can affect another life.

## Rabbi Yehuda Mandel

### No One Greater than Me

Most people think anivus, humility, means putting themselves down. But when it comes to kedushah, the opposite is true. You want to grow in kedushah? Join what I call the "Arrogance Club." Become a ba'al ga'avah, and not in the unhealthy sense of looking down on others, but in the sense of recognizing your own gadlus.

Every time a person exercises self-control, he connects himself to Yosef HaTzaddik. When overcoming a temptation, he is zoche to attach himself to Yosef and draw strength from his example. What gave Yosef the ability to withstand the greatest test of his life? He carried himself with gaava d'kedusha, holy dignity. He said, "Einnenu gadol babayis mimeni - There is no one greater in this house than me" (Bereishis 39:9). His attitude was, "I am greater than this. This behavior is beneath me. I cannot do such a thing."

Chasing every taava is exhaust-

ing. It is an endless game that never truly satisfies and it teases a person without ever bringing lasting fulfillment. I know someone who struggled in this area for years. One day he made a simple but life-changing decision. Instead of focusing on every failure, he began thanking Hashem for every success and for every time he had resisted temptation.

That changed everything. He became a different person.

Too often, we obsess over our shortcomings while completely ignoring our successes. Instead, stop and thank Hashem for every step forward. Celebrate the fact that you are fighting the battle.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to succeed. If a person stumbles but genuinely feels pain over it, that pain itself is immensely valuable before Hashem.

As Rav Yaakov Galinsky zt"l told me, with Hashem you are never losing. If you resisted temptation, you won. If you stumbled but your heart aches because you disappointed

Hashem, you also succeeded.

I once heard in the name of Reb Aharon Karliner that if a bochur walked through the streets and successfully guarded his eyes, then by the time he reached the beis medrash, he should be dancing for half an hour. Why? Because he has no idea how great that success is.

We live in a generation unlike any before it. Previous generations never faced the constant visual bombardment that surrounds us today. The challenges are greater, but so are the opportunities.

Give yourself credit for every victory and stand tall with the dignity of Yosef HaTzaddik.