

Fascinating INSIGHTS

כד' אב תשפ"ו
August 7, 2026

פרשת ראה
14th year, edition 626

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH FASCINATING TORAH INSIGHTS

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Dogmatic about his Dog

A Torah scholar in Eretz Yisrael, R' Yitzchak, who was involved in kiruv,¹ would travel to various cities and try to bring secular Jews closer to Hashem.² One day while he was driving in Hertziliya, he heard people clamoring.

Confounded, he brought his car to a halt where he discovered that he had driven over a dog, killing it. It was the dog owner, Yosef, who was screaming at him. R' Yitzchak apologized profusely, telling Yosef that it was unintentional. He then told Yosef, "I am willing to pay the value

¹ The following story brings out the idea of, "Answer the questioner, not the questions" because sometimes they don't want to hear the answers.

A secular professor accosted the Lubavitcher Rebbe with the questions he had on the areas where Torah and science conflicted. After the professor's sharp response to the Rebbe, "You stay in Torah and I'll stay in science," the Rebbe was silent. The professor thought he won the argument.

Years passed and the professor became religious. On one of the many occasions that he approached the Rebbe, the Rebbe told him that he wanted to answer

his question from years prior. The professor told the Rebbe that he is past that already.

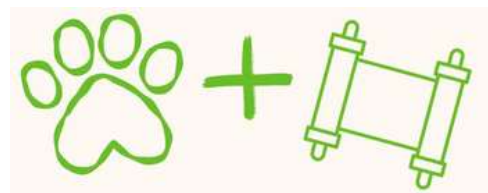
The Rebbe told him, "When you asked me those questions, I asked myself, 'Do I want to win the argument and lose the Jew or do I want to win the Jew and lose the argument?'"

² In our spiritually inferior generation we are surrounded by many who are less capable and therefore someone in previous generations who wouldn't be considered great, today can be. As the saying goes, "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king." Even someone with limited abilities can still be considered great.

of the dog and I'll even give you extra money for all the distress."

Yosef was thunderstruck, as such behavior was aberrant and an anomaly. The response and offer of R' Yitzchak was a Kidush Hashem.³ Yosef declined R' Yitzchak's monetary offer and he exchanged phone numbers with him. R' Yitzchak began to learn with Yosef and little by little he made an impact on him and his family.

One day Yosef proposed an offer. He told R' Yitzchak that he had a big basement and he and his wife wanted to donate this basement to be sort of a Beis Midrash where R' Yitzchak would give a shiur that people would attend. However,



the family wanted to put a plaque with the words

I'zichron Igor, as a remembrance to their dog Igor, who was the cause of all this.

The question posed to a *posek* if it was appropriate to dedicate and call the Beis Midrash after a dog. After researching the topic by looking up the relevant sources, the *posek* deliberated and came to a conclusive ruling: Since the will of the family is to observe Torah and mitzvos⁴ and to this end they are willing to dedicate this Beis Midrash, it is ok to acquiesce to their request to name it after their dog.

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³ There was a secular Jewish woman who intended to send her daughter to a public school. However she ended up changing her mind and sent her to a Beis Yaakov. What's the story behind this sudden change? She was once on a bus when she saw a religious Jewish girl murmuring something. So she asked the girl's mother who was beside her daughter, what it was that her daughter was saying. The mother told her that in the Beis Yaakov she attends they train her to say Tehillim when she hears ambulance sirens so that the person should have a complete recovery. The secular woman was astounded and decided there and then to send her own daughter to Beis Yaakov.

⁴ John Frank is a two-time Super Bowl champion who played five seasons in the NFL. In 1989, following the victory in Super Bowl XXIII, at just 26 years old and at the height of his football career, he stunned many by announcing his retirement from professional football in order to devote himself full-time to medical school.

At the time, he was earning \$357,500 a year, with even greater contracts ahead of him. Although Frank loved football, he possessed another passion that was far less expected for an NFL player: medicine.

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The Rebbe's Previous Life

The Rema Mipano⁵ writes that Rav Shmuel Bar Shilas was a gilgul of the judge (one of the *shoftim*) Shamgar ben Anas and therefore he was a מלמד תינוקות, a Rebbe of children who teaches Torah.

A hint to this is found in *נדר את-פִּלְשְׁתִּים שֶׁ-בְּקָר*

במאות איש במלמד הבקר

Shamgar killed the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad.⁶

The word *מלמד* can be understood as a Rebbe of children who teaches Torah alluding to that in the future he would be reincarnated as Rav Shmuel Bar Shilas who taught children Torah.⁷

The word *בקר* hints to what Rav told Rav Shmuel Bar Shilas⁸ that if a child is six years old, accept him and stuff him like an ox (*בקר*).⁹



After leaving the NFL, he completed medical school and eventually established a successful hair-transplant practice.

Today, he also serves on the board of Columbus Torah Academy and is a member of Beth Jacob Congregation in Columbus. When speaking to Jewish audiences, Frank often draws powerful parallels between football and Judaism.

He once explained: "My coach had about fifteen plays that he used every game, and it didn't matter which ones you liked or disliked. The coach chose them because that's how the team would win. In Judaism, we have mitzvos and this is the way He decided the Jewish people would succeed. Even if we don't always like them, the Coach knows what is best for us."

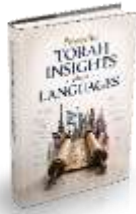
⁵ Gilgulei Nesahmos, Erech Rav Shmuel Bar Shilas.

⁶ Shoftim 3:31.

⁷ Baba Basra 8b.

⁸ Kesubos 50a.

⁹ This means just as an ox is force-fed, you should force the students to study Torah according to their ability.



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 book explores fascinating and thought-provoking questions, including:

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[When Comfort Becomes a Cage](#)

Some explain that the sin of the meraglim stemmed from their reluctance to enter Eretz Yisrael because they feared leaving the familiar routine of life in the Midbar. The word מרגלים is

related to הרגל (habit), alluding to the fact that they had become accustomed to their wilderness existence. Consequently, they hesitated to enter Eretz Yisrael and abandon the life to which they had grown accustomed.¹⁰

We must take this as a lesson. Sometimes Hashem calls us to move forward—to take on new challenges, responsibilities, or opportunities—but fear of the unknown causes us to cling to our old routines. As someone once said "If you can't beat the fear, just do it scared."

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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 thirteen 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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¹⁰ Chelkas Shlomo, Parshas Shelach.