

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Dovid Kaplan

### The Sunlight of Truth

Herschel had a non-Jewish business partner, Mr. Clark. Now, Mr. Clark was deeply impressed by his Jewish partner, as they were very successful in business, making a great deal of money. But what struck Mr. Clark most was Herschel's honesty and integrity. One day, Mr. Clark said to a friend of his, "You know, I know that the Jews have a holiday called Yom Kippur. It's always felt a bit awkward for me to ask Herschel about his religion, but I am curious. What exactly is Yom Kippur?" His friend, who was also not Jewish, replied, "I know that on Yom Kippur, Jews spend the day in synagogue. I have an idea. Let's go to the synagogue and see what they're doing."

So, the two men went to the synagogue on Yom Kippur, arriving just in time at about 11:00 in the morning to see the auctioning of aliyahs in the synagogue. They watched as the bids went higher and higher—\$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000. And then they heard the unmistakable voice of Herschel, who raised his bid to \$4,500. Without hesitation, Mr. Clark called out from the back, "I'll bid \$5,000." His friend looked at him and said, "Wait a minute, you don't even know what you're bidding on." Mr. Clark responded, "It doesn't matter. I know my friend, the Jew. He's a good businessman, and if he thinks it's worth \$5,000, then it must be worth even more. I want it, whatever it is."

The non-Jew, although not understanding the details of the Jewish world, recognizes the high level of integrity and wisdom that the Jew represents. The non-Jew sees the value of what is being auctioned because he trusts in the caliber of his Jewish partner.

The Gemara (Yoma 69a) offers a similar story. It recounts how Alexander the Great, on his way to conquer Jerusalem, encountered the Kohen Gadol, Shimon Ha'Tzaddik. As Alexander approached, he dismounted and bowed down before Shimon Ha'Tzaddik. His men were shocked. "You bow down to this Jew?" they asked. Alexander explained, "When I go to war, I envision this man, and every battle I've fought, I have won. That is why I bow to him."

When did this encounter take place? The Gemara relates that Alexander and Shimon Ha'Tzaddik marched through the night, and at the break of dawn, the two groups met.

The lesson here is profound. The rest of the world sees us Jews through the light of truth, the sunlight that reveals our true purpose in life. Just as Alexander the Great saw in Shimon Ha'Tzaddik the key to his success, the world, in its way, acknowledges the Jewish people as the bearers of a deeper meaning and a Divine purpose.

But as much as this light is for the world to see, it's primarily for us to see. We are to remember and remind

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Deena bat Shoshana  
Chaya Raizel bat Dena  
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Reuven ben Rochel  
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ourselves of our true purpose and heart and soul, striving to live with move throughout life.  
call to serve Hashem with all our guidelines and integrity as we

## Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

### Different But Together

End of life plans. Wills, last requests. Not things that are pleasant to think about. Decisions we tend to delay and push off. Discussions with our loved ones we want to avoid.

Parshas Vayechi is the closing parsha in Sefer Bereishis, and the final chapter of Yaakov Avinu's life. While the parsha speaks of Yaakov's end of life, it is called Vayechi – AND he lived, for Yaakov's life lessons live on, guiding us to this very day. As the Talmud teaches, "Tzaddikim, the righteous, even in their death, are considered alive." Their words, their teachings, their actions, live on.

"Vayikrivu yemei Yisroel lamus, And the time approached for Yisroel (Yaakov) to die, vayikro livno, l'Yosef, and he called for his son, Yosef." (Bereishis 47:29) Yaakov was getting older. He wanted his final wishes to be made known. He didn't call his financial planner or estate lawyer. Rather, he turns to Yosef, the son who was second to the Pharaoh. The son who was in a position of power, enabling him to carry out his father's last wishes.

Yaakov did not want to be buried in Egypt, but to have his final resting place in Eretz Yisroel. With poignant words, he turns to Yosef and says, "V'shochavti im avosai—And I will sleep with my fathers."

The Torah refers to Yaakov in this instance by the name "Yisroel." Yisroel, meaning a prince, a name denoting strong will. Though elderly, Yaakov gathered his strength, and articulated his request in a clear and precise manner. He asks Yosef

to promise that his wishes will be fulfilled. Did Yaakov not trust Yosef? Why the need to ask his son to take a vow?

"Eizehu chochom, haro'eh es hanolad. Who is the wise one? One who thinks of the future, of all the possibilities and deterrents that may arise." (Pirkei Avos 2:3) To be cognizant of the "what if's" of life. Yaakov was afraid, what if Pharaoh gave Yosef a hard time, and insisted on Yosef burying his father in Egypt. After taking a vow, Yosef could say, I promised, I swore to my father. This was his last request. How can you deny it.

Yaakov had his reasons for not wanting to be buried in Egypt. Rashi teaches that one reason was that the Egyptian culture worshipped the dead. From the time that Yaakov lived in Egypt, he brought blessing to the land. He was afraid of his burial place becoming enshrined, his body worshipped by the Egyptian populace.

Another reason was that by being buried in Eretz Yisroel, Yaakov was making a statement to his children and to future generations. Egypt, and for that sake the Diaspora, is not our final resting place. Our eternal home, our holy land, our country, is Eretz Yisroel.

Yaakov told Yosef that his request was for a "Chesed shel emes, A kindness of truth". Rashi teaches that chesed done to one who passes away is true kindness. For after death, the deceased cannot repay the kindness.

There is a Midrash telling of a debate between Truth, Emes, and Chesed, Kindness. When HaShem

created the world, Truth said that humanity is not worthy of creation, for man lies and is deceitful. Kindness retorted that man is worthy of being created, as man is full of love, understanding and compassion. But Truth had a rebuttal. Man does acts of kindness because of the hope of receiving something in return.

Chesed's reply was that there is a kindness for which one expects no remuneration. Chesed shel emes, the kindness shown by honoring a deceased's final wishes.

A lesson from Yaakov. While he still had strength, he faced his own mortality and made his request clear. And a lesson from Yosef. He went to his father. He listened to a hard discussion, he heard words that were difficult.

As children, we tend to tell our parents that there is plenty of time to talk about it. There are still years ahead. But Yosef not only listened, he pledged to honor his father's request. How comforting for a father to know that his words are being listened to. That he can have peace of mind with the confidence that his final wishes will be honored.

This wasn't Yosef's only visit to his dear father. "And it was after all these things, and it was said to Yosef, your father is ill. So he took his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe with him" (-Bereishis 48:1). This is the first time in the Torah where it is mentioned that one fell ill prior to passing away. Prior to Yaakov's passing, death came suddenly, without warning. Without an opportunity for any end-of-life planning. The Midrash tells us that Yaakov asked HaShem for illness. He reasoned with HaShem, that a man who dies without illness is unable to settle his affairs with his children. But, if there is a period of illness,

a man is forewarned of his impending death, and he has time to gather his children to instruct them on his final wishes. Moreover, illness prior to death enables a person to make a cheshbon hanefesh, an accounting of the soul. To which HaShem responded that Yaakov speaks well. Illness will begin with him.

Upon hearing that his father was ill, Yosef dropped everything, and ran with his sons to be with his father. To receive yet one more bracha for himself, and to ensure that his two boys would also be blessed by their zeide. A bracha, the most beautiful legacy one can leave behind.

Yaakov bentched Yosef's sons

with the famous bracha of HaMalach HaGoel. "The angel that redeems me from all bad, should bless the boys... v'yidgu larov b'kerev ha'aretz, and may they multiply abundantly like fish within the land." Rav Moshe Feinstein asks, should it not say like fish within the sea? Do fish live on land? Rav Moshe answers that Yaakov's bracha is that HaShem be with His children even in seemingly impossible situations and in the most difficult of circumstances.

And then Yaakov gathered all his sons. He gave each one a bracha, accompanied by a custom-tailored message. Yaakov is transmitting an important lesson. A lesson for his

children; a lesson for future generations. Families are comprised of individuals. All different, yet all part of one united family. We don't "one-size-fits-all" bless our children. Each one needed to hear a different message. Each child a world onto his own, yet, all stood together before their father.

I think of when my zeide, my mama, my father, my mother were niftar. By each one, we stood together. Brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles. No two exactly the same, yet all united. Yaakov's legacy, his final message. Be a family together, a nation united.

## Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### My New Car

It's remarkable how deeply we crave acknowledgment. Recently, I got a new car—a sleek, all-electric marvel equipped with every bell and whistle you could imagine. It does almost everything: automatically turns on the headlights when it gets dark, monitors tire pressure, and even warms itself up before you step inside. The only thing it can't do is make a cup of coffee—but I'm sure someone's working on that, too.

One feature I hadn't experienced before is the car's keyless system. If the electronic key is in your pocket, simply walking toward the car unlocks the doors, flashes the lights, and welcomes you with a soft click. The other day, while taking out the trash, I walked near the car. As I came within range, the lights blinked, the door locks released with a satisfying clunk, and the

side mirrors flipped outward like the ears of an old, loyal dog.

For a moment, I felt a peculiar sensation—as though the car was smiling at me. It sounds absurd, but it genuinely lifted my spirits. I stopped in my tracks and thought, If even an inanimate object acknowledging my presence can spark a fleeting sense of joy, how much more uplifting is it when another human being truly sees us?

This idea brought to mind a poignant episode in the Torah. After Yaakov Avinu passed away, Yosef's brothers felt uneasy. The Torah tells us: "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'Perhaps Joseph will bear a grudge against us and repay us for all the evil we did to him.'"

Until then, Yosef had treated his brothers with kindness, inviting them to dine with him and demon-

strating no signs of resentment. However, after Yaakov's death, the brothers sensed a shift. Yosef no longer extended his hospitality as he had before, and they feared that his true feelings were beginning to surface. But their assumptions were mistaken.

The Talmud provides a fascinating explanation for Yosef's behavior. With Yaakov gone, Yosef anticipated a new era in Egyptian society—one where latent anti-Semitism could easily erupt. He understood that his position of power as Viceroy might make any public association with his family appear as an attempt by the Jews to consolidate influence. Such perceptions, Yosef feared, could provoke hostility against the fledgling Jewish nation.

Thus, Yosef made the painful decision to stop hosting his brothers at the palace. He sacrificed personal warmth and familial sensitivity to safeguard the broader interests of his people. Yosef understood that being a leader sometimes requires



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setting aside one's own emotions, even at the risk of being misunderstood, for the greater good of the nation.

This story teaches us two powerful lessons. First, acknowledgment—being truly seen—is an essential hu-

man need that can uplift and inspire us. And second, true leadership often demands difficult decisions, requiring us to balance personal relationships with the greater responsibility of ensuring the well-being of others.

Yosef's wisdom and selflessness re-

mind us that while acknowledgment from others is a source of strength, the ability to rise above our immediate feelings for a higher purpose is the mark of true greatness.

## Mr. Charlie Harary

### Take the Shot

**B**asketball. A sport that was my close companion and a constant in my life. That orange ball became more than just a piece of equipment; it was my world. Every morning, every night, we were inseparable. By the time I was in tenth grade, I achieved what was a monumental milestone in my school: I made the basketball team. This wasn't just any team, though. It was the team. Every game brought out the crowds, every victory or loss made the local papers. It was a source of pride, and all I wanted was my moment to shine.

That moment came during my senior year. The coach turned to me and said, "Charlie, you're starting." I couldn't believe it. The game was against our hometown rival, and the energy was electric. The stands were packed, the crowd roaring. Every play was a battle—up and down the court, neck and neck.

With ten seconds left on the clock, we were down by one point. The coach called a timeout and gathered us into a huddle. He laid out the final play: "We'll pass the ball to Joe. Charlie, you'll cut to the other side. Joe will feed it to you, and you'll take the shot."

I froze. Me? Are you sure? I wasn't the star player. I loved the game, but there were others—better players, stronger shooters. Yet the coach was resolute: "Let's do it."

The whistle blew. The gym fell

into a tense silence as the ball was inbounded. Joe caught it and passed it to me. Four seconds left. The ball was in my hands. Just me and the basket. The crowd was a blur of noise and energy. But in my mind, all I heard was doubt: What if I miss? What if I let everyone down?

In that split second, my thoughts spiraled: If I miss, I'll be embarrassed. I'll be the guy who cost us the game. My teammates will hate me. My life will spiral... It was irrational, but fear often is.

Instead of shooting, I passed the ball to a teammate near the basket—a split-second decision. He wasn't ready, but he caught it, took the shot, and missed. The buzzer sounded. We lost.

In the locker room, I tried to brush it off. "Tough break," I muttered, blaming the miss on him. But deep down, I knew the truth. The coach approached me. "Charlie," he said, "good game. But you're off the team."

I was stunned. "What? Coach, what do you mean?"

He didn't mince words: "What happened on that last play?"

"I... I wasn't open," I stammered.

"Stop," he said. "The truth, Charlie."

I admitted it: "I was scared. I thought I'd miss."

What he said next changed my life: "Charlie, when I put you in the game, it's because I believe in you. If you don't have confidence in yourself, then trust me. I know what I'm do-

ing. I chose you because I knew you were the best option for that moment. So if you can't trust yourself, at least trust your coach—and shoot."

That lesson stayed with me. It wasn't about basketball. It was about life.

Every day, we face moments when we doubt ourselves. We're convinced we're not good enough, smart enough, or capable enough. But there's a higher Coach—one who sees our potential even when we don't.

In Judaism, we're reminded of this every morning when we recite Modeh Ani: "I thank You, living and eternal King, for returning my soul to me with compassion. Great is Your faithfulness."

Many read this prayer quickly, but let's slow down and reflect. It's not just about gratitude for waking up—it's about recognizing that the Creator of the universe has faith in us. Think about that: the Master of all existence—the One who made oceans, mountains, and galaxies—looks at you and says, "I'm putting you in the game today because I believe in you."

If G-d believes in you, how can you not believe in yourself?

This realization should shape every decision we make. Whether it's stepping out of our comfort zones, pursuing a dream, or rising to a challenge, we owe it to ourselves—and to the One who believes in us—to take the shot.

Life isn't meant to be mediocre or even merely great. It's meant to be awesome. So the next time doubt creeps in, remember that you were chosen for a reason. Trust the Coach, and take the shot.

# Bring Them Home!

## Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 9 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 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  
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 וויאן  
עוז חי בן סמדר  
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: 9 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 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  
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  
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)