

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Yitzchok Aryeh Epstein

### The Farmer's Lesson

A well-known story is told of a Jewish man who approached Rav Shalom Belzer, requesting a blessing. The Rebbe inquired, "What is your profession?" "I am a farmer," the man replied. "A farmer?" the Rebbe asked. "Tell me, do you observe Shabbos? Do you refrain from performing labor on the holy day?"

The farmer hesitated. "Rebbe, it's impossible to leave the field unattended for an entire day. If I neglect my work, the field will be ruined."

The Rebbe patiently began to advise him, offering practical guidance on how he could maintain his farm while fully observing Shabbos. Their conversation continued for an hour until, finally, the farmer conceded. He resolved to commit himself to keeping Shabbos.

However, he added a condition: "Rebbe, I will begin after the harvest season. Right now, it's the busiest time of the year. Once things settle down, I will observe Shabbos properly, following all the laws you have explained."

At this, the Rebbe smiled and said, "Let me share a story with you.

"A group of wealthy Polish landowners once gathered for a celebration. As they drank and laughed together, each one boasted about the Jewish manager who oversaw his business. "My Moshe is the best," one declared. "He runs my tavern flawlessly." "Well, my

Moshe is even better," another countered. "He manages my lumber business and is completely trustworthy." The host of the gathering, eager to prove his point, announced, "I don't know about your Jewish managers, but my Moshe is more loyal than any of yours. He would do anything for me." "Let's put him to the test," suggested one of the landowners. "Tell him he must convert to Christianity." The host agreed and summoned Moshe immediately.

"Moshe," he said, "I want you to convert and become a Catholic." Moshe gasped. "Oh, my master! I never make such decisions without consulting my wife. Give me a few minutes, and I will return with an answer." He rushed home, spoke with his wife, and within minutes, returned. "I have spoken with my wife, and we agree—I will convert."

The landowners erupted in laughter and raised their glasses in triumph. Moshe had proven his complete devotion to his master.

Months passed, and the Poritz (landowner) who had forced Moshe to convert decided he preferred him as a Jew. He summoned Moshe, now known as Ivan, and declared, "Enough of this. I liked you better as a Jew. You will return to your old ways."

Again, Ivan responded, "My master, as you know, I do nothing without consulting my wife. Allow me to speak with her first."

Upon returning home, his wife ad-

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vised him, "Tell the Poritz that we are willing to revert to Judaism, but not now. Pesach is in a few days, and we have a freezer full of pork and barrels of whiskey, and we can't let them go to waste. We'll finish everything over Passover, and then we will return to being Jews."

Hearing this, the farmer who had sought the Rebbe's blessing burst into laughter.

The Rebbe looked at him and said, "You think I control Shabbos? Do I have the authority to grant you permission to delay its observance? We must do what Hashem com-

mands, regardless of the difficulty. The opportunity to fulfill His will is a gift, and we must embrace it fully."

The Zohar states that all the blessings of the week emanate from Shabbos.

A striking example of this occurred with two brothers who owned a jewelry store. Late one Friday night, someone rushed to their home, shouting, "Your store alarm is blaring! Someone must have broken in!"

The brothers debated what to do. "Should we go check?" But they ultimately resolved, "Shabbos is more valuable than all our jewelry." On

Motzei Shabbos, they rushed to the store, where the police were waiting. "You're the owners?" an officer asked. "Yes," they replied.

"Then you are incredibly lucky," the officer said. "The robbers who broke into your store were armed with guns. Their plan was to lure you here, force you to open the safe at gunpoint, and steal everything. But since you didn't come, they got nervous and fled before we arrived. Your Shabbos observance saved you."

Keep Shabbos and love Shabbos and Shabbos will guard you and love you back.

## Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### When Second Best is Best

In my late twenties, I developed a deep fascination for vintage motorcycles. One day, I discovered an old Harley-Davidson WLA abandoned in a barn in Devon. These motorcycles had been brought over by the American Army for the D-Day landings, but this particular one never made it across the Channel in 1944 and remained buried for 30 years. The WLA was an ideal military bike because it had significant tolerance for imprecision; it was built to function even if its parts were only roughly aligned. Unlike a BMW or a Ducati, which demand exact precision, a battlefield machine must be resilient and forgiving.

This reminds me of a concept in Judaism known as b'dieved, a term

that defies direct translation, but is often rendered as "after the fact." Every mitzvah (commandment) has an ideal form of fulfillment, referred to as lechatchila. However, there is also a degree of flexibility, a recognition that while a mitzvah may not have been performed in the most optimal way, it can still be valid and effective.

The WLA was the ultimate embodiment of b'dieved. And as I reflected on this, I recognized the profound kindness of G-d in allowing for b'dieved to exist. Has there ever been a person who performed every mitzvah perfectly, without deviation, every single moment of their life? A mitzvah represents the will of G-d, and where G-d Himself is concerned, there can be no b'dieved,

only absolute precision.

The will of Hashem is unified, just as He is One. In Hebrew, the word for "one" (echad) is closely related to the word for "sharp" (chad). A blade is sharpest where its two edges meet at their closest point, reflecting the idea that unity and precision go hand in hand. In the loftiest spiritual realms, where the will of G-d is undiluted, there is no room for flexibility. But as that Divine will descends through countless layers of existence, becoming further and further removed from its source, it allows for greater latitude—until, in this lowest of worlds, there exists the concept of b'dieved, a space where human imperfection is acknowledged and accounted for.

## Rabbi Doniel Staum

### The Litmus Test of Pure Intentions

Parshas Vayakhel recounts the first national campaign led by Moshe Rabbeinu, calling upon Bnei Yisrael to contribute materials for the construction of the Mishkan. The response was overwhelming—

they gave and continued giving until Moshe Rabbeinu had to call for a halt, declaring that there was more than enough: "The people were restrained from bringing."

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap raises an incisive point. Why was this

process orchestrated in such a way? Why did it need to reach a point where there was enough, and then the people had to be told to stop?

He explains that when a person engages in acts of kindness or gives tzedakah, it is not always clear whether their motivation stems from a genuine desire to help others or from a

personal need for validation. Do they give purely for the recipient's sake, or do they give because they need to feel like a giver?

The Mishkan had to be built with absolute sincerity, giving solely for the sake of Hashem. If a person donates out of a need to validate themselves, then when told to stop, they will resist, pleading, "Please take it!" But when one gives purely for the sake of Hashem, their giving is not about personal fulfillment; it is about aligning with Hashem's will. Before, Hashem wanted them to bring, so they brought. Now, Hashem wanted them to stop, so they stopped. That was the ultimate test.

This concept is reinforced by the fact that Parshas Vayakhel begins with the mitzvah of Shabbos. It is the fourth time in Sefer Shemos that the commandment to keep Shabbos is mentioned: first in Parshas Beshalach before Matan Torah, then in Parshas Yisro in the Aseres HaDibros, again in Parshas Ki Sisa ("The children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos") as a sign of the covenant, and now, once more, here. Rashi explains that the Torah reiterates this point to emphasize that the construction of the Mishkan does not override the sanctity

of Shabbos.

Why is this lesson taught specifically here? Because it embodies the same principle. If one's passion for giving is about personal fulfillment, nothing will stop them—not even Shabbos. But true avodas Hashem means serving Hashem on His terms. Hashem commands us to build the Mishkan, but not on Shabbos. Can we submit to His will? Can we accept His directives even when they challenge our personal inclinations? That is the foundation upon which the Mishkan was built.

This idea seamlessly connects to Parshas Parah, which some opinions hold is a Torah mitzvah to read in preparation for the Korban Pesach.

The Midrash teaches that the Parah Aduma serves as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. But how can that be? The Parah Aduma is the quintessential chok, a mitzvah with no comprehensible reason, whereas the sin of the Golden Calf seems to have an understandable psychological basis—Bnei Yisrael panicked in Moshe Rabbeinu's absence and sought an intermediary to connect them to Hashem. If the Parah Aduma is meant to be a kaparah (atonement), shouldn't it bear some logical connection to the sin?

The Beis HaLevi, in a profound and beautiful essay, explains: The atonement lies precisely in the lack of reason. The sin of the Golden Calf was rooted in misplaced passion—a desperate need to do something, even if that action was misguided. The Mishkan served as a correction for this impulse, channeling their desire for connection into a structure that aligned with Hashem's will. But the ultimate rectification is the Parah Aduma, which demands absolute submission—"This is the decree of the Torah." There is no rationale, no logic; only the command of Hashem.

Coming from Purim, a Yom Tov where Hashem's love for Klal Yisrael was revealed in the hidden miracles of history, we transition into complete obedience: the construction of the Mishkan, the purification of the Parah Aduma—and from there, we take the next step toward bringing the Korban Pesach, retelling Yetzias Mitzrayim, and experiencing the exalted night of the Seder and the Yom Tov of Pesach.

May we merit to be purified and bring the Korban Pesach this year together with all of Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, on Har HaBayis.

## Rabbi Chaim Rosenfeld

### Don't Worry

Allow me to share a remarkable story that my friend Ari Rosenberg shared with me. It serves as a powerful testament to the faith required to observe Shabbos without fear of financial loss.

Ari works for a well-known charitable organization in Chicago

that does incredible work. One of his friends, whom we'll call Harry Berkowitz, once approached him with a request. "Ari," he said, "I need a favor. My brother-in-law is a respected rabbi with a large family. He works tirelessly, but I know he's struggling financially, and Pesach is an expensive holiday. I want

to help him, but I know he'd be embarrassed to accept money directly from me.

"Instead, let me donate the funds to your organization, and you can send him a check. Tell him it's a gift from his shul, given in recognition of his dedication as a rabbi. This way, he'll accept it without hesitation, and no one will know it came from me."

Ari agreed, and Harry donated



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Donated Since 2019

**\$7,666,460**  
Donating This Year



\$3,600, which was sent to his brother-in-law. This arrangement continued for several years.

Then, tragedy struck. Harry passed away suddenly, leaving behind a young wife and children. His passing was devastating to those who knew him. After the funeral, Ari went to the airport, where the body was being flown to Israel for burial. Standing there, he found himself next to the deceased's brother-in-law—the rabbi who had unknowingly been receiving Harry's generous support for years.

Ari hesitated. Should he say something? After a moment, he approached him and said, "Reb Shlomi, I need to share something with you. I don't know if the deceased will forgive me, or if you will, but I feel compelled to tell you.

"You know the \$3,600 you received every Pesach? It came from your brother-in-law—the very man whose body is now before us. He was the one who ensured you had the means to celebrate Pesach with dignity."

Reb Shlomi's face froze in shock. "How do you know about that?" he asked, his voice trembling. "How could you possibly know?" Ari explained. "Because I work for the organization that facilitated it."

Tears welled up in Reb Shlomi's eyes. "I knew it," he whispered. "I always had a feeling. I once tried to approach him about it, but he denied any involvement. I can't believe it was him all along." Overcome with emotion, he broke down crying. "What will I do now?" he

sobbed. "He took care of me. Who will take care of me now?"

The next day, one of Harry's friends approached Ari. "I saw you speaking to Reb Shlomi at the airport," he said. "He started crying right after. What did you say to him?"

Ari recounted the story. The friend listened, deeply moved. Then, without hesitation, he said, "I want to continue that mitzvah. Please send him the same \$3,600 through the organization. Don't tell him it's from me."

A week later, Harry's brother called Ari. "I have a feeling my brother was financially supporting Reb Shlomi," he said. "Is that true?" "It is," Ari confirmed. "How much did he give?" the brother asked. "\$3,600 every year." "Then I want to take his place and continue sending that amount." Ari paused. "Actually, someone already stepped forward and donated this year's \$3,600."

The brother didn't flinch. "I don't care. I want the mitzvah, too." And with that, he donated another \$3,600. Now, Reb Shlomi had received \$7,200.

A few days later, Ari received another call—this time from Harry's widow. "I know what my husband used to do," she said. "He was always giving tzedakah discreetly. I know he was supporting my brother-in-law, and I want to continue in his footsteps."

Ari hesitated. He already had \$7,200 set aside for Reb Shlomi. Should he tell her? He decided to consult his rabbi.

"Rebbe," he asked, "Harry's widow wants to donate, but we already

have more than enough. Should I tell her?" His rabbi answered decisively, "She's a widow. If she wants to give, don't say a word. Let her do the mitzvah. If it brings her joy, let her give."

Ari called her back. "How much would you like to donate?" he asked. "How much did my husband give?" she inquired. "\$3,600 every year," Ari replied. "Then I'll give \$5,000," she said. And with that, she wrote a check. Now, Rabbi Shlomi had received \$12,200.

Ari looked at me and said, "Can you imagine? This man stood in the airport just days ago, crying, 'How will I manage without my brother-in-law? Where will I find \$3,600 for Pesach?' And here he is receiving not \$3,600, but \$12,200—more than three times the amount."

Ultimately, who provides for us? Hashem. He determines our livelihood. Human beings may serve as the conduits for His blessings, but it is Hashem who sustains us.

When it comes to Shabbos, we must trust that Hashem is in control. We close our businesses, shut down our emails, and disconnect from the financial concerns of the week. And yet, we lack nothing. Hashem Himself is saying, "I am taking care of you. Spend time with Me, and I will provide."

Shabbos instills in us the emunah that Hashem governs the world and our finances. Just as Reb Shlomi was cared for even after his benefactor had passed, so too will each of us be provided for, especially when we uphold the sanctity of Shabbos.

## Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov

### Package to the President

Imagine being chosen to personally deliver a package to the President—you would prepare eagerly, arrive early, and cherish the honor for a lifetime.

Yet every day, you have the privilege of delivering 613 "packages" to Hashem, the King of all Kings, who created you, sustains you, and knows you personally. If serving a

human leader excites us, how much more should we rejoice in serving our Creator with love and devotion? When we recognize who we are serving, our enthusiasm and commitment will naturally follow.

# Bring Them Home!

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

(Updated: 20 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  
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  
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: 20 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)