



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל שיחי'
גורארי'
העוסק לילות כימים במסירה
ונתינה במוסד JEM
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ידידו הרה"ת ר' דוד שיחי'
ויסמן
והשליח הרה"ת ר' יחזקאל שיחי'
ראטמאן

The Birthday Miracle

AS TOLD BY RABBI MENACHEM KUTNER
TZACH ERETZ YISROEL - CHABAD TERROR VICTIMS PROJECT

On 7 Cheshvan 5773, Captain Ziv Shilon, a platoon commander in the Givati Brigade, was leading his battalion on a routine patrol near the wall on the Gaza border, when they noticed a suspicious package. As the commander, Ziv approached the package alone to investigate. The bomb detonated as soon as he touched the package and he was severely wounded. He lost his left arm on the spot and his right arm was crushed.

After several minutes, he managed to evacuate himself to his fellow soldiers in the waiting jeep while carrying his severed left arm. After emergency treatment by the

dedicated army medic, he was airlifted to Soroka Hospital in Be'er Sheva in critical condition and the doctors valiantly fought for his life. Several days later and after many surgeries, his condition stabilized but, sadly, they were unable to reattach his left arm and his right arm seemed damaged beyond repair.

Ziv was eventually transferred to the Rehabilitation Hospital at Tel Hashomer (in Tel Aviv) and the doctors continued to work on saving his right arm. To their frustration, the numerous operations accomplished nothing. To make matters worse, they realized that Ziv's

lifeless right arm was becoming a life threatening liability to the rest of his body and they recommended that it be amputated.

Ziv adamantly refused to consider this option. “As doctors you need to do your job to heal,” he said. “The fact that I lost my left arm at the border, that was not in my control. Under no circumstances will I willingly consent to have my right arm amputated. I have the strength to endure any amount of surgeries and procedures you need to do to save my right hand.”

They tried to explain to him that he really had no choice in the matter and the debate continued for several weeks.

In the capacity of my shlichus in the “Chabad Terror Victims Project” department of Tzach I work with the “*Metzuyanei Tzaha!*” (wounded soldiers of the IDF) and on occasion we arrange a “trip of a lifetime” for them. They are treated to a full week of fun and sightseeing in New York City. I would regularly visit Ziv during his long months of rehabilitation and was aware of the agonizing decision he was facing. I suggested he join our trip to get a break from the painful reality of the hospital and his medical decisions.

He was delighted with the idea. “This is exactly what I need right now!” he said.

The group of ten soldiers had a blast in New York for a full week. Friday was designated for the spiritual part of the journey. We visited 770 and had the *zechus* to daven in the Rebbe’s room and to see the entire building. Touring Crown Heights and observing the vibrant *chassidische* lifestyle in the heart of New York made a deep impression on them.

The next part of the trip was a visit to the Ohel, and on the bus ride, I wanted to share with them the significance of this visit. I described how a Chossid prepares to enter *yechidus*, the procedure of writing a *pan* and how important it is to prepare a *keili* to receive the Rebbe’s *bracha*. I then offered each one to wrap tefillin as a preparation to entering the Ohel.

They all sat in the large tent with a pen and paper and I guided them in writing the opening line of the *pan* and they continued on their own. I told them that I would wait for them in the Ohel and as they enter I will recite with each one their *perek* in Tehillim.

The entire group was very serious and they spent close to an hour writing their *panim*. With his prosthetic arm, Ziv wrote a *pan* to the Rebbe.

When Ziv entered the Ohel, he told me that he is twenty-five years old and we recited Perek Chof-Vov. As we finished the *perek* he told me that he made a mistake. “I will be turning twenty-five next week. Right now I am twenty-four.” Without missing a beat I turned to Perek Chof-Hei and recited it with him. He then read his *pan* and tore it with his prosthetic arm and his teeth.



On the bus ride to Manhattan, where we were to spend Shabbos, there was a very special and uplifted atmosphere. The soldiers felt the Rebbe’s love for them and one of them told me that he left the heavy burden of his troubles in the Ohel. There was much singing and celebration during that ride.

I noticed that Ziv sat in the back of the bus deep in thought and was not participating in the good cheer.

That night, Ziv requested to sit next to me for *seudas Shabbos*. After *kiddush* and *hamotzi* Ziv turned to me and said, “Listen, Rav Menachem. The Rebbe made me very upset.”

“What happened?” I asked, shaking.

He proceeded to tell me that at the Ohel the major issue on his mind was his ongoing debate with the doctors about his right arm. As he was writing his *pan* he suddenly had the following thought: If the *perek* Tehillim he recites in the Ohel will have three references to a hand, he will take it as a sign that his hand is salvageable. If there is no mention



of “hand” he will take it as a sign that he will lose his right arm as well.

As we read Perek Chof-Vov together he was elated and relieved to read three references to “hand” and even the right hand! In *possuk vov*: אֶרְחַץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כַּפַּי --I washed my hands with cleanliness. In *possuk yud*: אֲשֶׁר בִּידֵיהֶם זִמָּה וַיִּמְנוּם --in whose hands are plots and whose right hands are full of bribery.

But then he realized that we said the wrong *perek* and as we said Perek Chof-Hei he was saddened that he did not find any reference to hands whatsoever.

“Rav Menachem, the Rebbe’s message to me is that I will lose my right arm as well...”

I sat there thunderstruck, and for a few long moments I could not even breathe.

Suddenly, I had an idea. “Tell me, Ziv. When you say that you are turning twenty-five next week, are you referring to your birthday on the secular calendar?”

“Correct.”

“Do you know the Jewish date of your birth?”

“Of course. Chof-Gimmel Iyar.”

I jumped out of my chair. “Ziv! Today was your real birthday! As you were standing in the Ohel your real *perek* in Tehillim was Perek Chof-Vov, not Perek Chof-Hei!”

Needless to say the joyous atmosphere in the room reached a fever pitch and we celebrated the clear *bracha* Ziv merited to receive from the Rebbe.

On Tuesday, as we were touring the city, Ziv started to feel sensation in his right arm. He ran over to me and excitedly showed me how he was able to curl his fingers!

“I can’t believe it! This is the first time I have feeling in my arm since the terrorist attack!” He was overwhelmed with gratitude at the open miracle.

Upon returning to Eretz Yisroel, the doctors were shocked at the miraculous development and intensified their efforts to restore full functionality to his right arm.

On Erev Chanukah, Ziv had a surgery. That night, when I visited him at the hospital to light Chanukah menorah, I lit the *shamash* and handed it to him. In front of our eyes, the miracle occurred. Ziv lifted his right arm, held the *shamash* in his hand and lit the first candle on the menorah. ❶

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