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**Rabbi Zvi Kogan, 28, Hy”d**



The body of Rabbi Zvi Kogan, one of the Chabad *shluchim* serving in the United Arab Emirates, was discovered on Sunday following a four-day search, according to local authorities. Rabbi Kogan was 28 years old.

Born on the 26th of Menachem Av 5756 (1996) to Rabbi Alexander and Etel Kogan, he grew up in a *Litvish chareidi* family in the Ramat Shlomo neighborhood of Yerushalayim.

As a youth, Rabbi Kogan studied at Yeshivas Maoz Chayil in Yerushalayim, Rabeinu Chaim Ozer in Bnei Brak, and the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. Following his yeshiva studies, he served in the Israel Defense Forces as part of the Givati Brigade, an operational combat unit.

Both Zvi and his brother Reuven later developed a strong connection to Chabad Chassidus and adopted its teachings. The brothers relocated to the UAE to assist Rabbi Levi Duchman, the Chief Rabbi of the United Arab Emirates, in strengthening Jewish life in the region.

**A Flourishing Jewish Community in the Arab Emirates**

Since the signing of the Abraham Accords, the Jewish community in the Emirates has experienced significant growth. This expansion has included the establishment of synagogues, the opening of the first Jewish educational center in the Gulf, and the availability of a variety of kosher food options.

In March 2022, Rabbi Kogan married Rivky Spielman, a Lubavitcher from Crown Heights and a niece of Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, the Chabad emissary tragically killed during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

The couple soon began their own *shlichus* in Abu Dhabi, where Rivky worked as a teacher while Rabbi Kogan managed the Rimon Kosher supermarket in Dubai, a hub for Jewish tourists and residents.

**His Trait of Gratitude was Well-Known and Admired**

A friend described him as “a cheerful person who never said ‘no’ to anyone, always helping and assisting everyone. Every person would leave him feeling sorted; he always knew how to guide and assist. He was a modest individual who honored his parents in a remarkable way, a truly G-d-fearing person who consistently remained humble. His trait of gratitude was well-known and admired.”

Last Thursday, Rabbi Kogan went missing in the middle of the day. His car was later found abandoned in Al Ain, approximately 93 miles from Abu Dhabi.

According to Israeli news sources, Israeli intelligence believes that Rabbi Kogan was being monitored by Iranian operatives.

A joint statement from Israel’s Prime Minister’s Office and the Foreign Affairs Ministry affirmed: “The Israeli mission in Abu Dhabi has been in contact with the family since the beginning of the incident and continues to support them during this difficult time. His family in Israel has also been informed.”

The statement also declared: “The murder of the late Zvi Kogan is a criminal antisemitic terrorist attack. The State of Israel will act by all means and bring the criminals responsible for his death to justice.”

In response to the tragedy, Israel’s National Security Council has urged citizens to avoid non-essential travel to the UAE. Although the country’s travel warning remains at Level 3 (medium threat), there is heightened concern that Israelis and Jews in the Emirates may face additional risks, according to N12.

*Reprinted from the November 24, 2024 website of matzav.com*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Toldot 5785**



Rashi, quoting Midrash, interprets that Eisav, “haunted“  his father with his pious speech and cunning conversation. Yitzchak is fooled by Eisav and believes that Eisav, the man of the world and the physically powerful figure is better suited to carry on Avraham’s vision than is Yaakov, the more studious and apparently more simple of the brothers.

The other opinion, more popular among the later commentators to the Torah, is that Yitzchak is aware of the shortcomings of behavior and attitude of his elder son. His desire to give the blessings to Eisav is due to his wish to redeem and save his son, and to enable Eisav to turn his life around and become a worthy heir to the traditions of his father and grandfather. He thinks that by somehow giving the blessings to Eisav, Yaakov will not really suffer any disadvantage in his life’s work, while Eisav will find his way back to holiness through the blessings that he has now received.

These two divergent attitudes towards the wayward child in Jewish families is one that is enacted daily in Jewish family life. Later Yitzchaks either willfully allow themselves to be deluded regarding the behavior and lifestyle of children or they are aware of the problem and attempt to solve it with a giving nature and a plethora of blessings.

Rivkah, Eisav’s mother, is not fooled by her son’s apparently soothing words nor does she believe that granting him blessings will somehow accomplish any major shift in his chosen lifestyle. To a great measure she adopts a policy of triage, saving Yaakov and blessing him while thus abandoning Eisav to his own chosen wanton ways.

The Torah does not record for us the “what if” scenario – what if Eisav had received the blessings would he then have been different in behavior and attitude, belief and mission. However, from the words of the later prophets of Israel, especially those of Ovadiah, it appears to be clear that G-d somehow concurred with Rivkah’s policy and holds Eisav to be redeemable only in the very long run of history and human events.

The verdict seems to be that one must be clear eyed and realistic about the painful waywardness and misbehavior of enemies of Yaakov, be they from within or without our immediate family and milieu. There are many painful choices that need to be made within one’s lifetime and especially in family relations.

There are few pat answers to varying and difficult situations. Perhaps that is why the Torah itself does not delve too deeply into the motives of Yitzchak and Rivkah but is content merely to reflect the different emotional relationships each had with their two very different sons. The Torah emphasizes the role that human emotions play in our lives and does not consign all matters to rational thought and decision-making.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

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Yitzchak son of Avraham– Avraham fathered Yitzchak.” (25:19) R’ Yaakov Abuchatzeira z”l (1806-1880; Morocco; known as “Abir Yaakov”) asks: Why does the verse interrupt and speak about Avraham and never mention the offspring of Yitzchak? (They are not mentioned until later.) R’ Abuchatzeira answers: Rashi z”l (to Bereishit 6:9) writes that the primary progeny of the righteous are their good deeds. Accordingly, our verse could be read as saying: Yitzchak’s progeny were his good deeds, and whoever saw him said, “He is a worthy son of Avraham!” (Pituchei Chotam)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Toldot 5785 email of R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s whY I Matter*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Is America a White**

**Christian Country**

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**QUESTION:** What do you think about people who label America a white Christian country?

**ANSWER:** Absolutely! That’s what we want. Jews should not resent the fact that many claim this to be a white Christian country. We should say “Gezunterheit!” More power to you! We are satisfied with that. Let it remain a white Christian country!

It’s a tragic error when these ultraliberal Jews battle religion in the schools. Let them have religion! It’s their country. We can’t take over their country. Certainly, it’s a Christian country and it must remain so. The salvation of America is that it should remain a Christian country because to be a Christian country is ten thousand times better than being a G-dless country – because atheism is ten thousand times worse than idolatry.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chaya Sara 5785 email of Toras Avigdor, - Tape #47.*

**G-d Gives the Jew the**

**Power to Act and Achieve**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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



In the Torah portion of Toldot our ancestor Isaac declares, "For now G-d has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Commenting on the Hebrew word for "fruitful," "ufarinu," Rashi explains that it means "to increase," to spread out, and expand.

The above verse can be divided into two parts. The first half, "G-d has made room for us," refers to the strengths and abilities G-d bestows upon an individual. The second part, "we shall be fruitful in the land," refers to the obligation it implies to utilize those gifts by working to make the world a better place.

The Torah teaches, "Man is born to labor." G-d created the world in such a way that man has the potential to improve upon creation and add to it through his efforts. To the naked eye, G-dliness is hidden and concealed. However, when man acts according to G-d's will, the true underlying G-dliness of creation becomes revealed. Man becomes a "partner" with G-d in the act of creation, as it were, by uncovering the G-dly light that sustains all existence.

A question is asked: How can human beings improve on something G-d Himself created? Is man really "superior" to G-d in this respect? Of course not, as we see from the first half of the above verse, "For now G-d has made room for us." Everything ultimately originates from G-d. Were it not for the strengths and abilities He gives us, we could never accomplish anything. It is only through the merit of these Divinely-given powers that we are able to reveal G-dliness in the world and elevate creation to a higher level.

It also follows that once these powers have been granted, we are expected to make proper use of them. As we learn from the text of our holy Torah, "For now G-d has made room for us" is immediately followed by "and we shall be fruitful in the land," indicating the need for practical action.

This same concept is expressed by a verse in Psalms, "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The first step is the G-dly influence that comes from Above, i.e., G-d taking the Jewish people out of Egypt. Only afterwards does man's service come into play, "open your mouth wide." By telling us to "open wide," G-d is exhorting us to "add" to what He has created, improving and enhancing the state of the world. We can then be assured that "I will fill it": not only will G-d grant us the power to act, but He will also assist us in our Divine service, thereby ensuring our success.

*Reprinted from the 5762/2001Toldos edition of L’Chayim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY* *Adapted from Volume 10 of Likutei Sichot.*

**“If So, Why Am I Thus?”**

The children agitated within her, and she said, “If so, why am I thus?” And she went to inquire of Hashem, (25:22) The unset was that there was a struggle between Esov and Yaakov. Once there was a separation between them, the end was that Esov became an “Ish Sodeh – a man of the field”.

Being connected to Tzadikim helps a Yid to strengthen himself from the situation he is in. This connection helps him even after his passing, as the Saba Kadisha of Slonim ZY”A said:

“Everyone who is accustomed to sit at the Sheves Achim with the Chasidim Shabbos at night, so too, when he reaches the True World, if he will request that he be allowed to go every Shabbos to the Rebbe and Chasidim, it will be sure that he will be allowed to go. And then too, possibly that he will not be allowed to return to his place in Gehenom, and he will stay with them”. (Sefer Divrei Shmuel – Slonim- Cong. Tiferes Zvi – chizuk620@gmail.com)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Toldot 5785 email of R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s whY I Matter*

**Thoughts that Count**

**for Parsha Toldos**

*And Isaac prayed to G-d ("vaye'tar") for his wife, because she was barren* (Gen. 25:21)

As Rashi explains, the Hebrew word "vaye'tar" implies a tremendous amount of prayer: "He engaged [in prayer] much and urgently." Why did Isaac have to pray so much? Because not only was Rivka childless, she had been born without a uterus (as described by the Midrash). In order for her to give birth, the G-dly influence would of necessity have to come from a higher spiritual source; thus "he engaged [in prayer] much and urgently." *(Ohr HaTorah)*

*And Jacob cooked a pottage of lentils* (Gen. 25:29)

That which Jacob was eager to sell, Esau was eager to buy, and vice versa. Jacob wished to divest himself of the desire for worldly pleasures, symbolized by the pottage of lentils. (In the same way that a lentil is round, so too are all lusts and desires "round" in that they revolve like a wheel.) This was something that Esau wished to acquire. At the same time, Esau sought to free himself from the birthright, symbolic of a higher level of attachment to G-d (the firstborn is considered "holy unto the L-rd"), which Jacob desired. *(Rabbeinu Bachya)*

*Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge* (Gen. 26:5)

Why did G-d bless Isaac in Abraham's merit rather than in his own, as He did with the other Patriarchs? Isaac is associated with the attribute of "gevura" (severity), the nature of which is to withhold. Thus, the Divine blessing and influence had to come through Abraham, who is associated with "chesed" (loving-kindness), the attribute that bestows an abundance of blessing. *(Likutei Levi Yitzchak)*

*The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (Gen. 27:22)

The fact that the above statement was made by Isaac in wonderment - how can these two things go together? - implies that it is indeed impossible. For the "voice of Jacob" and the "hands of Esau" are diametrical opposites.

*(Avnei Ezel)*

*Reprinted from the 5762/2001Toldos edition of L’Chayim,*

**The Missionary in**

**The Parking Lot**

**By**[**Jeff Jacoby**](https://aish.com/authors/48866047)

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**Jeff Jacoby**

***They are entitled to say "Come to J…" and I am entitled to say "No, thank you."***

I was in a busy shopping center parking lot, outside the supermarket where my wife and I had just picked up a few things. While she was organizing the grocery bags, I returned the cart to the rack. As I turned to head back to the car, a youngish woman in jeans and a "J… Is My Superhero" T-shirt came up to me.

"Hi!" she said brightly, with a knowing glance at my kippah, a head covering (also called a yarmulke) worn by traditionally observant Jews. "I'm Jewish, too."

It was an odd thing to hear from a stranger, especially one who pretty clearly wasn't Jewish.

"You are?" I replied. "That's surprising."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Because your T-shirt tells me you're Christian," I said. Noticing the small cross on a chain around her neck, I added, "So does your necklace."

"Listen," she told me. "Jews need to be saved. J… has a message for you. I'd like to tell you about it."

I'm never rude to missionaries, and I responded politely.

"I appreciate your offer," I said, "but I'm committed to my own religion, and J… is not a part of it." I turned to leave. "My wife is waiting for me, so I need to get going. Take care."

The woman's voice grew more strident. "This is important! You really should hear J…' message before you go." I gave a half-wave and said, "No, thanks, I'm OK."

"That's what you think" was her parting shot. "You're not OK!"

Over the years I have been approached quite a few times by missionaries hoping to engage my interest in Christianity. Generally, the would-be proselytizers are evangelical Christians, but I have also had such encounters with Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and Mormons. It doesn't offend me in the least when Christians try to awaken in me an interest in their religion, so long as they are courteous about it. (The woman in the parking lot crossed the line, but in my experience, she wasn't typical.)

As an observant Jew who takes his religion seriously and embraces its values and teachings, I can certainly understand why devout Christians might wish to interest me in the values and teachings of *their* religion.

Unlike some Jews and Jewish organizations, I have never regarded Christian attempts to convert Jews as hostile, indecent, or [antisemitic](https://www.heyalma.com/is-trying-to-convert-jews-to-christianity-antisemitic/). On the contrary: I recognize that for many Christians, it is a fundamental article of faith that no one can be spiritually saved except by faith in J…, and that Christians have an obligation to spread this "good news" — the original meaning of the word "gospel" — to those who haven't received it.

By their lights, proselytizers are offering Jews something of inestimable value: life eternal. They are also living up to J…' injunction to make the conversion of Jews a priority: "Go not into the way of the gentiles," he is quoted as telling his disciples in the Book of Matthew, "but only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Of course, I know that we Jewish "sheep" are not lost. The faith in which I was raised, a faith far older than Christianity, has always [denied the claims made about J](https://aish.com/why-jews-dont-believe-in-jesus/).. As I have sometimes explained to missionaries or others who seemed honestly perplexed by Jews' adamant rejection of the divinity of J.., much of what Christianity professes is flatly incompatible with the deepest principles of Judaism.

The most fundamental of all Jewish doctrines — that G-d has no physical attributes, that His unity is singular and indivisible, and that it is absolutely prohibited to worship any person — are wholly at odds with the Christian view of J... To the Jewish mind, the claim that G-d was born in human form and died on the cross to atone for the sins of mankind is not only incomprehensible, it is blasphemous.

That is why countless Jews throughout history were willing to go to their deaths, or to be [expelled from their homes](https://aish.com/dont-be-surprised-by-antisemitism/), rather than convert to Christianity.

That is also why the idea of "Jews for J…" — the notion that Jewish identity is compatible with faith in Christ — is unequivocally repudiated by virtually all Jews, from the most devoutly Orthodox to the most secular and Reform.

Memo to the woman in the parking lot: If you're wearing a cross necklace and a J… T-shirt, the *least* believable thing you can say to a Jewish stranger is "I'm Jewish too." I realize that Christians with a strong evangelical commitment might regard it as an act of love to encourage Jews to become "completed" by accepting J... Seen through Jewish eyes, however, [so-called "messianic" Jews](https://aish.com/48918997/) are Christians. [Full stop](https://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/unmasking-jews-for-jesus).

**A basic teaching in normative Judaism is that *all* good people, Jews and non-Jews alike, receive their ultimate reward in the world to come.**

Unlike Christianity (and Islam), Judaism is not a proselytizing faith. Jews are not encouraged to recruit converts, though sincere and self-motivated "Jews by *choice" are*[*welcomed*](https://aish.com/the-incredible-story-of-the-righteous-convert-of-vilna/)*and honored and loved. Jews have never believed that one* must be Jewish to achieve salvation or go to heaven. A basic teaching in normative Judaism is that *all* good people, Jews and non-Jews alike, receive their ultimate reward in the world to come.

For Christians certain that anyone who hasn't accepted J… is destined for hell, proselytizing to Jews is the greatest imaginable kindness. That is why I always tell missionaries that I appreciate their good intentions. I know they mean well. But they will never convince me that they are right.

To be sure, I wish that all Christian denominations would follow the example of the contemporary Catholic Church, [which no longer seeks to convert Jews](https://catholicweekly.com.au/why-the-catholic-church-does-not-seek-to-convert-jews/) and no longer questions the enduring legitimacy of the faith by which J… and his first disciples were defined.

Nevertheless, I am grateful to live in a nation where freedom of religion — including the freedom to reject religion — is vigorously protected, and where my tiny Jewish minority has flourished for generations alongside numerous other faiths. The same Constitution that guarantees my liberty to practice my religion guarantees the liberty of evangelizing Christians to try to talk me out of it. They are entitled to say "Come to J…" and I am entitled to say "No, thank you."

In a world where so much blood has been spilled over religious differences, the fact that Americans with profoundly incompatible religious beliefs can live peacefully as neighbors is an extraordinary blessing.

Even if, now and then, it leads to an awkward encounter in a parking lot.

*Printed from the current website of aish.com This op-ed originally appeared in The Boston Globe.*

**Heavenly Sustenance**



For the first ten years of his marriage, Reb Yitzchok Meir of Gur (better known as Chiddushei HaRim), was supported by his father-in-law, who wanted him to spend his entire day studying Torah. But then his father-in-law lost all his money and the family was left poverty-stricken. Nonetheless, Reb Yitzchok Meir continued studying Torah as before.

Once his wife asked him how he managed to sit undisturbed, free of any worry about their situation. Reb Yitzchok Meir answered, "Your father chose me for a son-in-law as an ilui, a person who can learn in one day what takes others a year to learn. Similarly, with regard to worrying: what takes others over three days to worry about, I can accomplish in one minute!" The young rebbetzin had a question: "But what do you accomplish with your one minute of worrying?"

He answered with a question: "And what does three days of worrying accomplish? There is no place for any of this, for everything HaShem does is for the best."

A short time later, his brother, moved to town and hired him as his financial secretary. And that was how Reb Yitzchok Meir supported his family until one day he was appointed as a rov in Warsaw.

**Fixed Wages**

Rav Tachlifa taught: "All of a person's provisions are preordained for him during the days of Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur, except for the expenses of Shabbos and Yom-Tov, and the fees for his children's chinuch. If one spends less on these expenses, he is provided with less, and if one spends more, he is provided with more."

A man complained to Reb Meir of Premishlan: "Someone is taking away my parnasa!" "When a horse lowers its head to drink from a river," Reb Meir told him, "he stamps his hooves. Why? Seeing another horse reflected in the water, he becomes envious and angry, so he stamps at the other horse: he doesn't want it to drink up his water! You, however, surely understand that there is enough water for many horses. As our chachomim have said, no individual ever takes away from the livelihood that has been preordained for another."

**Full Support**

The Tzemach Tzedek writes that since the amount that a person will earn has already been set for him, he should not waste his time on extra work. Rather he should work only as much as necessary to earn the amount he needs to live at the time being, and trust in HaShem Who will provide for him in the future.

How does a Yiddishe farmer go about producing a harvest? Chazal tell us that "he places his trust in the Life of all the worlds – and sows." The Rebbe explains that though the farmer knows that planting a seed in the ground will bring growth, he nevertheless realizes that this process is not automatic: it is being orchestrated by HaShem alone.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains the unique ability of Yidden to trust in HaShem. While goyim will recognize an obvious miracle, they will dismiss everything else as resulting from "the laws of nature." Yidden, by contrast, can recognize that even constant, everyday happenings are brought about by the hand of HaShem Himself. The Rebbe distinguishes between two approaches that a Yid can take when doing business: (1) Now that HaShem has commanded him to take a job, the job is the source of his parnasa (albeit because of the bracha of HaShem); (2) the job is merely a mitzva like any other, and his parnasa comes directly from HaShem, unrelated to the job.

The Rebbe explains that this difference will also express itself in a person's day-to-day conduct:

If he sees his business as the source of his parnasa, he will be inclined to protect it even at the expense of a mitzva, such as investing more time in davening or more money in tzedakah. However, if he sees it as a mitzva, he will not let it detract from another mitzva.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5785 email of The Weekly Farbrengen.*

**A True Tzadik Sees**

**No Bad in Others**

The Me’or Einayim (Parshas Chukas) quotes the Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh zy”a as saying that a true tzadik sees no fault in others. If one does see bad in others, it is a sign that he is not a genuine tzadik. He compares this to someone who is looking at himself in a mirror. If he sees a dirty face, it means that his own face is dirty. If he sees a clean, spotless face, it means that his own face is clean.

So too, if one sees bad in others, it is because he is seeing his own faults. With this in mind, he explains the pasuk (Vayikroh 19:18) of “v’ahavta l’reacha komocha” to mean that just like one would not hate himself if he recognized some flaw in himself, so too one should not have negative feelings towards his friend, even if he sees a flaw in him.

Just like one would not focus on his own bad parts and would still love himself, one should feel the same way towards his friend. He concludes with a hint to this concept from the verse in Tehillim (34:13): “Who is the man who desires life, he loves days to see good.”

This can be understood to mean that one who lives the life of a tzadik desires to only see good in his fellow men.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sarah 5785 email of The Way of Emunah: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum.*

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There is an opinion that Moshe sent Yisro back home before matan Torah. Yalkut Shimoni (Mishlei 950) explains that Yisro couldn't be at matan Torah because Yisro didn't suffer enslavement in Mitzrayim. As if to say, "If you didn't suffer with them, you don't deserve to rejoice with the great joy of matan Torah together with them."

Reb Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi zt'l explained that the problem wasn't that Yisro wasn't a slave in Mitzrayim like the Yidden were. The issue was that Yisro lived comfortably in Mitzrayim at a time when the Egyptians oppressed the Jewish nation. The complaint against Yisro was that he didn't feel the pain of the Jewish nation who were being tortured in his country. How could he live tranquilly in Mitzrayim when the Jews suffered so much? And since he didn’t participate in their sorrow, he wasn't worthy to partake in their joy.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Chayei Sora 5785 email of Rabbi Eli Biderman’s Torah Wellsprings.*