

# Never Give Up

## 1. From the story of Or Ben Yehuda, Commander of the Caracal Battalion

I remember the situation so clearly. I peer, lift my head up, then bring my head back down, then look to the side again – some five pickup trucks are coming at me, and packs of motorcyclists, and terrorists are hopping between the dunes, between the trees, all in combat vests and uniforms and advancing in our direction. I can't even count them; there are hundreds. Hundreds! And in the distance behind them are long lines of people from Gaza who are just marching in our direction, some armed, some unarmed, and I say to myself, "Well, that's it; this is where I'm going to die, right here on this spot. I'm going to die here."

I've been in many encounters and many firefights in my life, but it never felt like this; it never even came close to this. This time I accepted death, I came to terms with death, I understood that's how it is. I remember looking up and apologizing to my children; in my heart I begged them to forgive me – they're so little, and so cute, and I'd never come back to them, never see them again. That was it; I saw this was really the end. And then I said to myself, "Okay, if this actually is the end, then I'll end it well. I'll die standing tall. I'll do the very best I can, and I'll fight until my last drop of blood."

So I turn to my soldiers, a group of twelve brave fighters who are waiting for me to tell them what to do. I turn to them with a half-smile – they told me afterward that I smiled, but I don't remember it – and I say to them, "Let's go, let's take them apart!" and they all shout, "Let's do it!!!" They come to the embankment with heavy machine guns, with whatever they can carry, and we take our place there and start shooting at anyone approaching the outpost; we shoot like crazy people! And at a certain point, we have a light anti-tank missile, so at one point we launch it toward one of the Hamas trucks, and the truck explodes, a tremendous explosion, something extreme – the truck must have been loaded with explosives, and the blast takes with it some motorcyclists who were nearby. As we continue fighting, I suddenly realize that many of the terrorists are beginning to retreat, to turn around and run back, and I suddenly understand that we are, in fact, doing something significant here.

*From One Day in October: Forty Heroes, Forty Stories, pages 184–185*

## 2. From Mickey's Story

Never in my whole life did I think that the idea of killing my wife and my daughter would ever cross my mind for even a fraction of a second. But there was a point there – when the terrorists were at the door of the safe room – a point when we realized that this was it. My wife and I look at each other in total silence when my daughter isn't looking, and my wife makes this sign of two fingers walking like legs and shakes her head "No."

She's basically saying, without words, "We're not going with them." Then she points her fingers like a gun and points it at herself, then at our daughter, then at me. That's basically her way of telling me, "If they come in, kill me, then Netta, then yourself." And I nod. And I put my hand over my heart, signaling her, "I'm sorry; forgive me." She signals that she's sorry, too, and she smiles. A sad, sad smile.

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[Here Mickey shares how for two hours terrorists were entering his house one after another carrying RPG's, throwing grenades, and shooting in every direction. Even though Mickey only had a pistol, he was able to neutralize or kill all the terrorists. At one point, Mickey entered the safe room where his wife and daughter were hiding. He held the handle of the safe room door tightly and didn't allow any terrorists to enter. However, the door of the safe room had a hole in it as a result of one of the explosions. Through that hole it was possible for the terrorists to shoot Mickey and his family.]

So the leader comes in, and everyone falls silent. From behind the door I can see him – I see him through a hole in the door, and I can see that he’s holding a shoulder-fired missile, an RPG, and it’s pointed at me. He asks me, “Do you surrender?” and I said, “Yes, I surrender, I’m coming out, let’s end this.” But I don’t come out of the safe room. I tell him that I surrender on the condition that he won’t hurt my wife or daughter. When I say that, his men leave, disappear, move on to another house. Now it’s just him and me.

I realize that I’m about to be taken hostage, so I try to buy time. I start talking to him. I ask him for a cup of water, and he says to me, “Come out, I’ll even make you a cup of coffee.” Later on, I heard that that’s what he did with the neighbors, the ones who were taken hostage: he went into their homes, spoke to them nicely, reassured them that nothing would happen. An intelligent guy, very slick, very clever.

I ask him in English, “Why are you doing this? It’s against Islam to kill women and children,” and he answers me in English, “Of course not, we’re not killing women or children; we’re not doing anything like that.” We keep talking for five, ten, fifteen minutes. I’m playing for time – I’m behind the safe room door; he’s pointing the RPG right at me. I know, I just know, that I’m going to be taken hostage. I’m sure of it. Suddenly, he says to me, “that’s enough. Come out of the safe room now and come with me.” So I say to him, “Just two more minutes, give me two minutes to say goodbye to my wife and daughter.”

Another two minutes pass, and he shouts to me, “Your time’s up!” I start asking him another question, and he shouts, “No more talking! Now I’m beginning a countdown!” I say, “What do you mean, a countdown?” I see him standing across from me, across from the door of the safe room with the RPG, and he starts to count: “Ten! Nine!” I ask him, “Why are you counting?” and he says, “Because if you don’t come out, I’m shooting inside and finishing you off!” and he continues, “Eight! Seven!” When he gets to three, I shout to him, “Stop! I’m coming out!”

He says to me, “I want you to come out with your hands up. Leave the gun on the floor. Open the door and kick the gun over to me.” I say to him, “Okay, that’s what I’m doing, okay. I’ve been injured; let me just put the gun down, and I’m coming out.” I’m behind the door; he can only see a small part of me. I begin to rattle the gun and the cartridges so that he’ll think that I’m putting them down.

I’m standing in front of the door and say to him, “But you promised me that if I come out, you won’t shoot my wife and daughter. I’m coming out now, so you have to keep your promise. Put down the RPG; why do you have to stand there aiming the RPG?” He says to me, “You’re right.” In that fraction of a second when he says “You’re right” and starts lowering the RPG, and his eyes move – I open the door, charge forward with my gun, and shoot him. In the groin.

After he went down, no one else came into our house.

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But there’s something else in this whole story that gives me strength. There’s that expression, “I stared death in the face.” Me, I didn’t just stare death in the face; I embraced it. I made my peace with it. I even thought of helping it along. What would have happened if my wife and I had given up – if after they blew up the door to our safe room we had just given up? To tell you the truth, it terrifies me, it terrifies me to think about it. I was certain that we weren’t going to make it; a few times I was convinced of that, absolutely certain.

But somehow, I got through the whole story, and my family is still alive, and today, I can say with absolute certainty: *Ein ye’ush ba’olam*, There is no despair in the world. That’s a very strong feeling of mine. There’s no despair. There is no such thing as giving up. Even when you see the end, even when you’re sure that it’s over – don’t give up. Never, ever, ever give up.

**From *One Day in October: Forty Heroes, Forty Stories*, pages 230, 336–337**

# Guided Questions for “The Crazy Person Who Did the Opposite of Everyone Else”

If you prefer, you can create separate cards for each of these questions.

—Never Give Up 1—

## Read section number 1

Imagine that someone were to tell you about a battle involving twelve soldiers and their commander who had to fight off hundreds of trained terrorists possessing a huge number of weapons. Think of this situation in the most rational way possible. What are the odds that a small group of soldiers would be able to defeat a large group of armed terrorists? If you were in that situation, how would you respond? Would you at some point give up and stop fighting?

—Never Give Up 2—

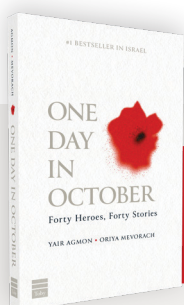
## Read section number 2

Sometimes a feeling of despair seems reasonable. We look at our situation and ask ourselves, “What are the odds of success?” We may even conclude that the chances are quite low. The stories of Or and Mickey remind us that even if it looks like our situation is dire, there is always a chance for us to succeed. Think of a situation from your life or from the life of someone you know where a good outcome prevailed against all the odds. Can you think of a case like that?

—Never Give Up 3—

## Read section number 3

Sometimes when we don't have much to lose, we are willing to take greater risks. Both Or and Mickey were certain that they were going to die. As a result of this feeling, they were able to fight in an incredible manner that eventually saved their lives. If Or and Mickey were sure that they were going die, why did they not despair? What caused them to take action and fight for their lives despite the risks?



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**One Day in October**

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