

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

Enthusiasm!

Here is a Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (5:23):

“Yehuda ben Teima says, ‘Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, fast like a deer, and strong as a lion to do the work of Hashem’”.

Now, what is that telling me? It's telling me that I have to do things with enthusiasm. A parent will ask a kid, “Could you get me whatever it is?” The kid's like, “Yeah, in a minute; I'm on my phone.” “I know, but I need it right now.” “You can't wait?” “No, the blood is gushing out and I really need the bandage. Do you think maybe you could get it for me?” And the kid goes, “Fine.” And they pick themselves up like the weight of the world, and they shuffle over, and they get the bandage, and they slap it down on the table in front of their mother, and they fold their arms and they go, “Anything else? What, what do you want? What do you want? I did it, right? I did it.”

Here's another scene.

“Oh no, I've got a daven Mincha.” We turn around and do one of those quickie Minchas, then sit back down. “What, what, I did it. I did it.”

You've got to bentch after you eat. “Oh, all right...1-2-3... I'm done.” You can't bentch that fast. “Look, I'll do it again. I'm done.” When we do something, however, and somebody says, “Thank you very much,” we often want a little more appreciation, a kind word.

G-d wants your heart. He doesn't need you to do mitzvos. He gives you an opportunity to do mitzvos, but you're not doing him a favor. Hashem is infinite. He doesn't need you to eat a piece of matzah. You think He gets a thrill out of hearing the crunch? Yay! I'm so proud of you!

You have a friend, and it's his birthday. You're going through the card section to find just the perfect card that's going to say it just right. You enjoy doing it. It's not a chore. You want to do it. When we do things with z-rizus—with enthusiasm—it radically changes the quality of what we do.

There are a lot of things we can do enthusiastically that we shouldn't do quickly, like brain surgery. You know what I mean? I don't think you want to just rush through that. Take your time. But that doesn't mean you're not doing it with enthusiasm. It's important to do things with feeling. You're waiting for somebody special to come and visit. Imagine your mother says, “Oh, look, your best friend just came to visit.” “Yeah, tell him I'm in my room.” Don't you want to greet him? You might go down to the airport and hold up a sign. You want to show the person that they're important to you, and so you don't put it off.

You only put off things you don't want to do. You see, when people go to amusement parks, they get there early in the morning to be able to strap themselves into a machine that's going to hurl them upside down backwards at 100 miles an hour. If

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you live in Israel, you could just take a cab ride. You'll have the same experience. You don't have to wait on lines for that.

When people have a chance to go to an amusement park, wow! Have my picture taken with a cartoon character? What could be better than that? People say, "I can't get up in the morning." Then there's a ski trip. At two o'clock in the morning, they're at the bus with all their equipment, ready to go up into the mountains so they can fall down.

If we care about Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we care about Torah, we care about mitzvos, then it will show in the way we do it. We'll do it like we care. We'll be excited and enthusiastic about it. And the same way we do those mitzvos, that's how we want Hakadosh Baruch Hu to look towards us.

This guy used to show up ten minutes late for davening every single day. He also owned a factory. One day, the factory caught fire. By the

time the fireman got there, it had burnt to the ground. The fireman said, "What do you want, we were only ten minutes late."

Think about it. Why are we lazy? What is there that's stopping us from being enthusiastic about things? The Pasuk (Tehillim 104:4) tells us that angels are quick as lightning. There's no hesitation. How come it's harder for us?

There are two parts of you. Your body is made out of dirt. It's very attractive dirt, don't get me wrong. Very nice dirt, as dirt goes. Some of the finest dirt I've seen. But, basically, our bodies are made out of dirt, and dirt doesn't go anyplace unless there's an earthquake or you stick dynamite into it. It doesn't move anywhere. Dirt stays where it is.

That is the physical nature of people. They are lazy. They don't want to move. They don't want to go anywhere.

Then there's a part of you that's a soul. It wants to rise up. It wants to go

up and do things.

So there's part of you that's dirt, and if you want to give into that dirt and embrace the dirt, you'll be dirt. And that's what you'll be your whole life: a pile of dirt. Or you can animate that dirt. You can move it. You can get it going. You can allow your spirituality to overcome your physicality. And every time you push yourself to do things faster than you normally would, you're overcoming your own physical limitations. You're overcoming your dirt and becoming more like an angel, more like Hashem, more spiritual.

A bird is something that's physical, but it flies. That's why it says, "Kal ka'neshet—Be light as an eagle." Spread your wings and fly. You have the ability to lift yourself up out of this world, to fly above, to defy the limitations of this world. To become like an eagle.

And you can do it.

Rabbi Joey Haber

Big Me, Little Me

When you look around at the world today, there's something crucial to recognize: the world isn't telling the truth. I once read that in earlier times, society was far more focused on the "little me." But today, the focus has shifted dramatically to the "big me."

In the past, no one walked around wearing T-shirts with bold slogans. Typewriters didn't even have exclamation points. People didn't use bumper stickers to advertise where they went to school or boast that their child was an honor student. That just wasn't how the world worked.

Life was simpler, and people thought smaller.

Take Dwight Eisenhower's cabinet. It had around 25 members, yet only one felt compelled to write a book about their experiences. Modesty was the norm. In fact, a poll conducted years ago in U.S. high schools asked seniors a simple question: "Do you think you are a very important person?" Only 12% said yes.

Fast forward to today, and the world has transformed. It's all about the "big me." We've got exclamation points, emojis, bold messaging, and constant self-promotion. T-shirts, bumper stickers, billboards—all of it screams, "Look at me!" Social media

amplifies this even further, with everyone showcasing their best moments and biggest "trophies."

Consider this: in a 2005 survey, high school seniors were asked the same question about their sense of self-importance. This time, 80% said they believed they were very important. That's a dramatic shift. Why? Because we've been conditioned to think we're a big deal, and that mindset has reshaped how we perceive the world around us.

Here's a small, telling example. My son recently participated in a school basketball tournament and a bike race. He's only ten, so it wasn't really designed for his age group. But I let him join anyway. Later that evening, he came home holding a massive trophy. Surprised, I asked, "Where did you get that?" He re-

plied, "The winner didn't want it, so I took it."

Now, if you walked into his room, you might be impressed by that giant trophy. But the truth is, he didn't win it. And that's often the reality of what we see around us. People display their trophies—metaphorically or literally—but the stories behind them don't always match the grandeur.

This brings me to a further point. On Friday nights, as we welcome

Shabbat, we're accompanied by two angels—one good, one not-so-good. If the house is prepared, the table set, and everything in order, the good angel offers a blessing for the following week to be the same. If things are chaotic, the not-so-good angel offers a similar wish.

Why do we need both angels? Why not two good ones? The answer is simple. Life is a mix of good and bad. Every week has its challenges and triumphs, and we bring that reality

into Shabbat.

So when you look at other people's lives and it seems like everything is perfect, like they're always winning, remember this: it's a façade. Everyone is projecting a picture that's bigger and shinier than the truth. Don't be fooled by the trophies. Instead, focus on what's real—your journey, your growth, and what truly matters.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

Would You Leave?

This is one of the most thought-provoking stories I've encountered—and it's true.

Paul Geidel holds the distinction of being the longest-serving prison inmate in U.S. history. Born in 1894 in Hartford, Connecticut, Paul was the son of an alcoholic saloon owner who passed away during his childhood. Orphaned at a young age, he was raised in an institution and began working as a hotel bell-boy at just 14 years old.

In 1911, at the age of 17, Paul robbed a wealthy stockbroker named William Jackson, who was staying at the New York hotel where Paul worked. During the robbery, Paul tragically strangled Jackson to death. Two days later, he was arrested and sentenced to life in prison.

Paul's imprisonment spanned an astonishing 68 years and 296 days, during which he was moved between various New York state prisons. Over those decades, the world outside transformed in un-

imaginable ways—the Great Depression, the New Deal, two world wars. Generations of inmates came and went, yet Paul remained, becoming a respected elder within the prison walls. He earned prestige among inmates and guards alike and was entrusted with managing the prison library.

In 1974, at the age of 80, Paul faced an unexpected crisis. His file was reviewed, and it was decided that he would be released. But Paul wasn't interested in freedom. The outside world had become alien to him—a place he no longer recognized. The last time he had walked free, cars were rare, telephones were a luxury for the wealthy, and airplanes were primarily used in military conflicts. He had no idea how to live as a free man in such a vastly different reality.

Paul appealed to the court, asking to remain in prison, and the judges granted his request. He stayed another six years, finally being released in 1980 at the age of 86, after nearly seven decades

of imprisonment. He lived quietly for seven more years before passing away in 1987 at the age of 93.

This tale raises a profound question. Is it possible that some of us live in our own emotional prisons, preferring the predictability of confinement over the uncertainties of true freedom? Have we unknowingly carved out a "comfortable" space in the confines of our coping mechanisms—a place where, despite feelings of anxiety, numbness, and dissonance, we feel safe?

I have a friend who shared a deeply moving insight. He endured a difficult childhood marked by abuse, neglect, and trauma. At the age of 50, he embarked on an intense healing journey, gaining awareness of the habits, reactions, and coping mechanisms he had developed over decades to survive.

Despite his growth, he realized that part of him clung to the pain, anger, and stories that had defined his life. These narratives, though crippling, had become part of his identity. Letting them go felt like losing a witness to his suffering, and a piece of himself.

But once we kindle the inner



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flame of our soul—once we experience the infinite expression of Divine bliss, love, light, and joy—there

is no turning back. The appeal of our coping mechanisms fades in the presence of our true, radiant self.

So the question is this. If you had no fear, who would you be? And even more, who would you become?

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

One at a Time

I became a posthumous student of Rav Shlomo Freifeld zt'l, making him my rabbi 18 years after his passing. A great rabbi once gifted me a book titled *Reb Shlomo*, and when I asked why he chose that particular book, he said, "Every time you look at your bookshelf and see the name 'Reb Shlomo,' you'll remember that one day, someone may write a book about you. Perhaps that thought will inspire you to act with greater wisdom." His words resonated. *Kol ma'asecha b'sefer nichtavim*—All our deeds are recorded in a book in Heaven (Avos 2:1).

Rav Shlomo Freifeld was a towering figure, not just in his physical presence but in his achievements. He founded a yeshiva, a summer camp, a synagogue, and an entire community—each reflecting his boundless love for every Jew, regardless of their background or level of knowledge. He embraced those whom others overlooked, offering them a place of belonging. His legacy shines through every

story in that book, many of which I've marked with folded corners to preserve their lessons. Nearly every page is creased, a testament to the wisdom contained within.

One story in particular stands out. Rav Shlomo was in his summer camp, teaching two boys who didn't fit in elsewhere. They were boys who had been expelled from other yeshivot and had come to him as a last resort. On a hot summer afternoon, he sat outside learning with them.

As they studied, a distinguished rabbi approached, possessing a long beard and a commanding presence. The boys, impressed, invited him to sit and speak with Rav Shlomo. This rabbi had studied alongside Rav Shlomo in their youth, and after catching up, he asked Rav Shlomo the following:

"Rabbi, I don't understand. We learned in the same yeshiva, had the same teachers, and came from similar backgrounds. But look at you—you've built a yeshiva, a community, a camp. You're known throughout the Jewish world. Meanwhile, I'm a

simple teacher in a small school. How did this happen?"

There was pain behind that question, and Rav Shlomo, in his humility, deflected. "Hashem decides," he said simply, not attributing his success to himself.

After the rabbi left, Rav Shlomo sat quietly, shaking his head. His students, sensing something was amiss, asked, "Rebbe, is everything okay?"

He replied, almost to himself: "Everyone wants a yeshiva. Everyone wants a synagogue. Everyone wants a community. But who wants to sit in the heat of the day and learn with two boys? What is a yeshiva if not for two boys? What is a synagogue if not for one family, one individual?"

Leadership is not about the grandeur of institutions, but about the care and attention given to each individual. The many are nothing more than a collection of individuals, and if we fail to tend to the one, we fail the whole. Yes, it's challenging, and at times it feels like an impossible task. But true greatness lies in the willingness to embrace that challenge—one person at a time.

Rabbi Label Lam

Steal Time for Torah

One of the six questions we are asked after 120 years is: "Kavata itim la'Torah—did you set aside fixed times for Torah study?" (Shabbos 31a). The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah interprets the word *kavata* as meaning "stealing," and the Vilna Gaon applies this interpretation

here: "Did you steal time for Torah?"

What does this mean? It asks whether you took moments from this fleeting, temporal world and invested them in the eternal world of Torah.

The Chofetz Chaim tells the story of a young girl selling apples when thieves began stealing her wares.

She cried helplessly as her livelihood slipped away. A nearby vendor, observing her distress, asked why she was crying. "They're stealing all of my apples!" she exclaimed. He responded with practical advice: "Then why don't you steal some apples back?"

Our time is constantly being stolen by endless distractions in this world. The challenge is to reclaim some of that time—to "steal it back"—and dedicate it to Torah study.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 16 Tevet)

שמות חיילים פצועים לרפואה שלמה

אביתר מנחם חיים בן זהבה
אברהם מרדכי בן יעל
אהרן בן שרה הנדל
אופק בו אלינור
אורי אברהם בן הדסה
אייל אליעזר בן חנה
איתן אשר בן דבורה
אלון בן מרים
אלחנן יאיר בן דבורה
אליה בן רות
אלישע יהודה בן רות
אלעד בן שרית
אמיר בן אלה
בנימין בן ריינה
בנימין יצחק בן שרה
בר חיים בן נורית
גלעד איתי בן אפרת
דוד בן זיוה
הראל בן חנה
חיים מרדכי בן שרה איטה
טל גרשון בן שרה
יאיר יונה בן דרורה צפורה מלכה
יהודה אהרון בן מרים אסתר
יהונתן יאשיהו בן כרמית
יהונתן יוסף בן שירה
יואל בן אילה
יוחאי יהודה בן סיגל חוה
ירין אליהו בן סיגל
ישראל בן ענבל אסתר
כפיר חיים בן מירה מרים
מיכאל בן פריידל
מישל בת אנג'ליקה
מנחם דוד חי בן מרים
משה אהרן בן לאה בילא
משה צבי בן עירית
מתן בן דבורה
נועם אברהם בן עטרה שלומית
ניר בן אורנה
עדי מנחם בן מורן מירה
עודד אפרים בן ויויאן
עוז חי בן סמדר
עידו בן ענבל
עידן בן טובה
עמיחי בן סיגלית רחל
עמית יהונתן בן מאיה
רואי בן עופרה
רון בן אבישג
רון בן שרון
רועי חיים בן מירב
תום שאול בן דניאל
תומר בן צפורה

אבינתן בן דיצה תרצה (אור)
אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
אוהד בן אסתר (בן עמי)
אוהד בן קרן (יהלומי)
אור בן גאולה (לוי)
איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
אלון בן עידית (אהל)
אליה בן סיגלית (כהן)
אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
אלכסנדר ששה בן ילנה לאה (טרופנוב)
אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
אמילי תהילה בת אמנדה פרנסיס (דמארי)
ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)
אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)
בר אברהם בן גיוליה (קופרשטיין)
גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)
גיא בן מירב (גלבע דלאל)
גלי בן טליה (ברמן)
דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
דורון בת סימונה שרה (שטיינברכר)
דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבע)
זיו בן טליה (ברמן)
טל בן ניצה (שוהם קורנגולד)
יאיר בן רות אידית (הורן)
יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)
יצחק בן אנטה חנה (אלגרט)
יצחק בן דבורה (עידן)
ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)
כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)
לירי רבקה בת שירה (אלבג)
מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)
מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)
מתן בן ירדנה עינב (צנגאוקר)
נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)
נעמה בת איילת (לוי)
עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)
עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)
עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)
עופר בן כוכבה (קלדרון)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
קית' שמואל בן גלדיס חוה (סיגל)
קרינה בת אירנה (ארייב)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
רומי בת מירב (גונן)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
שגיא בן נעמית (חן דקל)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)
שלמה בן מרסל (מנצור)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 16 Tevet)

INJURED SOLDIERS

Evyatar Menachem Chaim ben Zehava
Avraham Mordechai ben Yael
Aharon ben Sarah Hendel
Ofek ben Elinor
Ori Avraham ben Hadassah
Eyal Eliezer ben Chana
Eitan Asher ben Devora
Alon ben Miriam
Elchanan Yair ben Devorah
Eliya ben Ravit
Elisha Yehudah ben Rut
Elad ben Sarit
Amir ben Ella
Binyamin ben Reina
Binyamin Yitzchak ben Sarah
Bar Chaim ben Nurit
Gilad Itai ben Efrat
David ben Ziva
Harel ben Chana
Chaim Mordechai ben Sarah Itta
Tal Gershon ben Sarah
Yair Yonah ben Drora Tzipporah Malka
Yehuda Aharon ben Miriam Esther
Yehonatan Yoshiyahu ben Carmit
Yehonatan Yosef ben Shira
Yoel ben Ayala
Yochai Yehudah ben Sigal Chava
Yarin Eliyahu ben Sigal
Yisrael ben Inbal Esther
Kfir Chaim ben Mira Miriam
Michael ben Freidel
Michelle bat Angelika
Menachem David Chai ben Miriam
Moshe Aharon ben Leah Beila
Moshe Tzi ben Irit
Matan ben Devorah
Nir ben Orna
Noam Avraham ben Atara Shlomit
Adi Menachem ben Moran Mira
Oded Efraim ben Vivian
Oz Chai ben Smadar
Ido ben Inbal
Idan ben Tova
Amichai ben Sigalit Rachel
Amit Yehonatan ben Maya
Roi ben Ofra
Ron ben Avishag
Ron ben Sharon
Roi Chaim ben Meirav
Tom Shaul ben Danielle
Tomer ben Tzipporah

Avinatan ben Ditzza Tirtza (Ohr)
Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Agam bat Meirav (Berger)
Ohad ben Esther (Ben-Ami)
Ohad ben Keren (Yahalomi)
Ohr ben Geula (Levi)
Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)
Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)
Alexander Sasha ben Yelena Leah
(Tropanov)
Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
Emily Tehilla bat Amanda Francis
(Damari)
Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)
Ariel ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)
Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)
Gad Moshe ben Sarah (Mozes)
Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)
Gali ben Talya (Berman)
David ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Doron bat Simona Sarah (Steinbrecher)
Daniella bat Orli (Gilboa)
Ziv ben Talya (Berman)
Tal ben Nitza (Shoham-Corngold)
Yair ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)
Yitzchak ben Aneta Chana (Elgarat)
Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)
Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)
Liri Rivka bat Shira (Elbag)
Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)
Matan ben Anat (Angrest)
Matan ben Yardena Einav (Tzangauker)
Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)
Naama bat Ayelet (Levi)
Oded ben Bilhah (Lifschitz)
Omer ben Niva (Venkrat)
Omer ben Shelley (Shemtov)
Ofer ben Cochava (Kalderon)
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Yitzchak ben Devorah (Idan)
Keith Shmuel ben Gladis Chava (Segal)
Karina bat Irena (Ariav)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Brasalevsky)
Romi bat Meirav (Gonen)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Sagi ben Naamit (Chen-Dekel)
Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)
Shlomo ben Marcelle (Mansour)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)