

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Tzvi Sytner

Carefree Arizona

While ago, I was in Arizona for an event hosted by Mikvah USA, where I was invited to speak on the topic of marriage. I flew in on Sunday evening, with plans to return early Monday morning.

Before I left, I was told, "Why don't you take an extra day? You're already in Arizona, the weather is beautiful—you could escape the freezing cold of Toronto for a bit. Just take a day off."

I dismissed the idea immediately. "I can't just take a day off. What am I going to do? I have responsibilities, things to take care of."

My schedule was tight. I landed at 4:15 p.m., the event was set for 5:00 p.m., and I was scheduled to leave the hotel first thing the next morning. By the time the event concluded at 10:00 p.m., I was ready to check into my room for the night.

The venue, however, was not a typical hotel; it was the Savannah Wellness Center, a retreat dedicated to relaxation and mindfulness. Located in a town aptly named Carefree, Arizona, the setting was serene, almost surreal.

I walked into the lobby, where everything was pristine and white, the fireplace crackling softly, and that signature hotel fragrance filling the air. The atmosphere was one of complete tranquility. The receptionist welcomed me warmly. "Good evening, and welcome to the Savannah Wellness Center,"

she said with a smile.

"Thanks," I replied. "We're here to support you on your journey," she continued. My journey? I'm just here for a few hours, I thought to myself. I have a flight in the morning.

She handed me a small journal. "In the morning, you can join our intention-setting ritual. We also offer an evening session to help close your day. Throughout your stay, you'll find a variety of classes: meditation, mindfulness exercises, and more. We encourage you to explore." At that moment, I was convinced that everyone in this place was on some kind of cloud. The entire atmosphere was in slow motion, as if time itself had been dialed down to half-speed.

A staff member named David escorted me to my room. The space was minimalist: everything white and sterile, a large bed in the center, and a window facing nothing but cacti and endless desert. On the coffee table, there was a small bag labeled, "The Art and Mindfulness of Stacking Stones."

Curious, I picked it up, opened the bag, and poured out a handful of smooth stones. The instructions explained the meditative benefits of stacking them, how the process cultivates focus and inner peace. I chuckled to myself. "What kind of person stacks stones for relaxation?"

But, with no one watching, I gave it a try. Carefully, I followed the instructions, balancing one stone on top of another, listening to the subtle

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Manish ben Esther

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Bechor ben Rivkah

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Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber

Miriam bat Yeshayahu

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Deena bat Shoshana  
Chaya Raizel bat Dena  
Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva  
Reuven ben Rochel  
Paysach Yosef ben Hinda

sounds as they met. Before I knew it, I had completed a small tower. And strangely enough, I felt... calm.

Still, I told myself, "That was nice, but I have Shacharis in the morning. I need to daven and get out of here."

The next morning, I woke up to a notification—my flight was delayed by two hours. My first thought? I don't have time for this. I need to leave. With unexpected time on my hands, I noticed a morning meditation session on the schedule. Well, I'm already here...

So, I went.

The room was dimly lit, perfectly arranged with soft lighting and just the right level of tranquility. People sat wrapped in blankets, breathing deeply, fully immersed in the moment. I hesitated for a second, but then found a seat and joined in. The experience was unlike anything I had expected. No distractions. No rushing. Just stillness.

By the time it ended, I felt something I hadn't realized I was missing—peace. At that point, I wasn't even in a rush to leave anymore. But then, I checked my phone—another delay. Two more hours. And then another.

For nearly six hours, I was "stuck" in this wellness retreat.

Looking back, had it been up to me, I wouldn't have stayed even an extra hour. Who has time for this? Stacking stones? Meditating? Slowing down? It felt completely counterintuitive. My instinct was to move, to accomplish, to keep going. But Hashem had other plans. He was telling me... Sit... Be still... Just for a moment...

And as I spent the rest of the morning walking through the desert, surrounded by towering cacti and endless sky, I realized something profound: we don't need to fly to Carefree, Arizona to make space for reflection.

We see this with Moshe Rabbeinu. He became the leader of Klal Yisrael, the one who received prophecy, because he had the ability to pause, to find moments of solitude, to create that connection with Hashem.

If we can take just five minutes—a few moments of quiet—to step off the treadmill of life, we can connect with Hashem in the most personal way. It doesn't have to be through Tehillim or a Siddur. It can simply be speaking to Hashem, creating that quiet sanctuary for reflection.

Because when we don't stop, life keeps accelerating. We get swept up in the urgency of everything, and before we know it, days turn into weeks, weeks into months, and years slip by.

So let's take a moment. Let's slow down. Let's reconnect. And may Hashem help us find the space to truly see where we are, and where we need to be.

## Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Twerski

### Rav Wosner's Tehillim

**C**hazal tell us, "Ein adam shomei'ah Li u'mafsid—No one listens to Me and loses out" (Devarim Rabbah 4:5). Rav Shmuel Wosner zt"l often emphasized this teaching, highlighting that a person who follows the guidance of the Torah and listens to Hashem will never suffer true loss, even when it seems otherwise.

A friend of mine, a grandson of Rav Wosner, shared this extraordinary story.

More than fifty-five years ago, Rav Wosner would spend his summers in the mountains of Israel, seeking tranquility in places like Tzfat and Meron. These trips followed a familiar pattern: he would take a long morning walk, carrying a few sacred books, and find a shaded

bench beneath a tree where he could learn, recite Tehillim, and reflect.

In the summer of 1969, he traveled with a small group of attendants. One morning, as the sun was just beginning to rise, they set out for his usual walk. The roads were empty, the air crisp. Eventually, they arrived at a well-known tourist site, still deserted in the early hours. There, Rav Wosner paused, took out his Tehillim, and began to recite them in his usual heartfelt manner.

But this was no ordinary Tehillim. It was a rare, antique Slavita edition—an heirloom of tremendous value, worth tens, perhaps even hundreds, of thousands of dollars. For years, it had accompanied him, its worn pages imbued with countless prayers. When he finished, they

lingered a few more minutes, then continued on their way.

Hours later, back at their lodgings, someone noticed it first.

"Where is the Tehillim?"

A frantic search began, but it quickly became clear: they had left it behind. "We have to go back!" one of the young men said. "It's still early. I'll go now and retrieve it before someone else finds it." But Rav Wosner shook his head. "No," he said firmly. The young man hesitated. "Maybe Rav Wosner is worried about the winding roads," he thought. "I'll reassure him." "I have a very careful driver," he said aloud. "We'll take the roads slowly. There's nothing to be concerned about."

But Rav Wosner remained unwavering. "You are not going back." The young man pleaded again. "Please, Rebbe. It's safe." Rav Wosner looked at him and said

something that would stay with him forever.

"It may be safe for your guf (body), but it is not safe for your neshama (soul). By now, that place is filled with tourists. Who knows what you'll see? Who knows what you'll hear? I will not allow you to risk your ruchniyus (spirituality) for the sake of retrieving my Tehillim."

His words left no room for argument. The decision was final. The next morning, at the earliest hour, they returned to the site, but the Tehillim was gone.

They were devastated. The loss was immense, almost unfathomable. But Rav Vosner? He accepted it

with perfect calm. He did not mourn it nor did he express regret. His message was clear: no object, no matter how valuable, was worth jeopardizing something infinitely greater—the holiness of one's neshama.

Thirty-five years later...

Decades had passed, and the Tehillim was but a memory. Then, one day, while visiting the Austrian mountains, Rav Vosner received an unexpected visitor: a wealthy philanthropist holding a familiar-looking book.

"I was at an auction," the man explained, "and I saw this Tehillim for sale. When I opened the first page, I saw your name inside. I knew it be-

longed to you, so I bought it as a gift—to return it to its rightful place."

Thirty-five years later, the Tehillim had found its way home.

"No one listens to Me and loses out." Rav Vosner could have sent someone back that day. He could have retrieved his treasured Tehillim and spared himself the loss. But he knew that safeguarding the sanctity of the neshama was worth more than any book, no matter how rare or valuable.

And in the end, he was proven right.

The Tehillim returned, and to this day, it remains in the family.

## Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Two Out of a Hundred

There is a profound message hidden in the name of this week's Torah portion, Parshas Terumah. The entire Torah She'Baal Peh (Oral Torah) begins with a question: "From when does one recite Shema in the evening?" (Berachos 2a). The answer given is: "From the time the Kohanim enter to eat their Terumah." Terumah refers to the tithe given to the Kohanim. But what is the connection between the Shema and Terumah?

Chazal teach that one-fiftieth is the standard portion a farmer should separate from his grain and produce as Terumah for the

Kohanim (Terumos 4:3). The Vilna Gaon explains that the word Terumah alludes to "Trei M'Me'ah"—two out of a hundred—which is equivalent to one-fiftieth. However, if the essence of Terumah represents one-fiftieth, why does the word itself hint at two parts in a hundred? Why wasn't a term such as 'Chadmish,' representing Chad M'Chamishim—one out of fifty—used instead?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the core of Shema lies in its first verse, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," and the verse that follows, "Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L'Olam Va'ed." The recitation

of Shema is an act of unifying G-d's Name, affirming that every detail of creation, everything in existence, is ultimately Him alone.

The first verse, Shema Yisrael, contains 25 letters, while Baruch Shem consists of 24, totaling 49 letters. When we verbalize these words, we attach ourselves to them, and our very act of recitation becomes the fiftieth element—elevating these words and unifying G-d's name. Since we recite Shema twice daily, this process happens twice in every hundred utterances—Trei M'Me'ah, two out of a hundred.

That is Terumah. And that is its connect to the recitation of the Shema.

## Mr. Charlie Harary

### The Monk

A friend of mine shared a remarkable story that took place in his neighborhood years ago. There was

a man who had spent much of his youth searching for meaning. His journey took him across the world, eventually leading him to places like

Thailand and India, where he fully immersed himself in an ascetic lifestyle, perhaps even becoming a monk.

But his story didn't end there. He eventually returned to Israel, rediscovered his Jewish roots, and



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became a deeply respected individual. He built a Torah-filled home, raised a family, and his daughter married a young Torah scholar who would go on to become the head of a prestigious kollel.

At one point, this kollel was hosting a Melaveh Malkah fundraiser, and my friend was on the organizing committee. The evening's program included a speech by the rosh kollel, and as a mark of honor, his father-in-law—the former monk—was asked to introduce him.

Then, someone on the committee had an idea. They had found an old photograph of the father-in-law from his days abroad, dressed in the garb of his former life. They wanted to display it on a screen as a lighthearted “gimmick.”

My friend immediately shut it down.

“Can you imagine the humiliation?” he said. “A man stands up to introduce his son-in-law, the head of a kollel, and behind him flashes a picture of his past—a life he left behind?”

One of the most significant Torah portions, Yisro, tells the story of the giving of the Torah itself. Yet, when

introducing Yisro, the Torah does not simply call him, “The father-in-law of Moshe.” Instead, it emphasizes his past: “Yisro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moshe.” Why? Isn't it a fundamental principle that we do not remind those who have returned to a Torah life of their past mistakes (Bava Metzia 58b)? Why, then, does the Torah highlight Yisro's former role as a priest of idolatry?

I once heard a beautiful answer from my friend Yeshaya Kahalani, who quoted a sefer called Eitzos V'Hadrachos, written by Rav Yaakov Greenwald. Rav Greenwald, deeply involved in the emotional and spiritual well-being of others, corresponded frequently with the Steipler Gaon. In one letter, the Steipler wrote words of encouragement to someone struggling:

“You should know, this lacking, and this tremendous challenge—these are the vessels that you will use to open your strength. This will bring to your spiritual perfection.” You think you fell, you think you're in a challenge, you think you have a sort of lack—that feeling of unworthiness is your path to your great-

ness. And the Steipler quotes Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, who expands on this idea:

“Wherever your greatest struggle lies, that is precisely where your greatest potential awaits.”

People often believe that facing spiritual challenges is a sign of weakness, of distance from G-d. But the truth is the opposite. The very fact that one struggles is proof of their greatness. The greater the obstacle, the greater the opportunity for elevation.

This is why the Torah introduces Yisro in this way. It is not a stain on his past; it is a testimony to his greatness. He did not simply abandon his old life; he transformed the same leadership and influence he once wielded as the priest of Midian into his new role as the father-in-law of Moshe, a guide to an entire nation.

This is the choice we all face when confronted with struggles.

So the next time you find yourself in the depths of challenge, in a moment of doubt or despair, ask yourself: “Will I be a priest of Midian or will I become the father-in-law of Moshe?”

The choice is ours.

## Rabbi Yaakov Rahimi

### Honoring Hashem

What does it truly mean to show respect to Hashem? How does one properly honor Him?

The Chofetz Chaim teaches that the highest form of honor is cherishing and safeguarding the commandments of G-d. If you seek to respect G-d, if you wish to show Him honor, there is only one way to do so: by respecting His mitzvot.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Parshat Vayigash 6) expounds on this idea with the words of Rabbi Shimon bar

Yochai: “G-d says: Honor My mitzvot, for they are My messengers, and the messenger of a person is like the person himself. If you honor them, it is as if you honored Me. And if you disgrace them, it is as if you disgraced My honor.”

Just as an ambassador represents a king, and to dishonor the ambassador is to dishonor the king himself, so too, the mitzvot are G-d's messengers in this world. To treat them with reverence is to honor G-d, and to neglect or belittle them is, G-d forbid, a sign

of disrespect toward Him.

The Chofetz Chaim emphasizes that true love and reverence for G-d cannot exist in words alone. A person cannot claim to love G-d while disregarding His commandments. The mitzvot and halachot we follow are not mere customs or traditions—they are G-d's direct expressions of His will. When we uphold them with care, we are demonstrating our deepest respect for Him.

If we aspire to honor G-d, we must honor His mitzvot. By striving to observe them with sincerity and devotion, we fulfill the ultimate form of reverence for our Creator.



# Bring Them Home!

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

(Updated: 1 Adar)

### 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)  
איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)  
איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)  
אלון בן עידית (אהל)  
אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)  
אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)  
בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)  
גיא בן מירב (גלבע דלאל)  
גלי בן טליה (ברמן)  
דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)  
זיו בן טליה (ברמן)  
יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)  
מקסים בן טלה (הרקין)  
מתן שחר בן ענת (אנגרסט)  
מתן בן ירדנה עינב (צנגאוקר)  
נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)  
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: 1 Adar)*

### **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)  
Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)  
Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)  
Alon ben Idit (Ohel)  
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)  
Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)  
Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)  
Matan Shachar ben Anat (Angrest)  
Matan ben Yardena Einav (Tzangauker)  
Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)  
Idan ben Yael (Alexander)  
Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)  
Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslevsky)  
Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)  
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)