

Gratitude from the Torah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Ha'azinu

How Do We Keep Up Our Gratitude and Emunah Throughout This Challenging War?

Giving in to the Pressure of Cease Fire or Waging War Until Eradicating All Evil?

I have two personal news reporters from opposite vantage points, my husband with his Honest Reporting, and my sharp 89-year-old mother reporting from the CNN et al. perspective. On one of our bi-weekly phone calls during September 2024, my mom, who has two daughters, 6, grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren living in Israel, nervously related, "Now the war in Israel has surely begun, with Israel's attack on Lebanon." "What do you mean, Mom?" I asked, "Didn't[MS1] it begin almost a year ago with the barbaric slaughter of 1,139 Israelis most of whom were civilians, and the taking of more than 250 Israeli hostages?" "But now it's escalating and getting more dangerous as we are all concerned that Iran will get involved," retorted my mother. "It's all Netanyahu's fault. He should not have allowed attacks against Lebanon! I hope he will agree to a ceasefire, already," my mom continued. It's not the first time I've been subjected to Netanyahu being blamed for everything by my secular family and people I know in Denmark. The discussion never goes anywhere, because how can I explain to those who don't make Hashem and His Torah the center of their life, that the time has finally come to eradicate evil from the world? How many miracles will it take for those who deny Hashem to recognize G-d's providence and protection in our current war? In my opinion, it's even a miracle that Israel – who has been so passive about defending herself against terror attacks and has been engaging in one ineffective peace treaty after the other – finally strikes back. After all these years, in which Chamas – with the help of the UN and European 'humanitarian help'– built up their terrorist underground infrastructure in Gaza, with arsenals of weapons, the majority of Israelis have at last opened their eyes to see that we need once and for all to eradicate the evil that surrounds us. Now, there is a general consensus to continue the war without stopping until we attain the goal of living securely in our land, forever. I am filled with gratitude that Israel is finally fulfilling her moral imperative of eradicating evil, that threatens not only Israel but the entire world. I'm proud and thankful that most Israelis are dedicated to the eliminating the terrorists and their masters, wherever they are – above and below ground. As King David taught us: "I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till I destroyed them. I struck them down, and they could rise no more; they lay fallen at my feet" (*Tehillim* 18:38-39). Isn't this how a nation that desires life must behave? (Inspired by Dror Eydar, *Why Gratitude is in Order in Tough Times*).

The Reincarnation of Evil at the End of Days

The rise of antisemitism in response to the atrocities committed against Israel is not logical. Yet, everything happening in the world is predicted in our Scriptures, as King David asks, "Why have nations gathered and [why do] kingdoms think vain things? Kings of a land stand up, and nobles take counsel together against Hashem and against His Mashiach? (*Tehillim* 2:1-2). As the war between good and evil intensifies, the world becomes increasingly more and more polarized. I believe that all the evildoers throughout the centuries, who have opposed Israel and cruelly massacred us are being reincarnated now, so that they will receive Divine retribution at the end of days. Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, defines Amalek as any hate-filled group that directs its enmity toward the Jewish people or one that conspires to commit genocide against the Jewish people. When a people emblazons on its banner, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (*Tehillim* 83:5) it becomes Amalek. Thus, Chamas and Hezbollah are Amalek of the

21st century, whom we have a mitzvah to eradicate. Iran, whom everyone fears, is no other than Persia, whom with the help of Heaven, we will defeat again as we have done through Esther and Mordechai. The following midrashic prediction is comforting for those who live by the Torah: "In the year that King Mashiach will be revealed, all the kings of the nations of the world will provoke one another. The king of Persia will provoke the Arabian King, the Arabian king will go to Aram for advice, and the king of Persia will return and destroy the entire world. All the nations of the world will make loud noises and panic, while falling on their faces and be seized by contractions, like the contractions of a birthing woman. Israel will cry out in panic and say, "Where shall we come and go? Where shall we come and go? Where shall we come and go?" Tell them, my son, do not fear, everything that I did, I only did it for you. Why are you afraid? Do not fear, the time of your redemption has come. The last redemption is not like the first redemption. For the first redemption was followed by pain and subjugation to the kingdoms. However, the last redemption will not be followed by pain and subjugation to the kingdoms" (*Yalkut Shimoni* 60:499). Although scary things are about to take place in Israel – the vortex of the world – it is comforting to believe that this is part of the final redemption, orchestrated by the good and righteous Creator, Whose every move is for the sake of benefiting His people.

Cultivating Gratitude for the Miracles We Experience in the Current War

Ingratitude is universal. When life is good, it is not always easy to remember the source of our blessings. Maintaining gratitude for the good points is even more challenging when things go wrong. I'm mining for miracles in our current war and life in general, because each miracle reinforces my awareness of G-d's supervision in the world as well as my personal life. The miracles strengthen my emunah, to believe that even when things get tough Hashem is with us, directing the show! Despite our anguish and the mourning of the fallen, let us not forget to see the bigger picture and be grateful for the miracle of political revival and the ability to defend ourselves. Let us give thanks for what cannot be taken for granted, what we have not had for many generations: the opportunity to live in an independent Jewish state which can defend herself. Until now, we have fled or hid, but this time, Israel has arisen and fought back. When my mother reported that 700 people had recently been killed in the Lebanon war, I asked, "On which side?" in my desire to confirm Hashem's protection of His people. The fact that she didn't know if any Israeli soldiers had fallen in the latest war against Hezbollah, was a good sign. Baruch Hashem! Who protects Israel and directs our iron domes to intercept their repeated attacks? It was reported by the Israeli military, that: "The Islamic Resistance launched a 'Qader 1' ballistic missile at 6:30 am on Wednesday, ptember 25, 2024, targeting the Mossad headquarters in the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Warning sirens sounded in Tel Aviv on Wednesday as a surface-to-surface missile was intercepted by Israeli air defense systems after it was detected crossing from Lebanon, (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/9/27/israel-attacks-lebanon-israeli-bombings-kill-more-than-700-in-lebanon>). The Israeli Iron Dome has proved highly successful throughout our current war, intercepting nearly 95 percent of fatal rockets. As I'm writing this, the news about how IDF eliminated this arch terrorist of Hezbollah, who has terrorized the world for decades, killing thousands of people and aiding Iran in its plan to dominate the world and eradicate Israel. Now, is that not a miracle to be thankful for?

Why is Ingratitude so Common?

As Moshe proclaims G-d's greatness and justice, His children, the Israelites, fall short, for the

generation sustained and nurtured by G-d has repaid His kindness with ingratitude.

ספר דברים פרק לב פסוק יד הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט אל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא:
(ה) שחת לו לא בניו מומם דור עקש ופתלתל: (ו) הלהשם תגמלו זאת עם נבל ולא חכם הלוא הוא אביך
קנך הוא עשך ויכנך:

The deeds of the [Mighty] Rock are perfect, for all His ways are just; a faithful G-d, without injustice He is righteous and upright. Destruction is not His; it is His children's defect you crooked and twisted generation. Is this how you repay Hashem, you disgraceful, unwise people?! Is He not your Father, your Master? He has made you and established you (*Devarim* 32:4-6).

Although G-d has wrought great miracles for Israel, we have been disgraceful, lacking gratitude while falling prey to forgetting all Hashem has done for us (Rashi, *Devarim* 32:6). Why is ingratitude so common? When we speak of “lack of gratitude,” we often refer to individuals who attribute their successes solely to themselves and fail to acknowledge the help of others. This is a common human trait, as admitting that we need the help of others may hurt our pride, making us feel more dependent and less self-sufficient and successful. Nevertheless, we must genuinely acknowledge and appreciate the goodness we receive, even if this acknowledgment may lead to discomfort or affect our self-image as successful and independent individuals. This attitude is rooted in perfectionism, causing us to dwell on what is lacking, even if objectively, what is lacking is minimal compared to all the advantages and goodness we have merited. When Moshe rebukes the Children of Israel for their ingratitude, he first and foremost calls upon them to acknowledge the goodness they have received from G-d. “The children of Tzion shall rejoice in Hashem their G-d... You shall praise the name of Hashem your G-d who has dealt wondrously with you” (*Yoel* 2,23; 26). An essential part of our personal journey of rectification is recognizing the goodness we receive, ceasing to focus on negative aspects, and highlighting the positive aspects of our lives. The next step is to understand the source of this goodness – G-d – and to act from this awareness with humility and joy (Based on Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, *Recognizing the Good – Parashat Ha'azinu*).

The Prophecies of Parashat Ha'azinu Relating to Our Time and the Final Redemption

In *Parashat Ha'azinu*, Moshe proclaims the story of the Jewish people. His prophetic song includes our past, present, and future. In the future Israel will sin and be punished, however, we will ultimately survive the hardships and recover. The *Ha'azinu* Song describes not what ought to be, nor what must be, but rather what will be. This Song constitutes a true and faithful witness, for it explicitly spells out all that will befall us. It begins by describing G-d's compassion by taking us to Him as His portion and recalling how He took care of us in the wilderness. He caused us to possess the land of great and powerful nations, and we enjoyed goodness, wealth, and honor in the Holy Land. Despite all this goodness the Israelites became complacent, demonstrated ingratitude, rebelled against G-d, and served idolatry. G-d responded in anger, and the Israelites were stricken with pestilence, famine, wild beasts, and the sword until they were exiled and scattered to every corner of the globe. These historical facts are well known. G-d has given us a mission in the world, a unique responsibility that sets us apart from other people. Throughout our history, we often oppose our mission to adopt other nations' worldviews and ways of life. Yet, our attempts to surrender our legacy will never entirely succeed, for though we may stray far from our spiritual heritage, our identity and destiny will always remain bound up with the name of the G-d of Israel. Conversely, though mighty nations may rise up to destroy us, they will never succeed. In the end, G-d will return

to His people and return them to His land, if not due to our merits then for the sake of 'His great Name.' The Song proclaims that in the end, Hashem will exact vengeance on our enemies, for all their oppressive cruelty, which had as its underlying motivation a hatred for G-d, rather than simply an antipathy toward the Jews. This final vindication refers to the Future Redemption, that the Jewish people are promised. Through our redemption, the return of G-d's presence to the world will also inevitably transpire, and the purpose of Creation will finally be realized (based on Ramban, *Devarim* 32:40).

**Gratitude Focus for the Week of Parashat Ha'azinu –
Tips on Recognizing Goodness that Opens the Door of Redemption**

When we don't recognize any goodness in our lives and focus solely on the negative it can cause us to accumulate negative feelings about the past and the present and develop a pessimistic attitude toward the possibilities of repairing things in the future. However, when we acknowledge the good, this recognition develops positive feelings and we become more optimistic, believing in the possibility to improve and advance.

- We clearly see Hashem's protective miracles in the current war. It has been reported that soldiers were repeatedly surprised by attacking Arabs whose guns suddenly didn't work, giving the IDF just enough time to pull their act together and shoot the terrorists first.
- Iran's attack before Pesach was also miraculous. Iran sent 331 missiles at one go. The Iron Dome can shoot down a single enemy missile with 95% accuracy, yet the Iron Dome CANNOT handle 331 missiles sent simultaneously, some of them massive. It wasn't a joke when the Iranians said they were going to wipe out all of Israel. Yet 99% of their missiles did not even enter Israeli airspace. A month later the president of Iran who'd ordered that failed missile barrage on Israel died in a helicopter crash.
- There was a terror attack right before Pesach in Jerusalem, crowds of hundreds of adults and children burning their chametz, and the terrorists' guns didn't work. Afterward, the police checked the guns, and they worked perfectly.
- In a BBC interview with one of the heads of the Chamas, the interviewer asked him: You're working so many years on these missiles yet you're missing your targets 98% of the time. The Chamas leader answered him: I want you to know that we have it down to perfection. We should be hitting our targets 98% of the time instead of missing 98% of the time. But "the Allah of the Jews loves them, and he moves our missile to the right or to the left to miss them."

Thank You Hashem for loving us, please continue watching over us in these scary times! (Based on *Revealed Miracles Since October 7th* by Rebbetzin Rena Tarshish).

Recognizing goodness not only represents the right approach but also opens the door to a better future.

- **Showing Gratitude When all is Well can be a Challenge for Some** – But there are times in our lives when it is very hard to thank and praise G-d! There are times when even hard to hold on to hope! But there is hope even for a tree. If it is cut down, it will sprout up again and new shoots will not fail, as it states, "For a tree has hope; If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail" (*Iyuv* 14:7). Sometimes it feels like we are cut down in life. We think this might be the end. This is not true. G-d can change things. He can bring new life.

- **When someone says, “I lost my faith in this crisis”** – my response is: “Get rid of that faith. That faith is not worth a single penny.” Anybody can have emunah and praise Hashem when the sky is blue, and the sun is shining. But if you maintain emunah when things go wrong that is true emuna. Giving thanks for everything shows that you know in your heart that G-d is greater than any struggle and that He can help you solve all difficulties if you approach Him with a broken and humble heart.
- **Keep Praying Even When You Don't Feel Like It** – We keep our emunah even when we are hurting. Our Emunah keeps us serving Hashem no matter what. Sometimes I am not in the mood. I do it anyway for the sake of the mitzvah.
- **Express Your Gratitude** – In addition to feeling gratitude, it is important that you express it through your attitudes and words. You have to give thanks to G-d, but also tell people how grateful you are for their presence in your life, show to them how important someone's help was to you. Share and express gratitude and you will have a great life. Learn to appreciate the small things and give thanks to G-d in all circumstances. If you're going to wait to feel grateful and happy when good things happen such as a job promotion or buying a new house, you'll not experience the power of gratitude in your life. To enjoy the benefits of gratitude, you need to appreciate what you have, especially the little things. Gratitude opens the doors to miracles!
- **Replace Complaints with Gratitude** – Recognize that G-d is taking care of you and that you trust Him in every situation. Try to see the good side of every situation. For example, if you find yourself feeling down because it's cold or raining and you need to get up for work, you'll soon remember that at least you have a job and many people don't. Replace complaints with gratitude and you will see G-d working many miracles in your life.
- **Thank G-d Today for Simply Being Alive and Breathing** – Many people struggle to even breathe! Have you thanked Him for your health? There are so many people sick fighting for their lives. Do you always thank G-d before eating your meals? Because there are many people who don't have anything to eat.
- **Stop Complaining and Express Your Gratitude** – for Gratitude opens doors to miracles! May Hashem bless you and help you to live in gratitude!