

Gratitude from the Torah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Toldot

Recognizing Hashem's Providence Even Within the Mundane

Gratitude for the Miracles Happening in the Current War

Although Israel is going through incredibly challenging times, Hashem's protective hand can clearly be found. It may not be easy to see the miracles in the current War amidst the mourning for the fallen soldiers. Yet keep in mind that despite the massive international effort to wipe us off the map, it is a miracle that Israel continues to exist. Yair Ansbacher, an IDF reservist and a research fellow at the Misgav Institute, explains, "We are not only fighting Hamas in Gaza but a regional war against Iran and its proxies, which have been systematically built up for 40 years on our borders. This includes Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza, which surround us with militias and with rocket arsenals." Ansbacher gives details regarding the three miracles that happened at the onset of the war by which Israel was saved from total destruction: <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/379443>. Although Chamas launched the deadliest attack in Israel's history and hurled 9,500 rockets from October 7-November 9, about 10% were failed launches, which fell in the Gaza Strip. Many more were intercepted by the Israeli Air Force. I just heard an amazing miracle story of how Hashem sent His messenger to warn our soldiers, who were going to search for hostages in Gaza. The story is told by Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein, who heard it from a very reliable source: Rabbi Orbach of Baer Miriam. As the soldiers were going to enter a certain house to search its tunnels, a holy Rabbi blocked their way and prevented them from entering. When – in order to obey their commander – the soldiers tried to pass by the Rabbi, they experienced walking right through him. Realizing this was not a regular person, the soldiers heeded his warning and left the building seconds before it blew up: <https://youtu.be/9vRcgHXZepI?si=T5xoHkpF7vWKRReOC>. Yet, the greatest miracle of all is the awakening of the Israelite spirit. As hard as it is to live through this war and mourn its casualties, I feel it is a tremendous elevating merit to live in Israel during this messianic epoch. All of Israel religious and secular have come together to fight as one united people against our common enemy. I'm filled with gratitude for the way EVERYONE is there for one another, working on so many levels to become better people. This includes the solidarity and care we feel from the Jews of the Diaspora, who are more connected with their brothers and sisters in Israel in a way I've never experienced before. So within the pain of our bereavement during the current war, let us not forget the attitude of gratitude and thank Hashem for the miracles happening whether hidden or revealed before our very eyes.

The Challenge of Giving Credit to Hashem for Our Personal Accomplishments

When we experience Hashem's direct providence in our lives, it is much easier to give Him credit and feel gratitude. For example, there are several stories of how a person missed his flight which subsequently crashed. There is no doubt in the mind of that person that Hashem's mighty hand protected him. Yet, it is harder to realize that the regular happenings of our lives too are divinely ordained, especially when we ourselves put much effort into accomplishing a certain task. I'm personally struggling with truly and deeply recognizing that – even when I myself put great effort and skill into attaining a certain goal – the credit for the attainment is only Hashem's. When my son met his bashert (Divinely destined soulmate) on a religious dating site, people asked me who was the shadchan (matchmaker). I had to overcome the temptation to answer, "I was the matchmaker" because I published my son's profile on the dating site, and I saw the post from the

girl he ended up marrying, I found her phone number and gave it to my son. Yet, when I delved deeper, I realized that it was Hashem who gave me the idea to post my son's profile on that dating site, and it was Hashem who led his soulmate to make a comment. It was G-d who guided me in how to find her phone number, and it was also Hashem who caused them to give each other a second chance after the first meeting. It takes constant work to look for Hashem's underlying supervision in all the little miracles that happen to us daily, and even more so it takes conscious work to remember to thank Him continually for each hidden miracle. I just received a \$14,000 donation for our bomb shelter from a childhood friend from Denmark who became very wealthy. I had expended a lot of work and effort into receiving this donation, and additional donations through our [bomb shelter campaign](#). It is a great temptation to take credit and think, "Although I never received any official training in fundraising – I'm pretty good at it." Again, I must remember, that it is Hashem who inspired me to write fundraising appeals, and He is the one who aroused the Chabad Rabbi of Denmark to reach out to me to help and speak with my childhood friend on my behalf. Even my intense prayers are only due to Hashem infusing me with a soul and stirring me to call out to Him. Finally, it is only Hashem who opened the heart of the friend and guided him to give such a generous donation to Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin.

Recognizing Divine Providence in Our Daily Day Occurrences

Ya'acov is a great role model for realizing how not only the revealed miracles but even the regular happenings of our lives are divinely ordained. In *Parashat Toldot*, we learn the famous story of how Yitzchak ended up imparting his blessing upon Ya'acov, rather than his firstborn Esav. When Rivkah heard that Yitzchak instructed Esav to hunt and prepare food for him, promising to then grant him his blessing when the food was served, she immediately sprang into action to ensure that the blessing would be granted to Ya'acov. Rivkah prepared a meal from the goats of the family flock and had Ya'acov bring it to Yitzchak, disguised as Esav. When Ya'acov first came before his father with the food his mother had prepared, Yitzchak asked him how he managed to complete his mission so quickly. After all, Yitzchak had asked Esav to go out and hunt and then prepare food – a process that he naturally expected would take far longer than it took Rivkah to prepare meat from a goat in the family's stable.

ספר בראשית פרק כז פסוק כ וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל בְּנוֹ מַה זֶה מְהֵרָתָ לְמַצֵּא בְּנֵי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי הִקְרָה הָשֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנַי:

"Then Yitzchak said to his son, 'How is it that you have found [it] so quickly, my son?' And he said, 'Because Hashem your G-d made it available before me'" (*Bereishit* 27:20).

Ya'acov explained that whereas normally hunting an animal would take a good deal of time, G-d helped him and made an animal easily accessible, such that he completed his mission with unusual speed. Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani explains that Ya'acov here was not speaking untruthfully. Ya'acov recognized G-d's hand in providing the goats in the family herd no less than he would have recognized G-d's providence in making an animal instantly and easily trappable in the field. There was no difference, in Ya'acov's mind, between the animals in the pen adjacent to his home and an animal that would miraculously fall into a trap without any effort on the hunter's part. Both were manifestations of "*hikra Hashem Elokekha*" – divine providence. (*Zera Shimshon, Parashat Toldot*, 12). We all have a tendency to take for granted what we are accustomed to having and only feel grateful for the unusual, unexpected blessings that come our way. We don't think twice about 'the goats in the family pen,' the beautiful blessings that have long been part of

our lives, about which we haven't had to think twice, such as health, family, and our basic necessities. It is only when we receive some exceptional, unforeseen good fortune that we feel a deep sense of gratitude. Ya'acov teaches us to feel appreciative and enthusiastic about even the 'ordinary' blessings in our lives that are part of everyday existence, recognizing them as precious gifts lovingly granted to us by the Almighty (Rav David Silverberg, S.A.L.T. – *Parashat Toldot*). It is this recognition that made Ya'acov worthy to inherit the ancestral blessing of the Holy Land, where Hashem's providence is experienced to the greatest extent.

Gratitude Focus for the Week of Parashat Toldot

Ramban teaches us to believe that everything that happens is a miracle. Therefore it is important to commemorate the revealed miracles that testify to the everyday hidden miracles (Ramban, *Shemot* 13:16). The more we recognize divine miraculous providence the more we attract Hashem's miracles to happen in our lives. When we make efforts to cling to Hashem perpetually, never taking our mind off Him, even when we are engaged in worldly pursuits and in the mundane conduct of life such as eating and the like), we will be constantly protected even from natural events. The divine protection we receive is in direct proportion to the extent that we recognize Divine providence. Whereas someone who is more distant in his thoughts and actions will be more subject to the natural course of events.

- **Recognize G-d as the Source of Your Success** – How often do we fall into the trap of thinking our success comes from our own efforts? Let us remember that without G-d's gifts of health, intelligence, opportunities, and resources, we would never be able to accomplish anything.
- **Request Forgiveness and Recite a Prayer of Thanks** – Avinu (Our Father), forgive me for the times I fall into the trap of thinking I have accomplished something on my own. I realize that without You, I am nothing. Help me to praise You for the many ways You help me each and every day.
- **Praise Hashem for Your Accomplishments** – As you step into emunah praise Hashem for His strength and guidance in leading you in the right path. As you succeed in helping others, give G-d the credit for giving you the right words to say, and for guiding your actions.
- **Thank G-d for Helping You Overcome Your Fears** – As you overcome your anxieties and fears by strengthening your emunah, thank the Almighty for granting you valor and for infusing your heart with courage.
- **Believe the Torah that Hashem will Grant us Victory** – Recite positive affirmations to strengthen your emunah in the forthcoming victory and repeat this encouraging Torah verse three times:

סַפֵּר דְּבָרִים פָּרַקְךָ כִּפְסוּקֵי כִי הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֵהָלַךְ עִמָּכֶם לְהִלָּחֵם לָכֶם עִם אֲבִיבֵיכֶם לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם:

“For Hashem your G-d is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory” (*Devarim* 20:4)