

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Thursday, November 15, 2012

What does Hashem want of me when I am angry, afraid, or under attack?

The general answer is to do what is good and right in the eyes of Hashem. Rabbi Nivin teaches us that the whole goal of life is to walk in the moment with Hashem in the center, asking what does Hashem want from me? What type of moment is this, a moment to bring the strengths He has bestowed upon me, a moment to make a correction to a bad habit, a moment to do a mitzvah, a moment to grow in a particular direction to improve myself?

Today is Rosh Chodesh Kislev and the Israeli Defense Forces are retaliating in Gaza for missiles sent toward Tel Aviv and throughout Israel. A million Israelis are sleeping in or near their bomb shelters. Here we are in America. What does Hashem want from me in this moment? Is it more than saying tehillim and doing mitzvahs for the safety and protection of every Jew?

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, this afternoon, Thursday Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5773, issued the following statement to the foreign press. The highlighted, italicized, bolded section is the area that we can do something internal to help out with:

"In recent days and weeks, Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in Gaza have made normal life impossible for over one million Israelis. No government would tolerate a situation where nearly a fifth of its people live under a constant barrage of rockets and missile fire, and Israel will not tolerate this situation. This is why my government has instructed the Israeli Defense Forces to conduct surgical strikes against the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza. And this is why Israel will continue to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people.

I want to remind you that seven years ago, Israel withdrew from every square inch of Gaza. Now Hamas, they took over the areas we vacated. What did it do? Rather than build a better future for the residents of Gaza, the Hamas leadership, backed by Iran, turned Gaza into a terrorist stronghold. They fired thousand of rockets at our cities, at our towns, at our civilians, at our children. They've smuggled thousands of rockets and missiles into Gaza, and they deliberately place these rockets and missiles in civilian areas: in homes, in schools, near hospitals. This year alone, the fired over one thousand rockets and missiles at Israel, included close to 200 rockets in the last 24 hours.

I'm stressing this because it's important to understand one simple point. ***There is no moral symmetry; there is no moral equivalence, between Israel and the terrorist organizations in Gaza. The terrorists are committing a double war crime. They fire at Israeli civilians, and they hide behind Palestinian civilians.*** And by contrast, Israel takes every measure to avoid civilian casualties. I saw today a picture of a bleeding Israeli baby. This picture says it all: Hamas deliberately targets our children, and they deliberately place their rockets next to their children. Despite this reality, and it's a very difficult reality, Israel will continue to do everything in its power to avoid civilian casualties.

I have to say that from my talks with world leaders, I have the clear understanding that they have a clear understanding of this. Yesterday I spoke to President Obama and I briefed him on Israel's operations. I want to express my appreciation once again to President Obama for his unequivocal clear sided support for Israel's right to defend itself. I also want to express my appreciation to the other world leaders I've had a chance to speak to in the last 24 hours: to

President Hollande of France, to UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, to EU Foreign Minister Catherine Ashton and to Quartet representative Tony Blair. I want to thank them for their understanding of Israel's need to defend itself, and Israel's right to defend itself.

In the past 24 hours Israel has made it clear that it will not tolerate rocket and missile attacks on its civilians. I hope that Hamas and the other terror organizations in Gaza got the message. If not, Israel is prepared to take whatever action is necessary to defend our people."

Let's ask ourselves the toughest question – where am I morally committing a double war crime?" The mirror that the terrorists have held up to Judaism during the course of the Intifada has not brought out the truth about their motives but rather swayed political sympathy to them. It seems so ironic, has frustrated and confounded our minds to the point where we have to ask ourselves, how has this lack of being seen as the ones deserving of sympathy affected our cynicism, diminished our emunah, changed our relationship with Torah and mitzvahs? Has it strengthened the part of us that is resolved to live within the rules of the kelipa alone until Moshiach gets here and strengthens everything out? Or do we idealistically continue to relate with Hashem more and more and if the latter, what does He want from us before He brings the Final Redemption?

When we feel negative, constricted emotions coming from judgments and frustration, the Baal Shem Tov tells us that we have a trait within that the suffering comes to rectify. Thus, if I feel insulted, then likely I am now or have in the past or in a previous lifetime been the one who insulted. If Hashem deems that it is good for me to have such an experience, an answer to the question is "Hashem wants me to do teshuva on insulting others." WHAT? I feel insulted and I should do teshuva on insulting others? Consider the channel that has been blocked by insults and feeling insulted. It is one channel with lots of blockages in it. Either the person feeling insulted or the one who regrets making an insult, by doing teshuva, can beseech Hashem to forgive and clean out the entire blockage within the channel – as if it were a clogged artery, clogged by our mistakes, negativity, hurt feelings, angry words and more. It is a testament to our humanity but we are empowered to release the destructive beings blocking abundance by doing teshuva and asking that the entire channel be opened and that the destructive beings no longer be empowered to block abundance but rather establish a positive connective channel.

The IDF has been sent to target terrorists in Gaza. Let each of us target the negativity within ourselves, the grudges, the hatred, the resentment, the complaints, the judgments, and let us go deep within and see these emotions as stemming from a thought that is a garment over a power that comes only from One Source. That power is within our free willed choice to redirect for the unification and sanctification of His Name. And if we choose to do teshuva – that is, to allow Hashem to be King over that negativity and beseech Him to help us to do only that which is pleasing in His eyes alone – we experience our own akeida – we sacrifice the feelings of our "garment" because with our emunah we understand that by letting go of our pain as well as doing teshuva on the aspect of human nature that we all share such that we are also guilty of doing similar "crimes" we can open a channel of abundance.

The light that can come from our collective choice to release from our hearts our pain and our sorrow at causing others pain, out of pure love of Hashem, with deep emunah that He Alone is King, can bring a light for Chanukah that perhaps Hashem will bring a new light to the world. Please everyone reading this, please try as hard as you can, to find a way to take the areas that pain you at this moment, ask Hashem to forgive the ones who inflicted it, tell Him you know He brought this to you so that you could clean out this channel and that He can count on you to do the work of opening up an area of abundance that has been blocked. The pain we feel is His email to us, telling us this needs human forgiveness and repentance in order to create the positive influence He would love to send to uphold the world. We are partnered with Him. Please let us try right now.

I forgive the one who caused me the pain of and I let go of the pain and realize that it is within human nature of which I am a part. Please let me do teshuva, let me feel and regret the times I have done a similar thing, the times I have utilized a similar misdirected thought that has caused damage. Please allow me to clean it off my soul, uproot it from my nature and from human nature in general and please let it be a zechus for Klal Yisrael.

In this way, we can clean out the channels that could be causing our suffering this double war crime, this attack upon our children and our inability to be effective in gaining political sympathy because of the way the terrorists hide their crimes behind children and families. Let us look inside and do teshuva from both ends, from the negativity we feel and the negativity we cause. Let us see ourselves as neshamas who can clean our garments and who are privileged to do so in this world to make Hashem's name known. If each of us does this in the privacy of our hearts, Hashem will know and please G.d our positive influence will soon felt by all with the coming of Moshiach, may we see him immediately.