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# WHEN GOD SAYS NO- THE STORY OF NACHSON WACHSMAN

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**A**fter Nachshon Wachsmann, a corporal in the Israeli army, was kidnapped by Arab terrorists, his captors demanded the release of hundreds of their compatriots by nine A.M. the following Friday morning.



Nachshon's family asked the Israeli public to do what they could for their son's safety in a few areas. Everyone was asked to please pray and say Tehillim (Psalms) for Nachshon. Women were also specifically asked to light Shabbat candles on Friday night, making sure to do so at the proper time (before sunset). It was hoped that in the merit of the performance of all these mitzvot, Nachshon would be saved.

The Israeli's public's response was so positive that you may very well have gotten into a cab, only to have the cabbie ask you to please open the book of Tehillim next to you on the back seat and start saying some chapters for Nachshon. "I can't say Tehillim because I'm driving," the cabbie would say. "But you can."

On Thursday night, 24 hours before the ultimatum, a prayer vigil was held at the Western Wall and, at the same hour, prayer vigils were held throughout the world in synagogues, schools, community centers, street squares ... and, yes, churches throughout the world. People of good faith everywhere hoped and pleaded and prayed for Nachshon.



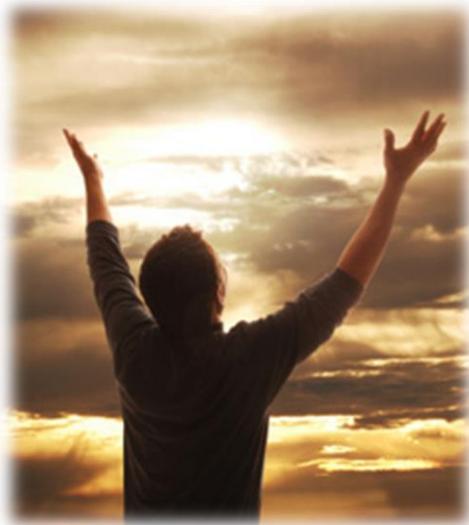
At the Western Wall 100,000 people arrived, with almost no notice -- Chassidim in black frock coats and long side curls swayed and prayed and cried, side by side with young boys in torn jeans and ponytails and earrings. There was total unity and solidarity of purpose among us -- religious and secular, left wing and right wing, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, old and young, rich and poor -- an occurrence

unprecedented in our sadly fragmented society.

After army intelligence tracked down where Nachshon was being held, the army decided their best bet would be to attempt a rescue mission. The operation was precisely planned, but during the operation Nachshon and one other soldier were killed by the terrorists.

After the news came out that Nachshon went up to Shamayim (Heaven), it is very likely that many people who had witnessed such extraordinary unity among the Jewish people asked themselves, "What happened to all of our prayers? What happened to all the mitzvot that we did? How can it be that everything went unanswered?"

In fact, one anti-religious Israeli journalist even had the gall to ask this question to Esther Waxman, Nachshon's mother. "What happened to all of the tefilot?" he asked her. Her spur-of-the-moment answer of, "G-d did answer. Sometimes He just says no." unquestionably displays tremendous strength for anyone, especially for someone who just suffered such a loss.



But there are those who heard this answer and got very upset. They were upset because they said there is no such thing as Hashem saying "No." Hashem always says "Yes." We may not merit seeing where all the tefilot make a difference, but they do. And shortly thereafter, the Waxman family found out exactly what happened to the merits that were created for their son.

During the week of Shiva (mourning) observed by Nachshon's family, the soldiers who made up the unit that attempted the rescue came to visit the family and offer their condolences.

One of the soldiers, who happened to be not religious, began speaking to Yehuda Waxman, Nachshon's father. "You know, you are probably wondering what happened to all the tefilot and mitzvot and chapters of Tehillim that everyone said for your son. But I'll tell you. Because we know exactly what happened to them. You see, when we were in that house where they were holding your son, we all should have died. We have no idea how we are alive today. There were bullets flying everywhere: over our heads, behind us, in front of us. Everywhere. There were grenades being thrown into every corner. Bomb after bomb went off. None of us have any idea how we're alive today. It simply should not have happened."

"You see, all of those prayers said for the Jewish soldier named Nachshon Waxman are the only reason any of us are alive today. Hashem took all those prayers, and for whatever reason, used them to save different Jewish soldiers."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- ❖ What most inspired you about this story?
- ❖ Have you ever felt that your prayers were not answered?
- ❖ Why do you think we find it so hard to hear the answer no?
- ❖ Have you ever seen that the answer “no” was for the best eventually?