

Fascinating INSIGHTS

ג' אב תשפ"ו

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פרשת דברים

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I'm excited to share that my newly released book, "Powerful Torah Insights about Languages," is now available. The book can be purchased on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0H85JL8YQ> (paperback, hardcover and digital editions).

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This newsletter can also be viewed in English at <https://tinyurl.com/4cp9hf4k>.

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The Kabbalist Who Stopped Hitler

During World War II, the German army advanced to El Alamein in Egypt. It was widely known that their intent was to continue through Syria and from there invade Eretz Yisrael, to wipe out the Jewish population living there. In response, many spiritual efforts were undertaken, including intensified tefillah, teshuvah and visits to kivrei tzadikim.

Among those leading these efforts was R' Yehuda Fetaya.¹ He organized four groups and sent them to the four corners of Yerushalayim to recite special tefillos. After the tefillos, R' Yehuda Fetaya declared: "Today's tefillos were effective. They confused the Sar (malach) of Hitler, exchanging the word סוריה (Syria) with רוסיה (Russia), which contains the same letters. There he will fall."



A few days later, it is said that R' Yaakov Abuchatzera (1806-1880), who was the grandfather of the Baba Sali, appeared in a dream to R' Yitzchak Alfiyah (1878-1955), instructing him to travel with others to his kever in Damanhur, Egypt, and daven for the salvation of the Jewish people. R' Yitzchak along with a group traveled there and davened at the kever for three days. On the third day of their tefillos, the German forces suffered their decisive defeat at the Battle of El Alamein.

Historically, Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union proved disastrous for Nazi Germany. After launching Operation Barbarossa, the German army advanced deep into Russian territory using the Blitzkrieg tactic. However, their supply lines became dangerously overstretched, eventually leaving frontline troops with severe shortages.

Combined with the vastness of Russia, the brutal winter conditions, difficult terrain, and strong Soviet resistance, the campaign became catastrophic for the Germans. It turned into a deadly quagmire, resulting in enormous losses. In fact, the majority of German military casualties during World War II occurred on the Russian front.

Torah Beyond Convenience

We declared *na'aseh v'nishma*, yet Chazal also tell us that Hashem held the mountain over us (*kafah*

aleiheim har k'gigis) and coerced us into accepting the Torah.

R' Moshe Shapiro explains that these two aspects are reflected in the way we approach Torah study. We are obligated to learn at every available moment and also have fixed times for Torah study. We said *na'aseh v'nishma*. This is the eager, voluntary desire to learn Torah whenever the opportunity arises. A Jew should seize every available moment to study Torah out of love and devotion. On the other hand, there is *kafah aleiheim*, the obligation of Torah that is not left to our personal discretion. This is expressed through *kvius itim*, setting fixed times for Torah study. If one learns only when he happens to have free time or only when he feels inspired, then Torah study remains dependent on his own wishes. By establishing fixed times for learning, we demonstrate that Torah is not merely something we do when convenient; rather, it is an absolute obligation that transcends our moods and schedules.



Furthermore, *kvius itim* reflects the fundamental truth that the existence of the entire world depends upon Torah. Since creation itself could not continue for even a moment without Torah, our commitment to learning cannot be left solely to convenience or whim. Torah is the very lifeblood of creation, and therefore it must occupy a fixed and permanent place in our lives.

Souls of Brothers

We find in the gemara that R' Akiva calls R' Yishmael in a friendly way his brother although they were not actually brothers. For example, in the midst of a disagreement between R' Yishmael and R' Akiva, R' Akiva said to him, "ישמעאל אחי," Yishmael my brother.²

The Megale Amukos³ tells us a deeper explanation and says that R' Akiva called R' Yishmael his brother because they were actually brothers in a previous gilgul. When was that? When Yishmael was Yosef Hatzadik in a previous gilgul and R' Akiva was originally Shimon. Since they were brothers then, Yishmael called R' Akiva his brother.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of Rabbi Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written thousands of Torah articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of eleven fascinating and popular books. His writings, many of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Spanish and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lectures, writes and teaches, and is passionate about inspiring Jews of all levels of observance. He can be reached at yalt3285@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at +972 54 849 5217.

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¹ R' Yehuda Fetaya once told his student R' Yitzchak Druzi that he himself (R' Fetaya) was a gilgul of R' Yehuda the Amora (Otzar Hagilgulim, Amoraim, p. 91).

² Sanhedrin 51b.

³ Vaeschanan, 73.