

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Chaim Gross

The Soldier in the Rain

The day of the Giving of the Torah was the day all of creation had been waiting for since the very beginning. Rashi (Bereishis 1:31) notes that the phrase “the sixth day” in the context of the creation of the world was a hint not to just any sixth day, but to the Sixth of Sivan: the day the Torah was given.

The entire existence of the world hinged upon that moment. In fact, according to the Ramban, there is a mitzvah not only to remember the day the Torah was given, but never to forget it. And not merely as a historical event, but as something to be relived. In the words of the Ramban, our eyes and our hearts must be there every day (Hasagos HaRamban on Sefer HaMitzvos, Laavin 2). We must visualize it.

There was Moshe. There was Aaron. There was thunder, lightning, voices and flashes of fire. The mountain trembled, the sound of the great Shofar filled the air. It was an overwhelming scene of holiness and awe.

But why all the grandeur? Why make such a momentous occasion out of it if it ended, seemingly, in catastrophe? Before Moshe Rabbeinu had even descended from the mountain, there was the sin of the Cheit Ha'Egel and then the breaking of the Luchos. The entire course of Torah changed. Only on Yom Kippur did Moshe descend again, this time with the second Luchos.

So why is it so vital to remember

the original Mattan Torah? What are we holding on to?

Let me tell you a story about one of the great Torah teachers of our generation: Rabbi Asher Arieli shlita.

Born in Bnei Brak in 1957, Rav Asher learned in the famed Ponevezh Yeshiva before moving to the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem. He married the daughter of the Mir's revered Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Nochum Partzovitz zt"l. What began as a small Gemara class held in a dorm room has today become a global Torah phenomenon; his daily shiur attended to by over a thousand talmidim and broadcast around the world.

His shiur is breathtakingly deep, engaging, clear and thorough. Not a detail overlooked. In the three and a half years I had the privilege to learn in his shiur, I can't recall Rav Asher hesitating once, repeating himself unnecessarily, or veering off topic. And yet, he is profoundly humble.

I remember asking him to serve as sandek (the one who holds the baby) at our son Akiva's bris milah. He agreed, on one condition: we not announce his name during the ceremony. I also recall one Friday afternoon, when he called our home to wish me mazal tov on a halachic sefer I had recently published and given him. My wife answered the phone. He introduced himself simply by his first name. “I don't really know much about halacha,” he said, “but it seems like a fine sefer. It must all be in your zechus (merit).”

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So why do we commemorate such a moment of the original Giving of the Torah if it ended in failure?

It's true that what we received there did not endure unbroken. The first Luchos were shattered. But the experience itself—the Revelation—was real. And that, says the Ramban, is what we must never let go of. It was an earth-shattering encounter with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, with Divine truth.

Chazal (Berachos 22a) teach us that every time we sit down to learn Torah, it must mirror that original moment: “with fear, awe, with trembling, and with sweat.” Torah is the foundation. Nothing else truly matters.

Listening to Rav Asher—whether he's explaining a subtle distinction between two views in a Tosafos, or analyzing how a Rashba consistently interprets two different Gemaras in a similar vein—is like stepping back into that moment. There is power, there is clarity, there is truth. It feels like a taste of Har Sinai. And it can change a life.

Allow me to share an extraordinary story.

A senior student from the Mir Yeshiva was once riding in a taxi. The driver did not seem religious. Yet he turned and asked, “Do you know Rav Asher Arieli from the Mir?” The student replied that he did. The driver explained that Rav Asher had played a pivotal role in his family's life.

His son, a talented and intelligent young man, had just completed his army service. He was being asked to stay in the military or pursue top-tier university programs. The world was wide open to him.

One day, while taking care of some errands in Yerushalayim, the young man was caught in a sudden downpour on Shmuel HaNavi Street, not far from the Mir Yeshiva. Seeking shelter, he stood under an awning by a building. That building hosts a shiur Rav Asher gives twice a week in Hebrew.

Out of curiosity, the soldier began to listen. He was transfixed. He had never heard Torah presented like

that before. He remained rooted to the spot, soaking in every word.

At the end of the lecture, Rav Asher walked out, and saw the young man still standing there. Without hesitation, Rav Asher offered to share his umbrella. They walked together. The soldier began to speak about the shiur, about what he had just heard. They spoke words of Torah together.

And that was a turning point. That conversation changed his life.

The taxi driver concluded: “Today, my son is a full-time yeshiva student at the Mir, in the Beis Shalom building.”

As Shavuot approaches, we may not all be able to attend—or return to—Rav Asher's shiur or a similar one from our personal past. But in our own current avodah and in our Torah learning, we can heed the Ramban's call: to re-experience and reconnect to the awesome power of Har Sinai.

Because it wasn't just a moment in history. It is the moment that continues to shape us. Forever.

Rabbi Meir Simcha Sperling

The Delayed Wedding

In the story of Rus, we encounter the tragic decisions of Machlon and Kilyon, two brothers who sinned by marrying Moabite women. The Alshich points out a striking difference between them: Kilyon, the younger brother, essentially disappears from the narrative. He is forgotten, erased from the annals of Jewish legacy. Machlon, on the other hand—despite committing the very same transgression—is remembered. More than that, he becomes the ancestor of Dovid Hamelech and, ultimately, Moshiach. Through his wife Rus, and the spiritual force of yibbum, malchus beis Dovid (the royal lineage of King David) itself emerges.

This should make us pause. They both committed the same sin. So why is Machlon rewarded with such extraordinary merit, while Kilyon vanishes?

The Alshich offers a remarkable insight.

By the natural order of things, the older sibling typically marries before the younger. Yet in this case, it was Kilyon, the younger, who married first. What does that tell us?

It tells us that although Machlon ultimately succumbed to the same sin, he initially resisted. He held himself back. He knew it was wrong, and so he waited. He struggled and he fought. Even if only briefly, he told his yetzer hara: No. He did not

act immediately. It was during that hesitation, that inner conflict, that his younger brother proceeded and married first.

In other words, Machlon didn't fall right away. He tried, and he delayed. He battled within. And even though he eventually gave in, that brief resistance was enough to change everything.

From that small act of restraint came the merit that led to the birth of Dovid, to kingship, to the lineage of Moshiach.

The implications of this are staggering.

He failed, but not immediately. He tried to stand strong. And that moment of resistance was eternally significant.

Just imagine the power of a single moment of self-control. The spiritu-

al impact of delaying an impulse. We're not even talking about total victory; just the refusal to give in right away.

Think of a daily struggle. Take one moment at a time, one decision

at a time. Each small act of control accumulates. Each pushback carries spiritual weight. Each delay could open the gates of tremendous bera-cha.

Who among us doesn't need

more blessing in their lives? Who wouldn't want more spiritual merit on their side?

We can do this. You can do this.

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky

Finding Your Place

We're now beginning a new book of the Torah—the Book of Numbers, known in Hebrew as Sefer Bamidbar. This name is rooted in a passage in the Gemara (Sotah 36b), which refers to the book as Sefer Ha'Pekudim, "the Book of Countings."

But what's actually happening here?

This section begins with the formation of the Jewish encampment in the Midbar—a structured, deliberate arrangement. The rationale behind this structure is found in what occurred at the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. At that moment, God opened up the Heavens and the depths of the earth. The Jewish people were granted a vision of what lies above and below, and they saw the celestial beings, the angels.

And what did they see? The angels were arranged in four camps, stationed in the four cardinal directions. Many of us are familiar with this from the bedtime Shema prayer, where we say: "To my right is Michael, to my left is Gavriel, in front of me is Uriel, and behind me is Raphael." Each side was led by an Archangel with their entourage. And each group of angels carried a flag.

The Jewish people, inspired by this sublime vision, yearned to live

on that elevated level. "We want to be like the angels," they said.

Rabbeinu Bachya notes something beautiful. In the Midbar, each direction had three tribal leaders, or nesi'im. The name of the Nasi who stood in the middle of each directional triad always ended in "-el," the same suffix found in the names of angels—Michael, Gavriel, Uriel. We see names like Shlumiel, Gamliel, hinting that these leaders, too, carried a spark of that heavenly role.

As the tribes arranged themselves by direction, they were also each given a flag. Chazal (Bamidbar Rabbah 2:7) describe what was depicted on each of these flags. For example, Reuven's bore the duda'im (mandrakes), referencing the story in Parshas Vayeitzei. Shimon's featured the city of Shechem.

If you've ever visited a shul where the Aron or the stained-glass windows depict twelve symbolic images, those are often based on these Shevatim banners. Each picture represents the unique strength or essence of that Shevet.

So what was the purpose of these flags?

Today, we have walkie-talkies and instant communication, even on the battlefield. But in ancient times, when soldiers were fighting amidst the chaos of war—confused,

scattered, unsure of direction—a raised banner was everything. A flag served as a rallying point. It told you where your people were. It gave you a place to return to. It reminded you where you belonged.

And that's the deeper meaning of a flag: it's a symbol of identity and unity. We speak of the flag of the Jewish people, the banner of Torah, and phrases like the banner of Israel. A flag is lifted high so it can be seen from afar. It shows the way.

Rashi comments on the Akeidah that when the Torah says "Hashem tested Avraham," the Hebrew word nissah can also mean "to raise up, as one raises a banner." The test itself became a flag—a signpost for generations—saying, "This is why I walk with Avraham."

Each of us has a flag, and we must ask ourselves: What is on it? What ideals do we rally around? What identity do we raise proudly, to signal who we are, as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation?

With G-d's help, may each of us find our place in the camp.



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Rabbi Joey Haber

Your Bar Mitzvah

There's a young man in a community—he's 19 years old. A truly wonderful kid. But he's had his ups and downs when it comes to religious observance. At times, he was distant from Jewish practice, struggling with putting on tefillin and other sorts of things.

Over the summer, and even more so when we returned to Brooklyn, he kept reaching out to me. "Rabbi, I want to meet with you. I really want to talk." And I kept pushing it off. Not because I didn't care, but because—well, life is full of distractions. It's easy to say, "I'm busy," and to let things slide. It's easy to let the urgent crowd out the important.

Eventually, I told him, "Let's meet Thursday afternoon, 3:30, the day after Yom Kippur. Come

to my house." "No problem, Rabbi," he said. "I'll be there." And sure enough, he arrived at 3:25. For a teenager, showing up five minutes early is practically a miracle, especially on a block with terrible parking.

We started talking. I knew he had started putting on tefillin again and was keeping Shabbat a bit more consistently, though it was still a struggle. "I'm trying," he said. "I'm here because I want to grow. I want a connection. I want to talk."

"Great," I replied. "Come upstairs to my office." But, as he had walked in, I noticed that he hadn't come wearing a kippah. "Would you mind if I got you one?" I asked. "No, not at all," he said. "I'm sorry—I forgot to bring one."

I walked over to my bedroom, which is on the same floor. In the

closet, there's a shelf—higher up—where we keep a small container of extra kippot. Old ones, spares, just in case. I reached up, pulled one out, and walked back into my study.

As I opened it up, I saw something that stopped me in my tracks. It was his bar mitzvah kippah, with his name and date of bar mitzvah.

I am not exaggerating. I'm telling you this exactly as it happened. I honestly still think it sounds made up. I don't even know why I have that box of kippot—this is a rabbi's home. We wear kippot. We don't need a stash of old ones. And if you're visiting, most people bring their own anyway. And yet—there it was. His kippah.

This wasn't coincidence. This was Hashem whispering to this young man: I see you. I know you're trying. I'm holding your hand. You're not in this struggle alone. And this isn't a fight you're meant to lose.

This is a fight you're meant to win.

Rabbi David Shelby

The Heavenly Chorus

There is a small halachic detail in the Shacharit prayer—specifically in the blessings before Kriyat Shema—that can easily be overlooked.

When we recite Yotzer Or U'vorei Choshech, we eventually reach the familiar words, "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh..." and "Baruch kevod Hashem mimkomo." These verses reflect the celestial praises of the angels. If you look carefully at many modern siddurim, you'll find a note: "If you're standing, sit down for these verses."

Why? Why the deliberate change in posture?

The reason is to distinguish between these verses—said during the blessings of Kriyat Shema—and the nearly identical ones said

later during the Chazarat HaShatz in the repetition of the Amidah, during the section known as Kedusha (see Orach Chaim 53; Mishnah Berurah ibid. 12, Kaf HaChaim ibid. 20).

But there's something much deeper at play here.

The angels in Heaven—the malachim—chant these praises constantly: "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem Tzevakot..." and "Baruch kevod Hashem mimkomo." But the Gemara (Chullin 91b) teaches something astonishing: the angels are not permitted to say these praises until we, down here on Earth, recite them first (see Nefesh HaChaim 1:6).

Think about that for a moment. The billions of celestial beings whose entire existence is to glorify Hashem—are silent. Silent. Until we initiate the praise down here.

When we say "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh" during Yotzer Or, we are not actively praising; we are recounting the praises the angels give. But when we stand during Kedusha and say "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh," that is our direct praise. And when we do that, we trigger the angels above to join in. That is why the Halacha instructs us to sit during the earlier version—to signal: This is not yet the real moment. The real impact comes later, when we stand and declare it ourselves. And it's not only these words.

Every mitzvah we do, every act of kindness, every moment of connection to Hashem—no matter how small it may seem to us—can reverberate across spiritual realms. So the next time you whisper "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh," pause. Realize the angels are listening. They are waiting. And they will not move until you do. You're not just reciting ancient words. You're leading the Heavenly chorus.

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 4 Sivan)

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)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרוד)

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza and Partial List of Injured Soldiers

(Updated: 4 Sivan)

Evyatar Menachem Chaim ben Zehava	Avinatan ben Ditzza Tirtza (Ohr)
Avraham Mordechai ben Yael	Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Aharon ben Sarah Hendel	Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
Ofek ben Elinor	Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
Ori Avraham ben Hadassah	Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
Eyal Eliezer ben Chana	Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
Eitan Asher ben Devora	Ariel ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Alon ben Miriam	Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)
Elchanan Yair ben Devorah	Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)
Eliya ben Ravit	Gali ben Talya (Berman)
Elisha Yehudah ben Rut	David ben Sylvia Monica (Konyo)
Elad ben Sarit	Ziv ben Talya (Berman)
Amir ben Ella	Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)
Binyamin ben Reina	Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)
Binyamin Yitzchak ben Sarah	Matan Shachar ben Anat (Angrest)
Bar Chaim ben Nurit	Matan ben Yardenia Einav (Tzangauker)
Gilad Itai ben Efrat	Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)
David ben Ziva	Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)
Chaim Mordechai ben Sarah Itta	Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslevsky)
Tal Gershon ben Sarah	Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)
Yair Yonah ben Drora Tzipporah Malka	Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)
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	

INJURED SOLDIERS