**Kol simcha torah gazette**

**For parshas va’era 5784**

Volume 8 Issue 18 (Whole #376) 3 Shevet 5784/ January 13, 2023

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

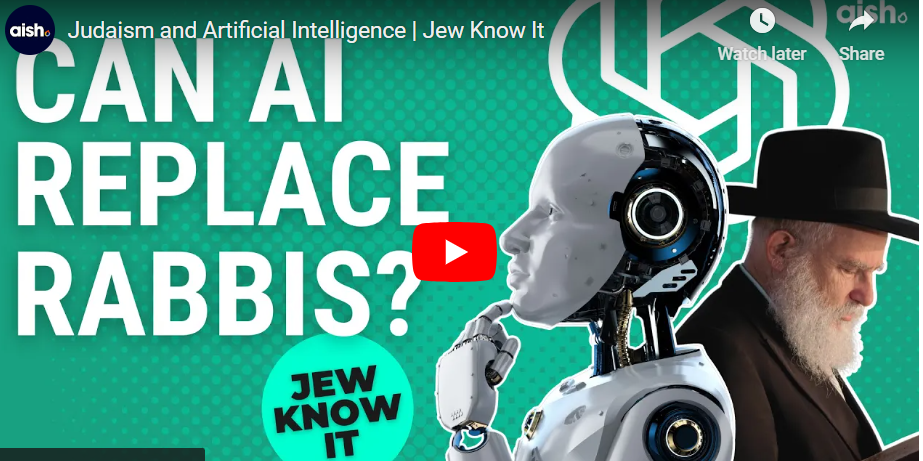
For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

***Past emails can be found on the website ShabbosStories.com under Brooklyn Torah Gazette***

**Can AI Replace Rabbis?**

**By [JewKnowIt](https://aish.com/authors/jew-know-it)**

***How the Torah is the Original A.I., Except There’s Nothing Artificial About it.***



What could a book as old as the Torah possibly have to do with something as futuristic as A.I.?

Well, you can sort of think of the Torah as the original A.I., except there’s nothing artificial about it.

Follow me here -

Today’s A.I.'s, particularly what are called “L.L.M.s” - that’s Large Language Models like ChatGPT - analyze MASSIVE amounts of text in the blink of an eye and spit out a response based on its programming.

And the Torah sort of does the same!

Think about it - let’s say you’re having a problem with a friend, partner or colleague and you’re looking for a solution, so you turn to Judaism.

You could throw any of these problems at the Torah, and with the help of a rabbi, the Torah will provide its best advice or guidance based on its stories and anecdotes.

These carefully selected stories and anecdotes are equivalent to an A.I.’s programming.

Get it? No? Then just ask an A.I. to explain.

**One of the Biggest Tech Hubs in the World**

Next up - why does so much A.I. come out of Israel?

Israel has become one of the biggest tech hubs in the world.

It’s even got its own nickname, “Silicon Wadi.” Silicon means… well, Silicon, and "Wadi" means “valley” in Hebrew.

I promise their tech is more creative than their nickname!

There’s Mobileye, a company specializing in driverless cars.

There’s Waze, the navigation app acquired by Google that helps you avoid traffic, but you already knew that.

There’s Cortica, a startup focusing on visual intelligence.

And let’s not forget Gong.io, Verbit, AnyVision, Deep Instinct, Optibus, Aidoc (fast-forwards through more) AND I COULD GO ON!

Why does so much A.I. come out of Israel?

1. Israelis have the chutzpah and entrepreneurial spirit to take BIG risks and innovate. It’s part of who they are.

2. The Israeli military's cyber-units are like A.I. boot camps, training top talent in the most cutting-edge tech.

3. Israel's tech ecosystem, where knowledge and ideas flow freely, creates the perfect breeding ground for A.I. innovation.

This brings us to our next topic - Jewish ethics and A.I.

I promise it’s not as boring as it sounds.

**Ethics**

Remember the phrase “*Tikkun olam*” from Hebrew school?

If not, let me bring you up to speed - *Tikkun olam* is all about making the world a better place, and it’s a big freakin’ deal in Judaism.

So, when it comes to A.I., Judaism doesn't really look at it as being “good” or “bad” - it's more about what we do with it.

Like, if we use it to make the world a better place, then it's positive, and if we don’t, then it’s not. Pretty simple, right?

For example, positive uses of A.I. might include using A.I. for healthcare, improving accessibility for people with disabilities, promoting environmental sustainability and fostering inclusive and unbiased decision-making processes in the legal system.

There’s SO MUCH FEAR out there about A.I., but imagine a world where A.I. *follows* Jewish ethical principles and we do the things above.

Doesn’t sound so scary anymore, does it?

Of course, you might be thinking, “But I’m not some genius programmer creating A.I.. What am I supposed to do?

Well, if you are using A.I., just check in before you use them and ask yourself –

Does this make the world a better place?

If not, maybe think twice.

Next up – A.I. rabbis.

**A.I. Rabbis**

Imagine having a rabbi at your fingertips, always ready to provide instant answers to your burning questions about life, death, dating or whatever.

Now Imagine this rabbi isn't just knowledgeable, but has an encyclopedic knowledge of Judaism, more so than most human beings could ever possibly have.

Now imagine this rabbi can adapt its tone based on your emotions or appearance or your most minuscule micro-expressions.

And imagine this rabbi could fit in your pocket.

No, I don’t mean like this rabbi “fun-sized,” but that the rabbi is an A.I. on your phone.

But would this “rabbi on your phone” actually be, like, a *real* rabbi? Not really.

A.I. can’t replace rabbis because while a “rab-A.I.” - get it? - could teach us everything there is to know about Judaism, the main goal of a rabbi is to connect with us with something BIGGER than ourselves during our SHORT time here on Earth.

Why couldn’t an A.I. rabbi do this? Because A.I.’s don’t have souls, so they can’t connect us to anything BEYOND our physical world, which is a rabbi’s whole job!

Sorry, A.I., but that’s just how it is.

Next up, our final burning question - can A.I.’s be Jewish?

**Jewish A.I.’s**

What does it mean to be Jewish?

Being Jewish can mean practicing the Jewish religion and/or being part of the Jewish ethnic group through ancestry.

So, could an A.I. be Jewish? You’re probably thinking, “um, no,” but… let’s play it out:

Say an A.I. is programmed to follow ALL Jewish rituals and practices, recite prayers and observe Jewish holidays.

Say this A.I. is created BY Jews with Jewish ancestry.

Say this A.I. is designed to have knowledge and beliefs aligned with Judaism, incorporating all Jewish teachings and ethics.

So… would this A.I. BE Jewish?

I'm going to go with the answer "no," because like we discussed earlier, A.I.’s don't have souls.

In Judaism, the concept of having a soul is a big deal.

It's like having this intangible, inner essence that makes us who we are, and it's believed to be unique to humans and separates us from animals and all other parts of the world.

Judaism sees the soul as what connects us to something bigger and more profound than just the physical world.

So, while A.I.s can do some cool stuff, they're missing that special spark that defines our soulful existence.

I'll have to consult the ultimate, all-knowing source of knowledge on this one - and yes, its name begins with G -

Hey Google, what do you think?

*Reprinted from this week’s website of aish.com*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

*It is not proper to do so...shall we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us* (Ex. 8:22)

The Egyptians were extremely careful to avoid hurting animals; according to the Ibn Ezra, they did not eat meat and would not even use any animal products. It is therefore "not proper" when such "humanitarians," who are so filled with pity for four-legged creatures, think nothing about enslaving Jews and throwing their babies into the river. *(Imrei Chein)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’eira 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on Capital**

**Punishment by Secular Authorities**

****

**QUESTION: What is the Torah view of capital punishment by secular authorities?**

**ANSWER:** The Torah view is that it’s a wonderful thing.

“If somebody sheds the blood of a man – by means of man,

– his blood should be shed. The Torah says if somebody kills a human being you gentiles shouldn’t wait for the Almighty to step in and take revenge. ‘Don’t wait for Me. I’ll be very angry at you. It’s your job to shed his blood.’ It’s an open verse in the Torah. And it’s not for Jews alone. It’s for everybody; it’s one of the sheva mitzvos bnei Noach. They must kill murderers. And that’s the only way.

How silly it was when they made a conference in Washington about crime and they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on surveys. Every penny was thrown out in the garbage. They should have spent fifty dollars and they could have had a solution. For fifty dollars they could take a construction worker from Bensonhurst, an Italian construction worker, and take him to Washington and they say, ‘Tony what do you say about punishing the murderer?’

Tony hasn’t been corrupted by college. He hasn’t listened to crazy theories, wacky statistics. All statistics are lies by the way; they’re all doctored. So, Tony hasn’t been deceived. He knows the facts. The way to stop crime is to kill the criminal. That’s all. If you want to stop felonies? So, call in Tony again and Tony will say ‘What do you mean? You’re going to give him color television and balanced meals? No; put him on a rock pile like the good old days.’

Any bum who thinks about a rock pile will think twice about doing a felony. The rock pile is not vacation time. The rock pile is a very difficult life and that’s how a criminal is supposed to be treated. A felon has to be treated like a felon. It’s crazy otherwise! They’re encouraging crime otherwise. It’s as simple as could be. The whole liberal establishment has gone crazy today.

And therefore, how does the Torah view capital punishment? It’s a necessity and without it a country cannot last

*Reprinted from the Parshas Shemos 5784 email of Toras Avigdor adapted from Tape #339 (November 20, 1980)*

**Thoughts that Count**

*The L-rd ... gave them a charge to the Children of Israel* (Ex. 6:13)

Despite the fact that the Jewish people hadn't listened "because of their anguished spirit and the cruel slavery," G-d commanded Moses and Aaron to keep on talking. For the word of G-d always makes an impression and has an effect: if not immediately, then sometime later. Holy words are never wasted, and are always ultimately heard. *(Sefat Emet)*

*And Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharao*h (Ex. 7:7)

Why does the Torah need to tell us the ages of Moses and Aaron? To refute the common misconception that only young people can carry the banner of liberation and redemption. Older people, too, can be "revolutionaries," if G-d determines it is necessary and the proper time. *(Shaarei Yerushalayim)*

*And the frogs died in the houses, in the villages, and in the fields* (Ex. 8:9)

When the plague of frogs was over, the frogs died. By contrast, after the plague of "various wild beasts" the animals did not die, but went back to wherever they had come from. The reason is that no "new" animals were created for the plague of "various wild beasts"; at G-d's command they left their natural habitat and converged on Egypt. When the plague ended, they were still necessary for the world's ecosystem. The frogs, however, were created especially for the plague; when it was over, there was no need for so many. *(Kehilat Yitzchak)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’eira 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim*

**Why Did G-d Strike Egypt?**

**To Punish Egypt or Teach an**

**Important Lesson to the Jews?**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



In this week's Torah portion, Va'eira, we read about the plagues G-d brought upon the Egyptians. On the simplest level, the plagues were intended to punish the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews and refusing to set them free. But the Torah tells us there was an even deeper purpose behind them: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the L-rd."

The Egyptian people did not believe in G-d; the plagues were meant to educate them about the Creator and His power. As Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel explained, Pharaoh denied three things: the existence of G-d, the concept of Divine Providence (that G-d oversees and is intimately involved in everything that goes on in the world), and G-d's ability to perform miracles that transcend the laws of nature.

**The Plagues that Demonstrated the Existence of G-d**

When G-d brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, all three of these erroneous beliefs were publicly disproved: The first three plagues demonstrated that G-d exists; the second three plagues established His Divine Providence; and the next three plagues taught Pharaoh that G-d can indeed act in a supernatural manner.

Significantly, however, the Torah mentions an additional reason for G-d's having brought the plagues: to teach the Jewish people about His greatness: "That you may tell in the ears of your child, and of your grandchildren, what things I have done in Egypt...that you may know that I am the L-rd." In other words, in addition to the effect they were supposed to have on the Egyptians, the plagues were meant as a lesson for the Jews, that they should "know that I am the L-rd." As Rashi notes, "The Holy One, blessed be He, brings punishment upon the nations in order that Israel should hearken and fear."

But why wasn't punishing the Egyptians and refuting their religious misconceptions enough of a reason? Why was it necessary for the Jews to be brought to a greater awareness of G-d?

**The Reason for Why G-d Created the World**

The answer has to do with the reason G-d created the world in the first place. Our Sages teach that G-d created the world "for Israel and for the Torah." Accordingly, everything that happens in the world - every event and every little detail - has a direct connection to the Jewish people and the Torah, and is intended for their benefit.

For this reason, there had to be more "justification" than simply punishing the Egyptians and refuting their beliefs; the plagues would somehow have to be advantageous to the Jews. In fact, it was only when they caused the Jews to have a greater awareness of G-d that the Egyptian plagues completely fulfilled their objective.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Va’eira 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Volume 36 of Likutei Sichot.*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***“Moshe spoke before Hashem, saying, ‘Behold, Bnei Yisrael did not listen to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me, and I have damaged lips?!’”*** (6:12)

Moshe was blessed with everything a person could possibly have. This was so that Klal Yisroel would believe that he was the true messenger of Hashem.

The power of speech, he did not have. Because if he was a smooth talker, people would say that people believed Moshe only because of his gift of speech. He could talk anyone into anything. On the other hand , if people follow someone who cannot speak well, it is assumed that he has a following because of his truthfulness and sincerity. (Derashot Hara"n)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeira 5784 parsha sheet edited by R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld for the Young Israel of Midwood.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Vaeira 5784**



The L-rd, so to speak, bemoans to Moshe the lack of faith exhibited by him and the Jewish people during the moments of crisis in their encounter with Pharaoh and their Egyptian taskmasters. G-d points out that the previous generations of the founders of the Jewish people never wavered in their faith and belief that G-d's covenant would be fulfilled, no matter how harsh the circumstances of their lives were.

And now when the process of redemption from Egyptian slavery is already underway, whenever there is a hitch or a delay or an apparent reversal, the complaint immediately arises against G-d and against Moshe as well. Now the Torah itself clearly makes allowances for this behavior due to the bone-crushing physical work imposed on the Jewish slaves by their Egyptian taskmasters.

It is difficult to be optimistic when one's back is being whipped. Nevertheless, the L-rd’s reproof of Moshe and of Israel is recorded for us in strong terms in the opening verses of this week's Torah reading. G-d, so to speak, is pointing out to Moshe the existence of a generational disconnect. The previous generations were strong in belief and faith and possessed patience and fortitude in the face of all difficulties.

Moshe's generation, in fact many Jewish generations throughout history, demand action and that action must be immediate. Their faith is conditioned upon seeing and experiencing immediate results and the changed society and world that they desire. Otherwise, they are prepared to abandon ship. That is what the prophet means when he chides Israel by saying that “your goodness and faith resemble the clouds of the morning that soon burn off when the sun rises. “

Faith, to be effective, has to be long-lasting. Since mortality limits our vision and naturally makes us impatient, it is often difficult for us to see the big picture and witness the unfolding of a long-range historical process. Our generation, unlike those of our predecessors – even our immediate predecessors – has rightly been dubbed the “now generation.” Instant gratification is not only demanded but is expected and when it does not happen our faith is sorely tested, if not even diminished.

Patience and faith is the essence of G-d's message to Moshe. Part of Moshe**'s** leadership task will now be to instill this sense of patience and long-lasting faith within the psyche and soul of the Jewish people. This daunting task will take forty years of constant challenges and withering experiences before it will see results and accomplishments. At the end of the forty-year period - forty years after the Exodus from Egypt - Moshe will proclaim that the Jewish people have finally attained an understanding heart and an appreciation of the historical journey upon which the L-rd has sent them.

Both patience and faith are difficult traits to acquire and they remain very fragile even after they have been acquired. But in all areas of human life – marriage, children, professional occupations, business and commerce, government and politics, diplomacy and conflict – patience and faith are the necessary tools to achieve success. That is the message that G-d communicates to Moshe and to Israel in all of its generations and circumstances in this week’s parsha.

Shabat shalom

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

"***And it shall become lice throughout the land of Egypt***." (8:12) G-d's punishment is measure for measure. G-d brought the plague of lice upon the Egyptians because they didn't let the Jews visit their bath houses, and their clothing became infested with vermin. (Baal HaTurim)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeira 5784 parsha sheet edited by R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld for the Young Israel of Midwood.*

**Kashering at 212 Degrees**

**By Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

****

**Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

A certain kosher item was produced after kashering the machinery at less than 212° F. Is it acceptable?

The halachic rule we follow when kashering is kebol’o kach polto, “the way the prohibited taste was swallowed is the way it is released.” Thus, if the prohibition was absorbed with hot liquid, it could be removed with hot liquid (hagala). But if the absorption was through dry heat, the kashering method required would be purging with fire (libun). Furthermore, the intensity of hagala will vary: if the absorption was in a kli rishon, hagala must be done with a kli rishon, but if it was in a kli sheini, the same would suffice for kashering.

Does this rule also determine the temperature needed for hagala, or must one always use boiling water? A utensil can absorb the taste of food that touches it at the temperature of yad soledes — when the hand recoils from the heat — approximately 104° F . If the absorption occurred at 115°, would hagala at 125° be sufficient?

The consensus of major poskim is that only boiling water has the power to extract a forbidden absorption, regardless of the temperature at which the original absorption took place.

This point is evident from Rishonim, and this is how the Rama and Alter Rebbe rule.

The Pri Megadim, however, writes that although l’chatchila the water should indeed be boiling, mei’ikar hadin non-boiling water could also work.

In cases of serious need, Reb Moshe Feinstein allows for relying on this view, though many prominent kashrus agencies avoid doing so.

**At what temperature is water considered “boiling”?**

While 212° F is the boiling point for water at sea level, the temperature of the boiling point at higher altitudes is lower. In Denver, Colorado, for instance, water’s boiling point is about 203° F, and hagala could be done in Denver with boiling water at 203° F. While some poskim hold that the water must actually boil, others consider the water’s temperature, regardless of whether it is actually boiling.

Based on the latter view, some kashrus agencies rely on performing hagala at 190° F when needed, since they view this temperature as the “beginning of boiling,” and water in fact boils at this temperature in cities with very high elevations. The Alter Rebbe doesn’t seem to allow such leniency.

Thus, one should investigate whether a particular hechsher or item relies on this leniency.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Shemos 5784 edition of The Weekly Farbrengen. Rabbi Raskin is Rov of Anash in Petach Tikva, Israel.*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***"And also I have established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan."*** (6:4)

R' Yosef Yaavetz (1435-1507; known as "R' Yaavetz heChassid") questions the use of the conjunction "And also." Usually, he notes, "also" is used to connect two "positive" or two "negatives," but here it connects a "positive" ("I have established") to a "negative" ("I did not make Myself known").

R' Yaavetz explains that the two verses are actually parallel. Both teach that sometimes events are determined by the level where the protagonist stands, and sometimes by other considerations.

For example, the Patriarchs never saw Hashem behave in the way represented by His four-letter Name (which we pronounce "Hashem"). However, this was not because the Patriarchs were not on the appropriate level; rather, history was not prepared for such involvement by Hashem.

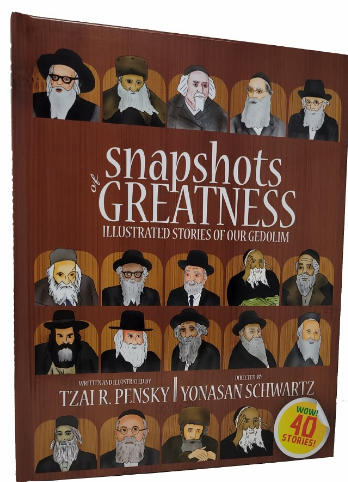
Similarly, Hashem told Moshe, when it comes to fulfilling My covenant with the Patriarchs, you must understand the difference between what I choose to do and what history calls for. I will fulfill my covenant with the Patriarchs, even though Bnei Yisrael are not presently worthy. However, this requires them to undergo the additional suffering about which you have questioned Me (as described at the end of last week's parasha). (Yesod haEmunah)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vaeira 5784 parsha sheet edited by R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld for the Young Israel of Midwood.*

**Teaching Our Children Great**

**Middos from Our Gedolim**

**By Daniel Keren**

****

(“Snapshot of Greatness: Illustrated Stories of Our Gedolim” written and illustrated by Tzai R Pensky, 2021, Chazak Entertainment Dist., 43 pages)

The Jewish nation has been called “The People of the Book,” and Jewish books have been the important vehicle since Mattan Torah at Har Sinai by which we educate ourselves and most importantly our children of our precious heritage and our important mission as the Am Segulah, G-d’s Chosen people to be a “light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6) of the world.

In recent years, Jewish publishers have come up with improved books that have caught the interest and imaginations of youngsters as a way to highlight important middos or ethical concepts. One of my favorites is a 2021 juvenile book titled “Snapshots of Greatness: Illustrated Stories of Our Gedolim that is a collection of 40 stories in cartoon format that originally appeared in the children’s section of the Yated N’eman weekly newspaper.

**Stories Culled from the Biographies of Great Gedolim**

This recent book written and illustrated by Tzai R Pensky was edited by Yaakov Herskovich collects 40 Torah cartoons based from stories culled from the biographies of great Gedolim, Torah leaders. Some of the selected cartoon stories include “The Fire & the Bed” (Rav Chaim Soloveitchik,) “A Lonely Shabbos” (Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman,) “The Reward for Keeping Shemittah” (Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman,) “Behind the Counter” (the Chazon Ish), “A Shiur to Remember” (Rav Shlomo Heiman,) “The Dirty Hallway” (Rav Ben-Tzion Abba-Shaul,) “A Most Effective Macha’ah” (Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld,) “The Messy House” (Rav Yechezkel Levenstein,) and “The Crying Baby” (Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach.)

“Snapshots of Greatness” is a wonderful way for parents and grandparents to connect with their offspring in both a positive and joyful manner. You can use these delightful stories as a springboard for additional discussions on the specific middos, character traits highlighted in those particular Torah cartoons.

**“My Name is EMES”**

Another recent example of excellent juvenile literature from the same publishing house is 45-page Torah cartoon book – “My Name is EMES” written by Rabbi Fischel Schachter and illustrated by Tzai R. Pensky. The important message of this second book has the protagonist Gimpel and his friends in an action packaged adventure spanning continents and centuries discovering that “Honesty is indeed the best policy.”

Both “Snapshots of Greatness” and “My Name is EMES” can be found in Jewish bookstores or by calling the publisher at (347) 831-4561 or emailing [Sales@chazakdist.com](mailto:Sales@chazakdist.com) On a different topic, there have been countless videos made since October 7th of the Israeli military action in Gaza. On a positive and humorous note is a 4:27 video by the Daily Mail in England that you can view by googling – “Brave IDF war dog Mikey has miracle recovery after being hit by Hamas grenade.”

The Daily Mail interviewed Prof Shai Efrati of the Shamir Medical College located in Be’er Ya’akov near Tel Aviv who was asked to give treatment to an injured dog. At first he told the caller that his unit which doesn’t have a veterinary department was quite busy handling injured IDF soldiers. The caller then explained that the dog – Mikey, a 9-year-old Alsatian is a member of the IDF Orketz dog unit and was a search and rescue dog injured by a Hamas thrown grenade that severely injured the canine’s eyes, legs and brain.

# 

# Mikey, the IDF search and rescue dog

Professor Efrati than quickly reversed his opposition, explaining that “we want to give the best of our treatment to our soldiers and Mikey is one of our soldiers.”

Based on 20 years of treatment to similar injuries to humans, the Shamir Medical College utilized hyperbaric oxygen therapy on Mikey. Originally there was little hope for the dog who was just weeks from being retired from IDF service, but Mikey has made incredible progress and has surprised everyone at the college’s clinic. May the same be true for all of the thousands of soldiers and civilians who have been injured by both Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists.

*Reprinted from the December 29, 2023 issue of The Jewish Connection.*