

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l From Commitment to Committed

For good reason, our preparation for Shavuot, the day in which we receive the Torah anew each year, is reflected in our growth and movement from where we were at the beginning of Sefiras Ha'Omer to where we finish at its end. The first day of Sefirah is symbolized by the quality of chesed she'b'chesed, kindness of kindness, and the last is represented by malchus she'b'malchus, royalty of royalty. At the very foundation of royalty is kindness, as a king or queen must embody such a quality in their leadership and ruling of a nation. At the other end of the spectrum lies the fully embodied quality of malchus, which includes far more than simply chesed. It is that which we strive to develop and reach by the time Shavuot arrives.

But what, in specific, qualifies malchus she'b'malchus? What characteristic personifies someone who is a true king or queen?

Megillas Rus contains the answer to this.

When you think about what is required to be a melech, the answer is that you must be committed to it. Commitment is a very compelling word. In fact, I like to say that there are two "C" words which are very important to being successful in life: commitment and consequence. Our Sages teach, "Who is a wise man? One who foresees the future" (Tamid 32a). When a

person realizes that their action will have a reaction—the nature of consequence—it is the sign of maturity and wisdom. Likewise, a king or queen must be committed to their country and citizens if they are to be successful at governing the people. This ingredient is depicted in Megillas Rus both in the life of Rus and Boaz.

After Machlon and Kilyon, the two sons-in-law of Naomi, pass away, she tells her daughters-in-law, Rus and Orpah, "Go, return, to your mother's home... Hashem should perform for your kindness as you have done for me" (Rus 1:8). However, in response to Naomi's directive, both Orpah and Rus said that they were not going anywhere. They both showed their commitment to Naomi that, in spite of their husbands no longer being alive and there not being reason for them to remain with Naomi, they wouldn't leave her.

But, in life, there is a difference between a commitment and being committed. Many times, unless our commitment is solidified in a concrete way to which we are held accountable, our undertaking remains something between us and ourselves. We make a "commitment" to go on a diet. But we must look at what happens the next day and next week to truly test the mettle of our commitment. It's fairly easy to make a "New Year's Resolution," and commit to all sorts of things. Yet the true litmus test is not whether we thought to do something, but if we actually carried

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it out. Our actions are what judge the resoluteness of our commitment. In essence, then, being “committed” as a verb more aptly describes a true commitment.

Now, let’s take a look at what happens next with Orpah and Rus and discover who gave a mere “commitment” and who was actually “committed.”

After Naomi heard that both her daughters-in-law wanted to remain at her side, she doubled down her efforts and encouraged them once again to return to their respective homes and families. At the sound of this, Orpah took one course of action and Rus took another.

Orpah kissed her Naomi and left. She made a commitment, but wasn’t committed. But Rus clung to Naomi, and remained with her. Rus was committed.

At last, Naomi made a third attempt at convincing Rus to return home. But Rus pushed back, and told Naomi to stop trying to persuade her to leave. And then comes the words which have echoed for centuries: “Where you will go, I will go; where you sleep, I will sleep; your nation is my nation; and your G-d is my G-d; where you die, I will die and be buried. The only thing which will separate us is death” (ibid., v. 16-17). Rus didn’t just have a thought in her mind. She meant it fully. She didn’t just make a commitment; she was committed.

When Naomi saw that Rus was adamant to follow her, she relented and acquiesced to have Rus stay with her and join her.

The quintessence of malchus, royalty, is this: being committed. And as it relates to the Yom Tov of Shavuos, as we stand with Hashem as the Kallah (bride) entering the day of her wedding with her chassan, Hashem, it is this that we are asked: Are we committed to Hashem? Are we sin-

cere in our commitment to be married to Hashem? It’s not a question of giving a commitment; it surpasses that. We are looking to discern within ourselves if we are ready to follow through and live in accordance with our commitment.

But this was only half of the picture, half of the marriage. We see that Rus, the mother of malchus and the mother of Dovid Hamelech and Mashiach, was committed. But what about the father? What about Boaz?

He too possessed this same quality.

In the middle of the night, Rus headed over to the silo where Boaz was sleeping and uncovered his feet, insinuating that she intended to perpetuate the legacy of her late husband through Boaz and thereby carry forth his name. When Boaz was faced with Rus’ bid, he replied that he couldn’t undertake it yet, as there was someone else who would need to first be approached: Ploni Almoni. Only if Ploni Almoni passed on the opportunity to marry Rus and redeem her husband’s name and legacy would Boaz take on the responsibility. Hearing this, Rus returned to Naomi and relayed what Boaz had told her. And then Naomi says something which teaches something remarkable about Boaz, and serves as a profound lesson for anyone positioned in a leadership role.

“Sit down, my daughter, until we find out what will happen here... Because the man [Boaz] will not rest until the deed is done today.” Boaz, as the leader of Klal Yisroel, wasn’t someone with the attitude, “I’ll call you back in forty-eight hours.” Sometimes, you reach out to someone and the message you hear is, “If this is an emergency, call 911 or check into your nearest hospital.” That’s not who Boaz was. If Boaz took something on, within that day—within twelve hours—one way or another, it would be done. That’s malchus. That’s a leader. Committed

to a person and people.

Anyone in the role of helping others can learn from Boaz. Many a time, a person tells someone that they’ll call them back. What happens then? They forget to return the call or they get delayed or they need to be reminded to respond. Such an attitude was the exact opposite of how Boaz approached working with others. Here, Naomi was telling Rus, “I know the man. He has a name for himself, he has a reputation. When someone comes to him with a problem, he doesn’t rest until it’s taken care of. And he does it all on the same day!” At that time, Boaz wasn’t even a young man. But he still acted this way.

If a person undertakes to help people, it could be just ten people, but help them and help them fully. Call them back right away. My Rebbe, R’ Gamliel, does not have messages on his phone. You call him, you reach him, he answers you. Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt”l received hundreds of messages a day and a day wouldn’t go by that he didn’t answer them.

Imagine the feeling that someone might have if they are waiting for their results from a medical exam. It keeps them very worrisome and anxious.

This Pasuk, describing Boaz, teaches an amazing lesson. “He will not rest until the deed is done.” It’s as if someone would call me and say, “Rabbi Wallerstein, my daughter’s off the derech, I need your help,” and Rabbi Wallerstein would not rest until he finds the right therapist, the right teacher and the right mentor and it’s done today. That’s remarkable. Truly remarkable. This may seem grand. But it’s equally true on a small scale. If someone calls you, take care of it right away.

This is malchus. This is what it means to be committed. It’s not, “Okay, I’ll handle it. I’ll get back to

you tomorrow.” The message you send when you’re committed is, “You’re waiting for my phone call. I have to call you back. I’ll call you back today.” Both Rus and Boaz exemplified this quality. Rus was committed to Yiddishkeit, and Boaz was committed to people.

And together, they gave birth to

the future malchus of Dovid Hamel-ech, who was entirely committed to Hashem and the Jewish people. He invested his entire being and energy into all that he did. When he danced in front of the Aron (ark) as it was returned to Yerushalayim, he was completely involved in rejoicing.

This is what this Yom Tov of

Shavuot affords us. It provides us with the opportunity to truly commit ourselves to Hashem and our Jewish brothers and sisters. We decide, “Where you go, I go,” and “I will not rest until the deed is done.” The mantras of royalty, of Rus and Boaz, the progenitors of Mashiach.

We don’t just have commitment; we are committed.

## Mr. Charlie Harary

### The Moment You Realize

**R**abbi Chaim Kreisworth zt”l was a great man, and in Jerusalem, there is a yeshiva named after him—Toras Chaim. He was a young man during the Holocaust, and one day in the concentration camp, he encountered an older man who told him, “Young boy, I know my days are limited here. I’m very wealthy, and I have a bank account in Switzerland that I’m never going to be able to access. I want you to memorize the account number and the passcodes. If you survive, please look for my children and give it to them.” A couple days later, this older man was sent to the gas chambers.

Rav Chaim survived the war, and came to Israel. For years, he searched for this old man’s descendants, but could never find them. One day, as Rav Chaim sat in a Beis Midrash (study hall) and spoke to a poor gentleman, doing his best to encourage him despite his travails, it happened. The poor man, in the course of conversation, disclosed his name and it dawned on him, the realization crashing down. He was talking to a descendent of the old man. The name was

familiar. He was face to face with the old man’s very own grandson.

“Wait a second,” interrupted Rav Kreisworth. “Did you have a grandfather in the Holocaust?” The man nodded in consent. “He perished there, in the gas chambers,” stated the poor man, plainly. “Take a seat,” Rav Kreisworth said, knowing what was to come next.

“Your grandfather was a very wealthy man. Do you have enough money to go to Switzerland?” The man shook his head. Without delay, Rav Kreisworth cobbled together enough money to send the poor man to Switzerland, where he’d be able to access the bank account with the numbers Rav Kreisworth had memorized.

Now standing at the bank in Switzerland, the poor man heard words he never thought he’d live to hear. “Because nobody touched the money all these years, and due to interest,” said the bank teller, “that account is now worth \$30 million.”

Now let me ask you a question.

At what point did this poor man become wealthy? When he spent the money? There are a lot of rich people who don’t spend money. When his grandfather left it for him? He

was poor his entire life until that point. When did he transition from poverty to wealth?

The moment that he realized it.

At that moment, he went from being impoverished to being wealthy.

What is Shavuot?

It’s the day when we study the Torah. It’s not the day when we celebrate the completion of the Torah. That’s reserved for Simchas Torah. It is the day when Hashem set us before a mountaintop and we heard the Ten Commandments. But it’s startling. For the forty days subsequent to the Giving of the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai to hear the Torah from G-d. So why do we observe Shavuot when we do if it took forty more days until Moshe Rabbeinu returned with all the laws of the Torah?

The answer is that Shavuot marks the moment when we realized how wealthy we are. It’s the moment when we realized that we have access to Divine information. G-d is going to give us His Book and endow us with His wisdom, which contains His light, and will guide humanity.

We live in a world where people make things up as they go, and yet

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we have a Book, the Torah, which is Divine. We have a Code which is deeper than anything man-made. We have the ability to connect to people across the world because of the Torah, and we are only alive today as a nation because of the Torah. The only reason we can find ourselves in any place of the world and pull a book off the shelf and feel at home is because of the Torah. The only reason the world has its values as they do is because of the Torah.

The overwhelming stream of wisdom which was handed down that

day has changed the world. And it all came down that one moment when the Jewish nation said, "We are the wealthiest people in the world. We just received a piece of G-d." That crossover point is what we relive on Shavuot. It is the moment when you stand underneath the chuppa and realize, "I am the luckiest person alive," and you have a whole lifetime to figure out why.

Don't let Shavuot pass you by. Fix your heart. Take a moment and stop to appreciate just how lucky

you are that you have the Torah. Whether you know a lot or don't know a lot, whether you're studying or not studying, whether you grew up with it in your hands or not, it doesn't matter. We all in a way get to start from scratch and begin again. Remember and remind yourself, "I'm the luckiest... I'm the wealthiest to have this wisdom." And with that attitude, we come to appreciate the greatest gift that we have and view it as an honor.

Because it is.

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## Rabbi Avrum Mordche Malach

### Walls of Sweetness

It was time. The long-anticipated moment of the Giving of the Torah was about to begin. Millions of people stood with anticipation, awaiting the moment the Heavens would open and the Divine voice of G-d would proclaim, "I am Hashem, your G-d..."

But, all of a sudden, the unexpected happens. The mountain, Har Sinai, is ripped out of the earth and appears atop the heads of Klal Yisroel. And then the following words are spoken to the Jewish nation: "If you accept the Torah, good; if not, there will be your burial place" (Shabbos 88a).

How could this have happened? The Jewish people shouted, "We will do and we will hear." Everyone wanted to receive the Torah. Who needed to be threatened? Moreover, what does it mean, "There will be your burial place?" What location is "there"? The Jews heard Hashem's voice as they stood underneath the mountain. It

should say, "Here will be your burial place."

Every Shavuot, my father z"l would repeat what he heard while being a yeshiva bachur in Novardok. "If you really want to feel the sweetness of the Torah all the days of your life, you always need to be surrounded by a wall, by a boundary. The mountain should be around you. You need your barriers, you need your walls. You can't have everything or see everything. You can't enjoy everything the world offers."

Imagine a little bumblebee, which lives off honey. Honey is the sweetest thing to him. However, the bee will only enjoy the honey if it takes in a small dose. What would happen if the bee fell into a huge jar of honey? It wouldn't be the sweetest place on earth for him. He would be in his grave. He would be dead.

If a person wants to enjoy the sweetness of the world, and truthfully, there are a lot of things to enjoy, we must remember our bound-

aries and our limits. What are your fences, your protective filters of your life, your points when you say "no." If you go out of bounds and go off-limits, then "there" will be the burial place, G-d forbid.

Hashem was telling the Jewish people: "You should know that sometimes being surrounded by a mountain feels restricting. 'Why can't I see the world?' you ask. 'The world has so much pleasure and luxury to offer!'" True, you should enjoy the world. You take care of work, you speak to people, you see things. But remember, when it is unlimited, "there"—out in the world with no mountain—will be a person's undoing. When you are "here" under the mountain, you will find life.

Receiving the Torah is the sweetest experience we can have. What can be better. But let's remember, it must be accompanied by the sentiment that we are surrounded and enclosed by a mountain.

In that way, we will truly experience the delightful pleasures that a Torah life has to offer.

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## Rabbi Paysach Krohn

### Finding Your Torah



**R**av Elchonon Wasserman hy" d, a student of the Chofetz Chaim, writes that he once asked the Chofetz Chaim the following question (recorded in Kovetz He'aros 6:6): "The Pasuk (Bereishis 32:25) tells us that Yaakov Avinu was left alone and an angel (i.e. the Satan, the angel of Eisav) wrestled with him until dawn. But if the Satan wanted to get rid of the Jewish people, why did he wait to fight with Yaakov? Why didn't he fight with Avraham or Yitzchak, who came before Yaakov?"

The Chofetz Chaim gave a remarkable answer. "The yetzer hara doesn't mind if a Jew fasts, davens or cries, as long as he doesn't learn Torah." Learning Torah is that which keeps Klal Yisroel going. Of course, Avraham Avinu embodied the quality of chesed and Yitzchak Avinu personified yiras shamayim (fear of Heaven). But the way the Jewish people transmit their legacy is through the study of Torah, a trait exemplified by Yaakov Avinu. That is why the angel fought with Yaakov. It's because he represented Torah, as the Torah itself states, "Yaakov was a wholesome man, dwelling in the tents of Torah."

Our most important focus and endeavor as we enter to Shavuot should be that of limud ha'Torah, diligence in the study of Torah. When we make a commitment to a greater degree of investment and involvement in Torah, we are assured that we carry forth and keep alive the tradition and heritage of our nation.

My father a" h passed away when I was a very young twenty-one-year-old. At that time in life, I didn't feel equipped to write his

matzeivah, monument, so my family asked the maggid Rav Shalom Schwadron zt" l to put some words together. However, there was one Pasuk which my father always mentioned and shared a unique insight into. It was that Pasuk which I put on top of his matzeivah. It comes from the beginning of Tehillim (1:2):

"For in the Torah of Hashem shall be your desire, and in His Torah you shall meditate day and night." The Gemara (Avodah Zara 19a), however, explains that when the Pasuk states, "And in his Torah you shall meditate," it can be understood to refer to the person's own Torah. In other words, through the process of learning Torah, it becomes "his." He, so to speak, acquires it. Before a person learns it, it is referred to as the "Torah of Hashem." However, once a person toils over it and makes it part of him, it becomes "his" and is rightfully—as the end of the Pasuk aptly describes—"his Torah."

My father a" h added a different explanation, and it was an idea which he truly lived. "For in the Torah of Hashem shall be your desire..." A person should have a desire to learn and master all facets and aspects of the Torah. He should want to delve into everything there is across the gamut of Torah—Chumash, Tanach, Halacha, Gemara, Midrash, and so on. However, each and every individual's expertise in Torah—or "his Torah"—that is what a person should delve into and immerse himself in day and night. Every one of us should undertake a part of Torah to be "ours" and our field of expertise.

My father, a mohel by profession, was brilliantly proficient in the laws of bris milah. He was familiar with

every Sheilah u'Teshuva (Responsa) printed, the Shulchan Aruch with its commentaries, and of course, the 19th Perek in Mesechta Shabbos (R' Eliezer D'Milah) which deals with the laws of Bris Milah. It was in this area of bris milah that my father dwelled day and night in.

It's a good idea for each of us to think about what portion of Torah we can make ours. Allow me to give you some suggestions.

For men, maybe someone will become the expert in Hilchos Mezuzah. Learn all of the halachos thoroughly, so that if anyone has questions relating to it, you're the man. The same might be true about Hilchas Basar B'Chalav (meat and milk) or Ta'aruvos (mixtures). Know it and become proficient in it. Or Hilchos Krias Ha'Torah or Birchas HaMazon or Berachos or Tzitzis. Whatever you decide, choose a topic, and become an expert.

Women can do the same thing. I'll suggest some topics: Hilchos Shabbos. That's very important and relevant every week! Become the expert, as much as you can. Or Kashrus or Hilchos Shemiras Ha'Lashon. My son, R' Eliezer Krohn, wrote a book, "A Woman's Guide to Practical Halacha." Pick up the book and try to study it. There are so many practical halachos pertaining to women.

But there is something more.

There are certain kabbalos (commitments) we all can take upon ourselves and bring into our lives as we approach Shavuot. For example, standing in one place as you recite Asher Yatzar. It's a very important beracha, during which we thank Hashem for the incredible workings of our physical bodies. We shouldn't be getting dressed or

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walking around or sending someone a message when we recite Asher Yatzar. We should stand in one place when we say it.

Here's another thing: say berachos out loud, so that other people can hear and respond Amen. Amen in gematria is equal to ninety-one, which is the same numerical value as malach, angel. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l once told somebody whose husband was going to have a serious operation that he should undertake to say berachos out loud so that other people could respond Amen. In this

way, angels will be created through the responses. In fact, the man lived another six years after that.

Here's something for women: say two chapters of Tehillim a day. If you can perhaps say more—five a day—you'll be able to complete all 150 chapters of the entire Tehillim in one month.

Rav Shach zt"l used to talk about the importance of bentching from a siddur. The Sefer HaChinuch (#430) in fact writes that if you do so, you will merit to receive your parnassah (livelihood) in an hon-

orable way.

All of the above are wonderful kabbalos each of us can accept upon ourselves as we enter this magnificent Yom Tov of Shavuot. Through it, we demonstrate our commitment to Hashem, which in turn will bring us closer to Him and Him closer to us.

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## Rabbi Fischel Schachter

### Just Hashem and You

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I was once at a Kiruv Shabbos, and the experience had begun beautifully. It was right after Pesach, during the days of Sefiras Ha'Omer, and the energy in the air was palpably electric.

That Friday night, everyone gathered together for an uplifting davening and I could sense that everyone around me, myself included, was in great spirits. The davening, however, was held very early, much before nightfall, and although Sefiras Ha'Omer was counted and there were certainly opinions upon which to rely to count that early, I decided to defer it to later. I could have counted along with everyone without a beracha, and make a condition as discussed in the Shulchan Aruch, but I figured that after it was certainly dark, I'd take a couple minutes and count then. No problem.

After a wonderful Friday night meal, I headed to my room and planned on getting a good night's rest. I had this subtle feeling, which kept on replaying in my head, "I'm missing something..." but I couldn't put my finger on it. So I just ignored

whatever it was, and fell asleep.

It was almost morning when I woke up. And then it hit me. I hadn't counted the Omer. It had never happened to me since my bar mitzvah that I missed a day. I knew that I only had until Amud Ha'Shachar (dawn) to count, and what time was it now...? I grabbed a little blue calendar I had with me, and began looking up what time Amud Ha'Shachar was. The only light in the room was a little light coming from the alarm clock. I was panicking, fidgeting my hands through the tiny pages, the only question on my mind: can I still make it or not? At my age, the only way to see the small letters was to lift my glasses and close one eye.

And then I saw it. I had until 5:43.

It was now 5:42. One minute!

I threw on my robe, washed my hands, and belted out the beracha, counting the tenth day of the Omer, and wow! As soon as I finished, I let out a big phew! There's nothing a Jew likes more than to make something at the last second. It was beautiful.

Motzei Shabbos rolled around, and it was time to daven Maariv.

As we got to the point when it was time to count the Omer, the shliach tzibbur (individual leading the davening) counted twelve days of the Omer. As soon as I heard that, I did a double take. And then I corrected him. No, it was eleven days of the Omer. And then everyone around me corrected me. No, it was twelve days of the Omer.

But it couldn't be. Last night was ten, so today must be eleven.

Until it hit me. Last night was not ten. It was eleven.

Last night I had checked what time dawn was, but I failed to check what day of the Omer it was. And in my hurried rush, I miscounted. At this point, twenty-four hours had passed and I was done. I wouldn't be able to count the remainder of the nights of Sefirah with a beracha.

Fast forward several days later. I was telling a story to kids at Shalosh Seudos, and there was a big Rebbe in attendance. That Motzei Shabbos, I had yaartzeit, and I wanted to daven for the amud (lead the davening).

I began davening, until I got to the middle of Shemonah Esrei and boing! I realized I had a problem. I

couldn't count the Omer with a beracha. What was I going to do? There were tons of people and it would be a huge embarrassment. I began to panic, as I thought to myself, "Well, maybe I can say a beracha, because there are opinions that if you're saying it on behalf of the congregation...I mean, maybe, I'm not sure if I actually counted the wrong day back then... G-d doesn't want me to be ashamed in front of all these people..."

But then it came to me. If I make this beracha now, it's not like all the people are going to say, "No, no, you can't!" No one knows. It's between me and you, Hashem. And at that moment, I

said to myself, I can't do it.

I went on to tell the person next to me that I can't make the beracha, because I missed a day. I was sure the man would say, "How could you miss a day?" but he was gracious, and he just jumped in and took over. It was great.

It was one of the great tests in my life, because it was between me and Hashem. Someone told me later that this once happened to the Divrei Yoel, the Satmar Rebbe—he had a medical emergency and he skipped the night and day—and the following night they came running over to him and said, "We have a solution so you can make the beracha! You can ask someone who could make a beracha not to

make the beracha, and you would make the beracha to cover him." But the Satmar Rav replied simply: "I'm not looking for loopholes. No, I can't make the beracha. I skipped a night."

"But all these thousands of people are standing there in the room?" shouted back the chassidim. "They need to learn from the Rebbe what it means to make a beracha!" But the Satmar Rav knew otherwise. They needed to learn from the Rebbe what it means to say, "If I can't, I can't."

There are moments in life which are between you and G-d. Be careful with those moments. They are very special. They change your life.

Trust me.

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## Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Very Soon

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Once upon a time, there was a princess who married a king. The king loved the princess very much, and he wrote into their marriage agreement that he would give her a king's ransom in jewels and palaces.

Shortly after the wedding, the king was called away on urgent business. Before he left, he told his young bride that he might be away a very long time, but she could trust that he would eventually return to her. A month went by, and then two. A year passed, and there was no sign of the King. Two years went by, and then five years. And then the people started to grow restless and decided

to elect a new monarch. They told the princess to forget the king, that he'd never return. She said that she knew he would come back. When it became known that a new king had ascended the throne, eligible suitors started to arrive, attempting to woo the princess. She turned down flat every offer. She could never think of marrying another. Eventually, everyone forgot the king except the princess.

Many, many years later, the king suddenly returned. He was amazed and overjoyed that the princess was still waiting for him. He asked the princess, "How were you able to stay faithful to me for so long?" She answered, "Whenever I used to get a little sad or de-

pressed, I'd take out my marriage contract from the cupboard and read all the things that you promised me. I knew it wasn't an illusion because it was written in black and white."

G-d is the King. The Jewish people are the bride. The Torah is our marriage contract. When a marriage breaks down, the first thing to go is the celebration of the anniversary. We, the Jewish people, still celebrate the anniversary of our marriage. It's called Shavuot. We know that one day, very soon, our King will return because we still have our marriage contract. It's written in black and white.

# Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

## Choices

Choices. Dilemmas. Life altering decisions. Each of the individuals in Megillas Rus is faced with a choice, a decision that would determine their future. While Rus was written about three thousand years ago, its teachings are relevant to us today. We learn that the choices we make do matter, and can profoundly alter the trajectory of our lives.

Megillas Rus opens with the words “Va’yehi bimei shefot hashofetim, And it was in the days that the judges judged.” The Talmud teaches us that “Kol makom sheh’neh’emar ‘Vayehi’, aino elah lashon tzaar, Wherever the term ‘Vayehi’ is mentioned, it is nothing but an expression of pain” It foreshadows that something tragic is about to occur. Va’yehi – a time of “Oy Vay”.

Megillas Rus tells us about a famine in the Eretz Yisroel. Food was scarce, people would go searching in the fields, but to no avail. We are introduced to Elimelech, who was the “parnes ha-dor”, the philanthropist of the generation. A wealthy man, a leader of the nation, a man to whom all would turn in times of need.

The hungry made their way to the home of Elimelech, knocking on his door, with the hope of returning to their families with some bread, some food to bring to the table, some nourishment for their children.

But there was “no one home”. The doors were locked, the windows shuttered. Elimelech abandoned his people. Together with his wife,

Naomi, and their two sons, Machlon and Chilyon, he left his home town of Bais Lechem, and went to live in Moav.

Elimelech was faced with a challenge. Would he be there for his people during that difficult time? He had the power and financial means to sustain the poor, but he was unable to live up to the test. He feared that by helping just a few, many more would come knocking for assistance. How would he decide whom to help and whom to turn away? How could he possibly help the many that would turn to him with outstretched hands?

Instead of being a source of support and sustenance, Elimelech packs up and leaves to Moav. How ironic that Elimelech, who came from Bais Lechem – meaning “House of Bread”, a community known for giving and sharing, abandons his people and relocates to Moav, inhabited by a people who were the exact opposite, a nation who refused to give or share. The Torah tells us that when the Am Yisroel left Egypt and met up with the people of Moav, the Moavites didn’t even offer water to the tired, hungry and thirsty travelers.

We tend to think of challenges as deprivations or hardships. However, even the blessings of great wealth or extraordinary talents can be challenges. The test is how to channel these gifts in positive ways. Will we give of what HaShem has blessed us with to others? Will we help make the world a better place? The choice is ours.

Elimelech and his family settle in Moav, but one calamity after another befalls them. Elimelech loses his fortune, and passes away, a broken-hearted man.

Machlon and Chilyon are faced with their own choices. To remain in Moav after their father’s death, or return to Eretz Yisroel. The Midrash tells us that while their mother desired to return to Eretz Yisroel, they chose to remain in Moav, and she stayed with them.

The brothers marry sisters, Moavite princesses – Machlon marries Rus and Chilyon marries Orpah. Once again tragedy befalls Naomi, with both sons passing away, leaving her with two childless daughters-in-law.

Upon learning that the famine is over, Naomi decides to return home. She begs her daughters-in-law to return to their families, knowing that it will be a difficult life for them in Eretz Yisroel. Both women are at a loss for words, and begin to cry. They both loved Naomi and didn’t want to leave her. As the Megilla relates, “they raised their voices and wept...”, they had no words.

Ultimately, Orpah kisses Naomi good-bye and returns home. But Rus “dovkoh boh” – she clung to Naomi and refused to leave.

Once again – choices. Orpah chose to remain in Moav, while Rus chose to follow Naomi. Rus speaks from her heart, telling Naomi “Where you go, I will go, where you sleep, I will sleep, your people are my people, your G-d is my G-d, where you die, I will die, and there I will

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be buried.”

The choices we make can change our lives forever. Sometimes, our choices not only affect us, but our future generations as well. Orpah’s great-grandson was Goliath, while Rus was the great-grandmother of Dovid HaMelech. We all know the story of how these two men stood against each other. Goliath who wanted to terrorize and harm the Jewish people, and Dovid who stood up to protect his nation.

We can ask, where did Orpah go wrong? After all, Naomi begged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moav, which is exactly what Orpah did. So how is it that Orpah became the great-grandmother of Goliath, while Rus became the “Eim b’Malchus”, a mother of royalty – the great-grandmother of King David.

It wasn’t Orpah’s decision to remain in Moav that was wrong. It was her mindset after making that decision. Orpah gave up on herself. She viewed herself as inadequate, a failure, and acted accordingly. She went

on to live a promiscuous lifestyle and continued on a downward spiral of spiritual decline.

Wherever you go...I will go. What was it about Naomi that got Rus to follow her and become one with Klal Yisroel? We don’t find any philosophical discussions between Naomi and Rus. No mention is made of discussions about HaShem, Torah, mitzvos, Shabbos, kashrus, etc. What touched Rus was the love and kindness that she saw in the heart of Naomi. That was what compelled her to give up her life in Moav and follow Naomi to Eretz Yisroel, even without knowing what would be awaiting her, what life would be like in a new country.

A life lesson for all of us. How do we touch another soul? How do we connect to another neshama? Through love, kindness and understanding.

Elimelech had a choice to remain in Eretz Yisroel and support his people, but he chose to abandon

them. His sons similarly had choices to return to Eretz Yisroel after their father’s death, but they chose to remain in Moav. Rus and Orpah had the choice of returning to Eretz Yisroel with Naomi. Orpah chose to remain in Moav. Rus chose to follow the path of Naomi, a path that changed the destiny of Am Yisrael.

We are not always in control of life’s circumstances. Elimelech couldn’t stop the famine. Naomi, Ruth and Orpah couldn’t bring their husbands back to life. But we can control how we react to what life brings us. We don’t understand HaShem’s ways. But we can control how we react, and the choices we make.

Our lifestyle choices make us who we are. We daven that HaShem be with us and guide us in making the right choices. Choices that bring bracha to us, our family, our community and the world around us.



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# Bring Them Home!

## Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 29 Iyar)

עומר בן שלי (שם טוב)	גד משה בן שרה (מוזס)	אבינתן בן דיצה (אור)
עומר מקסים בן אורנה אסתר (נאוטרה)	גיא בן מירב (גלבוע דלאל)	אביתר בן גליה (דוד)
עופר בן כוכבה (קלדרון)	גלי בן טליה (ברמן)	אברהם גלעד בן אמונה (מונדר)
עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר)	דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)	אגם בת מירב (ברגר)
עידן בן דלית (שתיו)	דורון בת סימונה שרה (שטיינברכר)	אוהד בן אסתר (בן עמי)
עמרי בן אסתר ורוניקה (מירן)	דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבוע)	אוהד בן אסתר (יהלומי)
צחי בן דבורה (עידן)	הירש בן רחל (גולדברג פולין)	אור בן גאולה (לוי)
קית' שמואל בן גלדיס חוה (סיגל)	זיו בן טליה (ברמן)	אורי בן עינב אפרת (דנינו)
קרניה בת אירנה (ארייב)	טל בן ניצה (שוהם קורנגולד)	איתן בן רות אדית (הורן)
רום בן תמר נועה (ברסלבסקי)	יאיר בן רות אדית (הורן)	איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור)
רומי בת מירב (גונן)	יגב בן אסתר (בוכשטב)	אלון בן עידית (אהל)
שגב בן גלית (כלפון)	יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)	אליה בן סיגלית (כהן)
שגיא בן נעמית (חן דקל)	יצחק בן אנטה חנה (אלגרט)	אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי)
שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס)	ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס)	אלכסנדר בן אוקסנה (לובנוב)
שלומי בן רוזיטה אירה (זיו)	כפיר בן שירי (ביבס)	אלכסנדר ששה בן ילנה לאה (טרופנוב)
שלמה בן מרסיל (מנצור)	כרמל בת כנרת (גת)	אלכסנדר בן נינה (דנציג)
תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי)	לירי בת שירה (אלבג)	אלמוג בן אורית (מאיר ג'אן)
	מקסים בן טלה (הרקיו)	אלמוג בן נירה (סרוסי)
	מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט)	אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט)
	מתן בן ירדנה (צנגאוקר)	אמילי תהילה בת אמנדה פרנסיס (דמארי)
	נועה בת ליאורה (ארגמני)	אנדריי בן יבגניה (קוזלוב)
	נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן)	ארבל בת יעל (יהוד)
	נעמה בת איילת (לוי)	אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו)
	עדן בת שירית (ירושלמי)	אריאל בן שירי (ביבס)
	עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ)	בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין)
	עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט)	

# *Bring Them Home!*

## *Names of Hostages in Gaza*

*(Updated: 29 Iyar)*

Shlomi ben Rosita Ira (Ziv)	Matan ben Anat (Angrest)	Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)	Avinatan ben Ditza Tirtza (Ohr)
Shlomo ben Marcelle (Mansour)	Matan ben Yardena (Tzangauker)	Ariel ben Sylvia Monika (Konyo)	Evyatar ben Galya (David)
Tamir ben Cheirut (Nimrodi)	Noa bat Liora (Argamani)	Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)	Avraham Gilad ben Emunah (Mondar)
	Nimrod ben Viki (Cohen)	Bar Avraham ben Julia (Cooperstein)	Agam bat Meirav (Berger)
	Naama bat Ayelet (Levi)	Gad Moshe ben Sarah (Mozes)	Ohad ben Esther (Ben- Ami)
	Eden bat Shirit (Yerushalmi)	Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa Dalal)	Ohad ben Esther (Yahalomi)
	Oded ben Bilhah (Lifschitz)	Gali ben Talya (Berman)	Ohr ben Geula (Levi)
	Omer ben Niva (Venkrat)	David ben Sylvia Monika (Konyo)	Ori ben Einav Efrat (Danino)
	Omer ben Shelly (Shemtov)	Doron bat Simona Sarah (Steinbrecher)	Eitan ben Ruth Idit (Horen)
	Omer Maxim ben Orna Esther (Neutra)	Daniella bat Orli (Gilboa)	Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)
	Ofer ben Cochava (Kalderon)	Hirsch ben Perel Chana (Goldberg-Polin)	Alon ben Idit (Ohel)
	Idan ben Yael (Alexander)	Ziv ben Talya (Berman)	Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)
	Idan ben Dalit (Shtivi)	Tal ben Nitza (Shoham- Corngold)	Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)
	Omri ben Esther Veronica (Miran)	Yair ben Ruth Idit (Horen)	Alexander ben Oksana (Lubanov)
	Tzachi ben Devorah (Idan)	Yagev ben Esther (Buchashtev)	Alexander Sasha ben Yelena Leah (Tropanov)
	Kieth Shmuel ben Gladis Chava (Segal)	Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ochana)	Alexander ben Nina (Dantzig)
	Karina bat Irena (Ariav)	Yitzchak ben Aneta Chana (Elgarat)	Almog ben Orit (Meir-Jan)
	Rom ben Tamar Noa (Brasalevsky)	Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)	Almog ben Nira (Sarusi)
	Romi bat Meirav (Gonen)	Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)	Elkana ben Ruchama (Buchbut)
	Segev ben Galit (Chalfon)	Carmel bat Kineret (Gat)	Emily Tehilla bat Amanda Francis (Damari)
	Sagi ben Naamit (Chen- Dekel)	Liri bat Shira (Elbag)	Andrei ben Yevgenia (Kozalov)
	Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)	Maxim ben Talleh (Herkin)	