

The Torah Any Times

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Mr. Charlie Harary

Now or Never

My good friend's father was in his early sixties, and thankfully, he was overall very healthy. He ate well, ran races, and took care of himself. One day, while I was with my friend, he received a call. His father had experienced some chest pains in the morning, though decided to go to work. But that's when the problems began. So he checked into a local clinic. The doctor, who happened to be a friend of his, told him he was having a heart attack.

You can imagine the panic. My friend was frantic, trying to figure out which hospital his father was being taken to. His father worked in Manhattan, but they had moved him to a hospital in New Jersey, and it wasn't a quick process to discover exactly where that was. Eventually, he found the hospital and rushed over, but it was too late. They had already moved him into bypass surgery. Soon enough, the whole family started trickling in, making phone calls, feeling gripped with nerves and fear.

A few hours later, the doctor came out. "It pays to be healthy," he said. My friend's father, being a healthy guy, had reacted well to the surgery. Everything had gone smoothly, and he would be fine. And that's ultimately what happened. He came home, took some time to recover, and eventually, started living a regular life again.

A couple of months later, I was

talking to my friend and asked how his dad was doing. "He's a changed man," he said. "How so?" I asked. "I don't know. He just changed." I pressed him to find out more. After some convincing, he agreed to talk to his father.

He called me back with an incredible story to share.

His father told him that while being rolled into the operating room, he had a thought about all the things he wanted to do but never did. He liked his life and didn't have a bucket list, nor was he interested in bungee jumping or anything extreme. He was happy with his job, his family, and his life. But there were many little things he realized he would miss if he didn't survive.

He told my friend that he had never fully expressed to his mother just how much he loved her. He also had one child who wasn't like the others, and he never told that son how proud he was of him. He had a friend too he had drifted apart from and never made amends. There was a list of small but significant things—dozens of them—that made the difference between a good life and a great one.

As he was rolling into surgery, he promised himself that if he survived, he would always live his life with three letters: N-O-W. And when he got out of surgery, he took out his business card and wrote those three letters on it. He also pasted those words onto the mirror in his bathroom so that every morning he

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would see it.

His mantra became: "I live now. I don't live tomorrow. If I can do it today, I'm doing it today. Am I calling that person to tell them how much I appreciate them? I'm not waiting.

I'm not waiting to be kind or to be the person I want to be. I'm living now."

He realized that all the greatness we seek in our lives is already within us. Our goal is simply to reveal it and

unlock it. What stops us are the constraints we place on ourselves, and the biggest constraint is the thought that we can't be more.

But as soon as we decide to be, we can be.

Rabbi Label Lam

Don't Regret What's Behind

Each night as we recite the bedtime Shema, we ask Hashem to remove the yetzer hara from before us and from behind us. Removing the yetzer hara before us has often been interpreted to mean that sometimes a person overcomes the obstacles in front of them, which he sees and recognizes. But there's another sort of obstacle and challenge that confronts a person: challenges which he is not equipped or prepared to face. With respect to those, the yetzer hara can push a person from behind, catching them off guard.

I'd like to offer another approach.

Some time ago, I was invited to join a group of rabbis. Normally, I'm not involved in politics, but there was a local politician, Tom Walsh, who was running for District Attorney, and so I acquiesced. Tom Walsh spoke to us, explaining his situation. He had made a decision, and it was the right decision. However, as politics often go, people wanted to put him away. For the first time in his political career, he was being hunted down.

Tom Walsh arranged to speak to a room full of rabbis. He was very broken, explaining his pain. I was invited to speak because they needed someone who could relate to both the rabbis and Tom. I de-

cidated to share a story about one of my personal heroes, Sandy Koufax.

Sandy Koufax, a Jewish baseball pitcher for the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers, was voted the greatest athlete of the 20th century by Sports Illustrated. He was most famous for what he didn't do: in the 1965 World Series, he refused to pitch in the first game because it fell on Yom Kippur. Despite his many accomplishments, this act of faith is what he is most remembered for.

The backstory is that Don Drysdale, who pitched that game instead, got knocked out badly. When the coach came to take the ball from him, Drysdale joked, "I bet you wish I was Jewish too." I could tell that my words resonated with Tom Walsh. I then continued.

"You can imagine the pushback and pressure Koufax faced, but he decided to do the right thing. This decision sent a shockwave down the spine of every Jewish kid worldwide, sending the message that there's something more important than baseball. And there was another aspiring young Jewish pitcher—me—Label Lam. This message resonated deeply with me and made a difference in my life.

"The Talmud says that some people acquire their World to Come in one moment. No matter what else Koufax did, he will always be remembered for not pitching on Yom Kippur. Tom, what you did by doing the right thing, despite the pressure, sent

a message throughout your county and the world that there's something more important than politics. And I want to ask you a favor."

Tom looked up. "What's the favor?"

"By doing the right thing, Tom, even when it isn't popular, you're sending a powerful message. Like Sandy Koufax, you have a diamond in your back pocket for doing the right thing. Even though you are under a lot of pressure, you should not regret your decision. You have the blessing of the Jewish community and, more importantly, the blessing of the Creator."

The Torah tells us that after the Akeidah, Avraham buried Sarah and mourned her, yet only so much. He held himself together, as reflected in the Torah's spelling of the word, "V'livkosa—And to cry," spelled with a small "kaf" in the word "to cry" (Bereishis 23:2). Despite his immense pain, Avraham comported himself with dignity. The Rambam explains that regretting a good deed can nullify its merit, just as regretting a sin can erase it. That was why Avraham restrained himself from giving full way to tears. Sarah passed away in the aftermath of the Akeidah, and had Avraham shown his sadness in too great a measure, demonstrating his remorse over her passing, he would have been suggesting that he wished he hadn't gone through with fulfilling Hashem's word to offer his son, Yitzchak, as a sacrifice and that Sarah hadn't passed away.

I urged Tom to do the same. Not to regret his actions.

When we ask Hashem to remove the yetzer hara from behind us, we are asking Hashem to help us avoid regretting our good deeds after we have done them. The lesson and message is clear: when you do something good, no matter the cost, stay with it. Don't cast

doubt on it, don't say that you wished you saved a few dollars or that it would have been better had you done something else. If what you did is right, feel proud about it and stick to it.

Tom went on to win the political position by a landslide, supported

strongly by the Jewish community. However, he gained something even more valuable: the blessing of the Jewish people and the merit of standing by his principles.

And that's a diamond worth having in your back pocket. It certainly is.

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l

Asparagus or String Beans?

When I taught boys, many of them in due time got married. One of my students, who had recently gotten married to a wonderful girl, came to me three months after his wedding. What he said shocked me.

"Rabbi, I want a divorce. I need you to help me convene a beis din and arrange for a get." I wasn't sure if I had heard him right. "A divorce? What happened?" He sighed, and began to slowly explain. "My wife asked me to bring home four cans of string beans for supper. I went to the store, but accidentally bought asparagus instead. When I came home and she saw the cans, she was beyond angry."

I nodded, encouraging him to continue. "And then?" "She accused me of not listening to her and said I must have been talking on the phone to one of my friends while shopping." At this point, I knew there was more. "What did you do then?" I asked.

"I felt terrible. I immediately apologized and said I'd go back to the store to get the string beans and be back in a few minutes, but she refused. She said she didn't want the string beans anymore

and would just make a salad. Despite my repeated apologies and offers to correct the mistake, she insisted she couldn't live with someone like me," he said, shaking his head.

I looked at him thoughtfully. "Tell me, how did this mix-up happen?" I sensed there was even more to the story. "When my father passed away a long time ago, I often did the shopping for my mother. She taught me to take canned goods from the back of the shelf because the ones in the front were closer to expiration. So, I grabbed the cans from the back and didn't realize they were asparagus instead of string beans."

"So you were trying to do something nice for your wife by bringing the freshest produce," I said, understanding now what had happened. "Exactly," he said, looking relieved that I understood.

There were two important points to focus on, I knew to myself, as I quickly thought over this incident. I first addressed with the boy his side of the equation.

"Do you know why your wife grew so angry with you?" The boy looked at me unsure, the answer not immediately coming to him. "It's not because asparagus instead of string beans means the end of the world. You know that and your wife knows

that too." The boy nodded, listening intently. "It's because you showed your wife through your actions that you don't care about her." I could tell the boy wanted to defend himself. After all, he certainly did care about his wife. So I went further.

"The truth is, you do care about your wife. You just didn't display it with your actions. When someone makes a small mistake, it's human, but it also means the world when you focus on the small details and pay attention to them. When you do that, you demonstrate that the other person—their requests, their needs, their opinions—matter to you. That's why your wife mentioned you were talking on the phone to your friend. She can't be sure about that, but she is sure that on this trip to the store you didn't regard her, you didn't care about her. In such moments, attention to the small things spells big results. If you purchase the string beans when she asked for string beans, you're communicating that she is on your mind, not your friend. You're letting her know that what she says, and all that she says, is important to you. So next time, though it may be difficult, don't lose focus of the small things. They show your wife that she's the most important person on your mind and in your life."

I could tell the boy understood. Then, I continued.

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"Now, let me talk next to your wife," I said. "Perhaps she just needs to hear your side."

I called her later. "Do you know why your husband brought home asparagus instead of string beans?" "I just thought he wasn't paying attention," she replied. Hearing this, and knowing what to say, I clarified. "He was actually trying to get you the freshest string beans by taking them from the back of the shelf," I explained. "He never got the chance to tell you because you were so upset."

There was silence on the other end. Then, I asked, "If your best friend had called you and said her husband brought home asparagus instead of string beans, what would you have

told her?"

"I would have told her it was a cute mistake and to appreciate her husband's effort," she admitted. "So, why don't you say the same thing about your husband?" I asked gently. She exhaled. "I guess I should."

I then continued.

"One of the biggest secrets in relationships is not to take things personally. Often, the other person isn't trying to hurt you. If you don't take it personally, your relationships with your spouse and children will improve. The advice we give to others, which is not personal, is usually very loving and considerate. We need to apply that same advice to ourselves."

I learned this lesson from my own

wife. Once, a student took my donut without asking, and I reacted angrily. Later, my wife helped me realize that the boy might have been hungry and wasn't trying to disrespect me. The next morning, I apologized to him in front of the whole class and brought him a box of donuts as a peace offering.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson and it's helped me through life: don't take things personally and treat others with understanding. If we follow the caring advice we give to others, we can become better spouses and parents.

And that's a lasting formula for success in every relationship we have.

Rabbi Aryeh Kerzner

Direct Dividends

Let me share with you an incredibly powerful idea from the Puppa Rebbe, R' Yosef Greenwald zt"l. I read this in an article written by a well-known wealthy Jew living in America, a Holocaust survivor, who came to America and found great success in real estate.

Before making his first major investment, he sought a blessing from the Puppa Rebbe. The Rebbe gave him a beautiful blessing, assuring him of exceptional success in his new business venture, and then explained how he knew it would come true.

"The Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) tells us, "Schar mitzvah behai alma leka—The reward for mitzvos is not received in this world, but is reserved for the next." This seems to contradict another principle as to how Hashem operates. We know that Hashem adheres to the dictates and guidelines of His own Torah, which says, "B'yomo titen scharo—When you have a

worker, you must pay him on time, on the day he finishes his job" (Devarim 24:15). So, if we are Hashem's workers, shouldn't He pay us on time? How can the Gemara say that we don't get paid in this world and must wait until the Next?

"There is an exception to the rule, however," continued the Rebbe. "If you hire a worker through an agent, a middleman, you are not obligated to pay them on time. When an agent is involved, the rule of 'b'yomo titen scharo' does not apply (see Bava Metziah 110b for reason).

"This year, you will be extremely successful in business," the Rebbe said. "Why is that? Because 'schar mitzvah behai alma leka—The rewards for mitzvos are reserved for the Next World.' Most mitzvos were given to us through a shaliach, through Moshe Rabbeinu. Since Moshe was the agent, there is no obligation to pay on time, which is why the reward is for the Next World.

"However, there is one mitzvah that was not given through the agen-

cy of Moshe Rabbeinu. The mitzvah of emunah, the first two mitzvos of the Aseret HaDibros – 'Anochi Hashem Elokecha' and 'Lo Yihiye Lecha Elokim Acheirim' – were given directly by Hashem. Since these mitzvos were given directly, there is an obligation to pay on time. Even in this world, you can expect and anticipate reaping the dividends of emunah.

"You endured unimaginable hardship and suffering during the Holocaust, yet you remained firm in your emunah, staying loyal to Hashem. When it comes to the mitzvah of emunah, there was no agency involved and we received these mitzvos directly from Hashem. Emunah represents a direct relationship and interaction between Hashem and Klal Yisrael, so you can expect payment even in this life. You will see great success in your business going forward."

That was the blessing this survivor received before making his first large investment in the real estate industry.

And how true were the Rebbe's words.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 14 Sivan)

עופר בן כוכבה (קלדרון)	גלי בן טליה (ברמן)	אבינתן בן דיצה תרצה (אור)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)	דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)	אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
עידן בן דלית (שתייו)	דורון בת סימונה שרה (שטיינברכר)	אברהם גלעד בן אמונה (מונדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)	דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבוע)	אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
צחי בן דבורה (עידן)	הירש בן פערל חנה (גולדברג פולין)	אוהד בן אסתר (בן) עמי)
קית' שמואל בן גלדיס חוה (סיגל)	זיו בן טליה (ברמן)	אוהד בן אסתר (יהלומי)
קרינה בת אירנה (ארייב)	טל בן ניצה (שוהם קורנגולד)	אור בן גאולה (לוי)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)	יאיר בן רות אדית (הורן)	אורי בן עינב אפרת (דנינו)
רומי בת מירב (גונן)	יגב בן אסתר (בוכשטב)	איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)	יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)	איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
שגיא בן נעמית (חן דקל)	יצחק בן אנטה חנה (אלגרט)	אלון בן עידית (אהל)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)	ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)	אליה בן סיגלית (כהן)
שלמה בן מרסיל (מנצור)	כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)	אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)	כרמל בת כנרת (גת)	אלכסנדר בן אוקסנה (לובנוב)
	לירי בת שירה (אלבג)	אלכסנדר ששה בן ילנה לאה (טרופנוב)
	מקסים בן טלה (הרקיון)	אלכסנדר בן נינה (דנציג)
	מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)	אלמוג בן נירה (סרוסי)
	מתן בן ירדנה (צנגאוקר)	אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
	נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)	אמילי תהילה בת אמנדה פרנסיס (דמארי)
	נעמה בת איילת (לוי)	ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)
	עדן בת שירית (ירושלמי)	אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
	עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)	אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)
	עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)	בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)
	עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)	גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)
	עומר מקסים בן אורנה אסתר (נאוטרה)	גיא בן מירב (גלבוע דלאל)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 14 Sivan)

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