

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi YY Jacobson

I Shall Not Die

In 1960, in a daring and covert operation, the Israeli intelligence agency, the Mossad, captured Adolf Eichmann in Argentina. Eichmann was entrusted with, and became obsessively devoted to, the extermination of the Jewish people. Every horrific detail of Hitler's "Final Solution" fell under his jurisdiction within the Gestapo. Eichmann was, in essence, the chief architect of the Holocaust.

The Mossad secretly abducted Eichmann and transported him to Israel, where he stood trial. The court categorically rejected his defense that he had merely been "following orders," and he was sentenced to death. On June 1, 1962, he was hanged in a private, undisclosed location. His body was then cremated, and his ashes were scattered in the Mediterranean Sea, beyond Israel's territorial waters.

Throughout this momentous chapter in history, one man bore the immense responsibility of guarding Eichmann, ultimately carrying out his execution and cremation. For more than 40 years, the identity of this individual remained a closely guarded secret. Only decades later did the world come to know that the man who executed Adolf Eichmann was Shalom Nagar, a devoutly observant Jew.

Born in Yemen, Shalom Nagar was orphaned at a young age, losing his parents when he was just six and eight years old. At the age

of twelve, he immigrated to Israel.

Once his role in Eichmann's execution became public, a German television network approached Nagar, requesting an interview about Eichmann's final moments. Nagar agreed, but with a firm condition: the interview had to be conducted in the study hall where he spent his days immersed in Torah study. The German producers suggested a professional studio—quiet, well-lit, free from distractions, with state-of-the-art equipment. Nagar was unwavering in his response: he would only agree if the interview was filmed in the beis midrash (house of study), in the yeshiva near his home in Israel.

With no other option, the German network relented. Their cameraman first captured the sights and sounds of scholars engrossed in learning before the interview commenced. Shalom Nagar, the man tasked with executing justice upon one of history's most infamous war criminals, recounted the extraordinary measures taken to ensure Eichmann's survival prior to his trial and execution. He was guarded not only from Jews seeking vengeance, but also from Nazi sympathizers determined to deny Israel the role of carrying out his sentence. Five prison cells were designated solely for Eichmann's confinement, with guards stationed in each of the four outer cells, ensuring that no harm could reach him.

Nagar himself was responsible for tasting Eichmann's food before it

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was served. “If I didn’t die within three minutes,” he recalled, “then the food was safe for Eichmann to eat.” His commanding officer had once joked, “Nagar, if you die, we can replace you. But this prisoner cannot be replaced.”

During the interview, Nagar described the night he carried out Eichmann’s execution, how he cremated the body, and how, in the dead of night, Eichmann’s ashes were cast into the sea. He also shared the haunting year that followed. “I felt as though Eichmann was pursuing me,” he admitted. “I would turn around, half-expecting to find him behind me.” Eventually, the dark visions subsided.

At the conclusion of the interview, the German journalist asked

why it had been so important to Nagar that the filming take place in the cramped, bustling beis midrash rather than a spacious, professional studio.

Nagar’s response was profound: “I knew this documentary would be broadcast to millions of Germans. I wanted them to see that not only have the Jewish people survived physically, but that we are thriving spiritually. Our Torah, our faith, our traditions, our values, and our connection to G-d remain as strong as ever. I wanted the world to see Jews sitting and learning—studying the ancient texts of the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and our sacred laws.”

Shalom Nagar passed away just months ago, on the 26th of Cheshvan, 5785 (November 27, 2024), at the age

of 88. He had the rare and solemn merit of delivering justice to one of the most monstrous figures in human history.

In his life and in his legacy, Nagar embodied the powerful verse from Tehillim we recite during Hallel:

“Lo amus ki echyeh v’asaper maa-sei Kah—I shall not die, but live, and I shall proclaim the deeds of G-d” (Tehillim 118:17).

Throughout history, the Jewish people have declared, time and again: We shall not die, but live, and we shall proclaim what G-d has done. After the Holocaust, we rebuilt. We persevered. And today, we continue to do the same.

“I shall not die, but live, and I shall proclaim the deeds of G-d.”

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein

R’ Akiva at the Panama Canal

Whenever I contemplate the Panama Canal, I find myself thinking... if only Rabbi Akiva could have seen it. Let me share why.

At the beginning of the Torah, we are told that Hashem called the body of water ‘seas.’ Rashi, citing the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 5:8), asks why they are called ‘seas’ when, in reality, they form one vast body of water. The Midrash explains that the taste of a fish which comes out of the sea in Akko (in Israel) is not the same as that of a fish which comes out of the sea in Spain.

Why does Rashi focus on the different flavors of fish?

Water is a metaphor for Torah (Taanis 7a)—just as water varies in taste and form, so too does Torah. There is the distinct “taste” of Sephardic Torah, shaped by the great sages of Spain—the Rambam, the Rif, the Ri Migash, the Rashba, and the Ritva—and there is the unique

essence of the Torah of Eretz Yisrael.

Each tradition carries its own unique flavor. Now, consider a place in the world where two of the greatest bodies of water—the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—converge. Such a location must also symbolize a confluence of Torah. The Panama Canal represents a meeting point of diverse Torah traditions and perspectives.

Now, let me share what I believe R’ Akiva would have said if he had seen the Panama Canal. Before its construction, a ship traveling from New York to the western coast of South America had to take a long and perilous route, sailing all the way around the continent’s southernmost tip. This journey was costly, time-consuming, and fraught with danger.

The Panama Canal transformed maritime travel. It created a direct passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, allowing ships to traverse in just eight minutes. Though the entire journey through the canal

takes a couple of days, the actual crossing through its locks is astonishingly swift. Even more remarkable is the mechanism behind it: The canal lifts a ship 85 feet into the air using nothing but water.

Consider this staggering fact. A Norwegian ocean liner recently passed through the Panama Canal, weighing an immense 168,000 tons. How is it possible to lift such a massive vessel 85 feet above sea level? The answer lies in the sheer power of water.

R’ Akiva himself discovered the transformative strength of water. He began his transformation into a Torah Sage from humble origins, completely unlearned in Torah. But upon observing water dripping steadily onto a rock, he arrived at a life-altering realization: If water—so soft and fluid—can carve a hole into solid stone, then surely Torah, with its infinite depth and power, can penetrate the human heart (Avos D’Rebbi Nasan 6:2).

Now imagine what Rabbi Akiva would say if he saw the Panama Canal. If water—a simple, natural

force—can lift a 168,000-ton vessel 85 feet into the air, how much more so can the Torah elevate a person beyond the weight of their struggles?

If you ever feel burdened, weighed down by life's challenges, think of what Rabbi Akiva might have said while gazing at the Panama Canal.

If water can lift an ocean liner to such heights, imagine how high the Torah can elevate you.

Rabbi Benzion Klatzko

Slow Down the Quickening

There were two young men, one whose name was Reuven, the other Yosef. They studied together in yeshiva in New York and were known for their dedication to Torah learning. In fact, they were the most diligent students of their year.

After leaving yeshiva, both married wonderful women who supported their learning. But over time, their paths diverged. Reuven, facing financial pressures, gradually transitioned out of full-time Torah study and into the workforce.

As his daily learning decreased, something else began to diminish as well: his identity as a true ben Torah. His studies became infrequent, eventually reduced to a nightly Daf Yomi session. But even that he began to miss. Soon, his Torah learning was relegated to occasional snatches of study between aliyos in shul.

Days turned into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years. Reuven's children grew up with a father who spoke about the values of Torah, but no longer embodied them. Subtly, his perspective shifted. The way he thought, the way he lived no longer reflected the ideals he once cherished.

One evening, in his forties, Reuven attended a wedding. As he watched the mesader kiddushin (wedding officiant), something caught his eye. It was his old chavrusa, Yosef; the very same Yosef who had once studied beside him with such hasmadah. But

now, Yosef was not just a Rosh Yeshiva. He was a refined, G-d-fearing man, a true ben Torah.

During the wedding meal, Reuven pulled Yosef aside and confided in him. "I don't understand," he said, "we were the same. We had the same passion for learning. I went to work, and you stayed in yeshiva, but something happened. I feel like my neshama has been stripped away. I know what I should be doing, but I'm not doing it. And life just keeps moving faster and faster."

Yosef looked at him and said, "Ah, you're experiencing the quickening."

Reuven was puzzled. "The quickening? What's that?"

"There is a mechanism in the universe," Yosef explained, "a phenomenon called 'the quickening.' When a person drifts away from spirituality, time accelerates. The years blur together. Your twenties become your thirties, your thirties become your forties, and the faster time moves, the less you feel able to change. The only way to stop the quickening is to bring meaning back into your life. And for someone like you, Reuven, the only way to do that is to return to Torah. You need to reconnect with your neshama."

Reuven went home that night inspired. The next evening, after work, he did something he hadn't done in years: he sat down at the

dining room table and opened a Gemara.

His wife and children watched in silent surprise. Five minutes passed, then ten. He yawned. Fifteen minutes in, he glanced at the clock. How slow time seemed to move... He had forgotten how difficult it was to build stamina in learning. It was like going on a diet, where the initial effort felt strenuous, even painful, but he knew he had to push through.

As he struggled to concentrate, his young child toddled into the room, playing with a toy. Instantly, his wife rushed over, gently taking the child's hand. "Shh," she whispered. "Tatti is learning Torah."

Reuven froze. It had been years since he had heard those words.

Something inside him reignited. He forced himself to continue. Forty-five minutes passed. His wife entered the room again, this time placing a cup of tea beside him, wordlessly supporting his efforts. The simple act spoke volumes. The life he had once envisioned—the one where Torah filled his home, where ruchniyus (spirituality) thrived—was within reach. He just had to fight for it.

Night after night, he pushed himself. The sessions became longer. He set goals: to complete a tractate, to master a sugya (topic). Slowly, the discipline returned.

And something remarkable happened. His children, seeing their father's newfound commitment, began to take their own learning more seriously. Because to a child, nothing is more valuable than what is precious



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to their parents. If Torah mattered to Tatti, it would matter to them too.

Reuven had found his second wind. And just in time—to stop the quickening.

We all experience the quickening at times. When we allow distractions—whether from technology, entertainment, or unproductive

habits—to consume our lives, time accelerates. Hours become days, days become years, and before we know it, we look back and wonder where the time went.

If I told you that in five years, you would be the exact same person you are today, would you be satisfied? Or would you hope that you had

grown, improved, and become a better version of yourself?

We must take action to slow down the quickening. And we do that by infusing our lives with meaning and reconnecting with Torah. May Hashem help us rediscover our passion, reignite our *ruchniyus*, and embrace the second light within us.

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

The Imperfect Painting

A young man struggling with many challenges once approached his Rebbe, seeking guidance. "Rebbe," he lamented, "things are so difficult for me—what can I do?" The Rebbe offered him words of encouragement and posed a thought-provoking question:

"What is the difference between a photograph and a painting?" The young man was puzzled. "Well," he responded, "a photograph is typically much more precise than a painting." "And which one is more valuable?" the Rebbe pressed. "A painting, of course," the young man answered. "And why is that?" the Rebbe continued. "A photograph is an exact capture of reality, but a painting requires skill, effort, and the ability to refine and correct mistakes. That," the Rebbe explained, "is the difference between the service of *malachim* (angels)—who cannot make mistakes—and the service of human beings, who can. And that is precisely why our struggles and efforts are so meaningful. Despite the challenges, despite the missteps, one should never give up."

For a long time, I thought this message was about the fact that we are allowed to make mistakes, and that this, in itself, makes our *avodas Hashem* (service of G-d) precious. But I have come to realize that there is a deeper lesson.

Imagine you need home renova-

tions and begin calling contractors. The first one listens to your list of needs and says, "I can handle everything, except the copper pipes in the kitchen—that's not my specialty." You move on to another contractor, who reviews your list and responds, "I can take care of most of it, but I'm not sure about the kitchen tiles—you might need someone else for that."

Then, you find someone who confidently declares, "I can do everything!" before even hearing what the job entails. Some would be wary of hiring someone who claims to be capable of everything, while others might be impressed by his confidence.

Now, imagine you give him the job, but at the very first task, he makes a mistake. Then, he stumbles again on the next. At some point, you'd likely decide that this person is not the right fit. And if he were wise, he'd acknowledge it himself.

Isn't this exactly what happened when Hashem offered the Torah to the nations of the world? When asked, each nation carefully considered the Torah's demands and admitted, "This particular commandment is not for us." They were being responsible, acknowledging their limitations.

But the Jewish people responded differently. Without hesitation, they declared, "*Na'aseh v'nishma*—We will do, and we will listen." They embraced the Torah with complete confidence.

Hashem granted them the opportunity. And what happened? It wasn't long before they stumbled with the Golden Calf. Logically, one might expect the Jewish people to reconsider their commitment, or for Hashem to conclude, "This isn't working out." But that didn't happen. Instead, we remained Hashem's chosen nation, proudly holding onto the moment when we proclaimed, "*Na'aseh v'nishma*." Why?

Because the Jewish people understood something fundamental: Hashem was not seeking perfection; He was seeking persistence. He wanted a people who, even when they failed, would rise and try again. He valued those who struggled, stumbled, and kept pushing forward.

The nations of the world were not being overly honest or responsible when they declined the Torah. What they lacked was the resilience to fall, get back up, and try again. But the Jewish people possessed that quality. And they were right, because the Torah itself dedicates an immense amount of focus to *teshuvah* (repentance), *kaparah* (atonement), and guidance for those who have faltered.

Hashem never expected us to be flawless. He wants us to keep striving. The beauty of our service lies not in its perfection, but in the perseverance to continue despite our missteps.

Like a painting, where the brushstrokes, corrections, and layers add to its depth and value, our journey—filled with struggles and recoveries—is more precious than any flawless photograph.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 22 Shevat)

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
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
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)
אוהד בן קרן (יהלומי)
איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
אלון בן עידית (אהל)
אליה בן סיגלית (כהן)
אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)
גיא בן מירב (גלבוע דלאל)
גלי בן טליה (ברמן)
דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
זיו בן טליה (ברמן)
טל בן ניצה (שוהם קורנגולד)
יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)
יצחק בן אנטה חנה (אלגרט)
יצחק בן דבורה (עידן)
מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)
מתן שחר בן ענת (אנגרסט)
מתן בן ירדנה עינב (צנגאוקר)
נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)
עומר בנימין בן ניבה (ונקרט)
עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 22 Shevat)

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
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
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)
Ohad ben Keren (Yahalomi)
Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)
Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
Ariel ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)
Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)
Gali ben Talya (Berman)
David ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Ziv ben Talya (Berman)
Tal ben Nitza (Shoham-Corngold)
Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)
Yitzchak ben Aneta Chana (Elgarat)
Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)
Matan Shachar ben Anat (Angrest)
Matan ben Yardena Einav (Tzangauker)
Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)
Omer Binyamin ben Niva (Venkrat)
Omer ben Shelley (Shemtov)
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Yitzchak ben Devorah (Idan)
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslevsky)
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)