

Shemini

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The sirens used to go off once a day, maybe twice. And they didn't seem to go off at the most inconvenient times either, and even as late as Purim people didn't seem to be fazed by the possibility of missiles reaching them or doing damage.

But then, everything changed. The Iranians started sending more missiles and more dangerous ones as well. The destruction worsened and deaths started to increase. All of a sudden, during the week of Pesach, there were constant booms in the distance, and even the closing of a car door made one stop and pay more close attention to what is happening at the moment. It's made Pesach cleaning even more difficult and tiring.

As if that weren't enough, it was cold and rainy. For many families, especially with young children, the outdoors is an essential part of Pesach cleaning. It's where the kids eat leftover *chometz* or newly bought *chometz* (pizza) while their parents purge the indoors of any that is remaining. It's where the parents send their children so *they* can get the "job" done in time for the *chag*. The rain took the outdoors away. The "Iranians"

took away even the indoors.

Yes, the miracles to date have been tremendous. Yes, we feel the “Clouds of Glory” catching missiles on our behalf. Yes, there are incredible stories of near misses and last-minute salvations. But, sometimes it seems like God is standing between us and the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* He asked us to do! There is something wrong with the “equation,” between two plus two doesn’t always seem to equal four.

The truth is, it does—*always*. This is what Nachum *Ish Gamzu* tried to teach us with statements like, “This too is for the good” when the opposite seemed true. It is what Rebi Akiva echoed when he proclaimed, “All that God does He does for the good” while he experienced the worst life had to offer. It wasn’t apologetic. It was their way of saying that if the equation of life seems incorrect to you, you “copied” it down wrong, probably leaving out some variable.

That variable is “Y,” or more to the point, “Why.” That “why” asks about why something that happened that doesn’t make sense to us makes sense to God. It has to, or it could never happen. We may not see how, but even a butterfly doesn’t flap its wings unless God tells it to each time, among everything else that He makes happen in all of Creation every moment that it exists.

For example, why were the deaths of Nadav and Avihu at the pinnacle of the inauguration of the Mishkan a necessary part of the initiation process? Even God hinted to this back in *Parashas Tetzaveh* (similar to *Tzav*) as Rashi brings down there. That’s where He told Moshe that on the day of the inauguration He would be sanctified through His holy ones. It’s just that Moshe had thought it would be him and Aharon, and not Nadav and Avihu.

The answer to this question turns history on its head and, for that matter, a lot of people who misunderstand what history is really like and why. A doctor once told a patient who asked, “Why am I sick?” that they shouldn’t ask why they were sick. Rather, he said, “Ask why you aren’t sick more often given all the billions of things that can go wrong in the body at moment of time!”

History too. We live with the notion that history is generally good and orderly and that only on occasion it goes awry. Then we ask why, as it is totally usually unexpected and, as far as we’re concerned, really should not have happened, but did anyhow.

Kabbalah has a different view. It says, “Don’t ask why things went wrong. Ask instead about how the things that went right went right!” For example, how could there even be a temple, or even a Mishkan?” The forces of chaos that seem to be the undercurrent of history should not have allowed them. They certainly were exceptions to the rule, which is why they did not last forever.

How did we come to expect everything to go right and become so disappointed when it doesn’t? A lot of times it comes from the body which constantly hopes for comfort and runs from pain. Other times it might come from the soul which intuitively knows that if God makes something, it must be inherently good, even perfect.

And it is. But as the episode of Nadav and Avihu and this current “Persian War” remind us, God’s idea of perfection and ours can differ at this stage of history. The world won’t change for the better when Moshiach comes. What will change will be our ability to see how “better” had been there all through history, and why it was necessary to camouflage it in calamity until

the yetzer hara was gone and the world became filled with *Da'as Elokim*.

Knowing this in your head and your heart not only brings comfort, but it also provides direction. It tells a person how to proceed in life so that they can invest their hopes and expectations where they can help and not hinder. When they have been wrong, they have left Jews stranded psychologically and physically, not something you want to happen as history winds down, and being in the right place at the right time is crucial for survival.

Almost finished my third edit of Sha'ar HaGilgulim, b"H, the Arizal's teachings on reincarnation and personal rectification, I have decided to teach the material as a course using ZOOM. I have not quite finalized the format or cost per series, but the idea would be to allow ongoing discussion to clarify points relevant to the material in real time. Discounts will be available on the actual hardcover book, and the PDF version will be free to anyone who signs up for at least one series. If you interested in this idea, I would appreciate knowing at pinchasw@thirtysix.org.

Besoros tovos and Good Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston