

The Torah Any Times

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Rabbi Chanan Gordon The Explosion of Antisemitism

Why is there such rampant anti-Semitism?

To answer this, we must rewind the clock to 2448, the year in which G-d endowed the Jewish nation with the greatest GPS for life—the Torah.

This gift was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. 'Sinai' shares the same etymology as the Hebrew word 'sin'ah,' meaning 'hate.' When the Torah was given on Sinai, the Jewish people accepted our unique role to be the conscience of the world. A nation that stands for morality and integrity in a world that embraces hedonism and focuses on materialistic desires. The world tends to conflate the message and the messenger. Accordingly, the price the Jewish people were destined to pay for becoming the 'light unto the nations' is that in the eyes of these nations—for most of Jewish history—the Jewish People would be a hated nation.

Evil people are not necessarily fools. If you read Hitler's Mein Kampf, you will notice that the author points out that the Jewish people bear two signs. One is the sign on their body—circumcision—and the other is that every Jew serves as the conscience of the world.

In my travels around the world, I have experienced this phenomenon first-hand.

One notable interaction was with a man who apologized for a morally degrading remark. When this

ever happens, and I'm present, I never say, "that's okay," because our role as the Chosen People means it should not be acceptable to display such base concepts in our presence.

There is a well-known passage in the Talmud (Megillah 14a), which describes a conversation between King Achashverosh and Haman, one of the first big anti-Semites. Haman asked the king if he could wipe out the Jewish people. The king gave him the go ahead.

The Talmud presents a parable about two neighboring landowners, one with a ditch and the other with a mound. Both the owner of ditch and owner of the mound were eager to rid themselves of what was respectively ruining their land. The owner of the ditch thought to himself, "I'm even willing to pay the owner of the mound for his dirt, so long as I can fill my ditch!" The owner of the mound had a similar thought. "I'd be willing to pay for this ditch, just so I can remove my mound from my property!"

One day, the two landowners crossed paths. The owner of the ditch turned to the owner of the mound. "Sell me your mound so I can fill my ditch!" "Take it for free," replied the owner of the mound, "so long as I can get it off my land!"

The Talmud's message is that both King Achashverosh and Haman wanted to destroy the Jews. Therefore, when Haman voiced his desire to act toward that end, Achashverosh

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didn't demand any money for permission to do so. He was more than willing if Haman was willing to do the job.

This parable contains deeper meaning. The mound represents the Jewish people, perceived as always being in the way, as always pushing others to the fringe through their 'monopoly of Hollywood' and 'running all the banks.' But there's an equally poignant message embedded here.

The ditch symbolizes the void existent in the rest of the world, the hole in the lives of today's generation.

We conducted exhaustive research on Generation Z, the largest generation in the world, comprising 21% of the American population. They have the highest rates of suicide, anxiety, and depression. This generation lacks meaning and purpose, living in a state of nihilism, though they re-

alize there is more to life than social media validation and pop culture thrill. How this came about is well documented. In America, and even spilling over to Canada, there has been a conscious effort to remove G-d from the equation, and it's a decision that has left an entire generation looking for meaning.

This generation spends money they don't have to impress people they don't like, leading to an existential crisis. The ditch, in the above parable, represents the feeling of purposelessness. Today's Gen Z sees an older generation, beholden to values which espouse morality and possess purpose and the GPS for life, and yet, through the rampant proliferation of mainstream media, they are drawn to a life which values materialism and hedonism. The catch is that even such so-called successful producers and consumers of pop culture know

that there is more to life than being blue checked and 'liked.' They know that such accomplishments are hollow victories. People worth billions still find themselves asking, "What am I here for?"

The world is at a crossroads between purpose and purposelessness. The Jewish People, with their adherence to Torah values, represent purpose. Pop culture and mainstream media push against this, promoting nihilism and materialism. This is the reality we face, and it underscores the enduring struggle to uphold moral values in a world that often rejects them.

So, the choice becomes yours, mine, and ours: which road will we travel down?

I pray that the light of the Jewish People extends to all the nations of the world to bring solutions to a world currently in darkness.

Rabbi Ephraim Wachsmann

All Heart

My father once shared that when he was a young boy, his father was the Rav of the community, and someone approached him one Shabbos afternoon, banging on the door. "Someone in the community opened his store on Shabbos!" exclaimed the fellow. "We got to put a stop to it!" My grandfather stood up and consented. He knew something needed to be done, and he had every intention to proceed with it.

Taking my father by the hand, the two of them made their way through the streets until they reached the store. You could imagine the storeowner being quite surprised to see two religious Jews at the door to his store on Shabbos, but they were there

for a different reason altogether. One he never anticipated.

"Tell the owner that I'd like to speak with him upstairs, right above the store," said my grandfather to my father. My father carried on, and the owner complied. Trembling that the rabbi had caught wind of his Shabbos dealings, they came together, my grandfather taking a seat directly across him.

And then my grandfather burst into tears. The storeowner remained glued to his chair, frozen in place, unsure what to say or do. Eventually, he gently asked. "Rabbi, why are you crying?"

"What kind of a Rav am I? What kind of a leader of a community am I? If a man in my community could have such difficulties with parnassah (livelihood) that he had no other resort

than work on Shabbos, I've failed. I've failed that man. I've failed you. I didn't know you were struggling so much, and now that I see you working on Shabbos as you are, I realize where I've fallen terribly short."

At the sound of this, the man burst into tears himself. "Rebbe, I promise you, I don't want to break Shabbos. But I owe so much money, and I don't have what to feed my children. I felt I had to do this. Hashem should forgive me."

My grandfather explained that any income earned on Shabbos will not yield any blessing, and that to the contrary, not working on Shabbos will bring an influx of goodness and blessing to him and his family.

Empathy. Empathy for another Jew, responsibility for another's plight, pure care and no blame. Such are the qualities of a true leader.

A true leader who changes lives. For generations.

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

Very Dear

In one of the Chazon Ish's travels, he stopped off in Vilna and decided to head into one of the shuls. Since no one around knew who he was, he quietly went to the shelf, took a Chumash, and sat down to learn. But there was someone who'd been watching him all along. The gabbai.

The gabbai, not a great scholar himself and not recognizing the Chazon Ish, approached him and asked if he was a member of the shul. "I'm not," softly replied the Chazon Ish. At the sound of this, the gabbai did not hesitate to take the Chumash from the Chazon Ish's hands and return it to the shelf. But that wasn't all. The gabbai went on to berate the Chazon Ish, lecturing about what he had done. All the Chazon Ish could think was, "I'll take revenge."

The next day, the Chazon Ish returned to the shul during davening. At that time, the gabbai would walk around with the pushka, collecting tzedaka. The Jews of Vilna were very poor, however, and could only afford to give a penny at most. But when the gabbai came to the Chazon Ish, he placed fifteen coins into the pushka. The gabbai, surprised, looked at him and realized it was the same person he had

scolded the day before.

The following day, when the Chazon Ish came to the shul, the gabbai ran over with the nicest, newest Chumash and handed it to him.

That was the Chazon Ish's revenge—a demonstration of generosity and humility. And only the Chazon Ish could teach such a lesson.

Now, let me share with you an even more recent story which epitomizes such sterling qualities of great character.

Baruch Hashem, Rav Tzvi Kushlevsky shlita infused the Jewish world with great emunah and bitachon when he had a baby boy at the advanced age of eighty-eight. It certainly was a cause for celebration not only for him and his family, but for the entire world Jewish world.

But what people don't know is that many years earlier, he went to the great tzaddik, the Baba Sali, and asked for a beracha to have a child. The Baba Sali handed him a bottle of his famous holy waters and instructed him to take it home and have his wife drink it, assuring him that everything would be good.

When Rav Kushlevsky returned home, it was late at night, so instead of waking his wife, he decided to store the bottle in the refrigerator until morning. Except morning nev-

er arrived in the way Rav Kushlevsky anticipated. That night, a boy who routinely stayed in Rav Kushlevsky's house was thirsty, and he opened the refrigerator, saw the bottle, and drank every last drop.

In the morning, Rav Kushlevsky realized what had happened. But despite this, he never said a word to the boy, never mouthed a complaint, and never let anyone know. Never. He showed remarkable restraint and strength, not letting a soul know about the happenings of that night.

Interestingly, a few days later, the boy approached Rav Kushlevsky and asked if they could learn Zohar together. But more importantly, and as we know today, what happened was nothing short of miraculous, the Divine hand of Hashem.

At the age of eighty-eight, Rav Kushlevsky, alongside his wife, brought his son into the Covenant of Avraham Avinu. His wife may never have drunk the water set aside for her, but who knows, perhaps the exemplary display of sensitivity and restraint shown by Rav Kushlevsky accomplished no less.

Good middos are dear in the eyes of Hashem. Very dear.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Real Thing

I'd like to share with you an incredible insight. Sometimes we find our-

selves being drawn to something, a very strong temptation or behavior. It's so powerful, it's overwhelming.

There are two ways of dealing with it. One way is to get out of it—do whatever it takes to escape. But there's also another method sometimes: go deeper into it. When you go deeper, you will see that it is fake news; it's not what you're real-

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ly searching for.

I learned this approach from an incredible teaching of the Maggid of Mezeritch on the story of Yosef HaTzadik. According to one opinion in the Talmud (Sotah 36b), Yosef is about to succumb to the incessant pleas of Potiphar's wife, who is pleading with him daily to betray his morality, his G-d, and the sanctity of her marriage. Just as he is about to surrender, he sees the visage of Yaakov, his father, and he abstains.

What does this really mean?

One interpretation, based on the teaching of the Maggid of Mezeritch, is that it's not that Yosef saw the image of his father elsewhere. Rather, he looked deeper into his own emotional experience at that moment. It

was then that he saw the image of Yaakov, his father.

Potiphar's wife embodied the middah of Tiferes, the quality of profound beauty and splendor. Yosef looked at her and asked himself, "What am I really looking for?" He realized he was looking for Tiferes, the divine quality of beauty and harmony that Yaakov embodied. As the Zohar teaches, Yaakov was a conduit for Hashem's attribute of Tiferes—Hashem's beauty, charm, splendor, grandeur, and harmony.

Yosef understood that what he was truly searching for was Tiferes. He asked himself why he should choose a lowly manifestation of Tiferes when he could attain the source. What he really wanted was the real

Tiferes, the quality his father Yaakov represented. He realized there was a void in him, and he thought he could fill it through this type of behavior. But by looking deeper, he understood that what he was seeking was true Tiferes. And there was only one way to obtain that. He knew he had to find it within his soul, within his connection to Yaakov, his father, and Hashem.

Yosef HaTzadik realized that he was searching for Yaakov Avinu. And then he decided not to surrender to the fake, camouflaged version of what he truly desired. He wanted genuine Tiferes, the divine beauty and harmony that could only come from a higher, more spiritual place.

He wanted the real thing.

Dr. Dovid Lieberman

More than Monkeys

There are some people who believe that we came from monkeys. My question is, if we came from monkeys, why are there still monkeys? But be that as it may, I want to share with you a fascinating research study in social psychology.

I watched a video of an experiment involving two monkeys, each in their respective cages. The researcher gave the first monkey a simple task: push a lever and receive a cucumber as a reward. The second monkey had the same task and received the same reward. This pattern continued for a few rounds, with each monkey happily accepting their cucumber.

Then, the researcher gave one monkey a grape instead of a cu-

cumber for completing the task. The monkey enjoyed the grape very much. When it was the other monkey's turn, he pushed the lever and received a cucumber, as usual. However, having seen his neighbor get a grape, the monkey looked at his cucumber, then at the other monkey, and finally at the researcher. Then, he did something unexpected: he threw the cucumber back at the researcher.

Previously, the monkey was perfectly happy with the cucumber, but upon seeing his neighbor get something better, he became dissatisfied.

The experiment illustrated a profound truth about envy. Envy rots the bones, Shlomo Hamelech tells us (Mishlei 14:30). When we focus on what others have, what they want, and what they desire, we lose sight of our

own needs, our own desires, our own life.

A person who maximizes their own potential and recognizes their own value focuses on who they are and what they have. Everything we have is tailor-made for our growth. Our hair color, intelligence, family, background, and environment are all designed to help us thrive. When we concentrate on optimizing ourselves, something magical happens: everyone around us seems to do better as well.

By focusing on our own growth, we can reach our full potential. But if we constantly compare ourselves to others, we risk reducing ourselves to nothing more than envious monkeys.

So let's focus on our own paths and maximize the unique gifts we have been given. Let's be more than just monkeys.

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Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 14 Sivan)

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

Bring Them Home!

Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 14 Sivan)

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