

Resistance and Persistence in Times of Trouble

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The Gemara in Kiddushin (32a) says that Rav Huna, wanting to test his son Rabba for his *kibbud av v'em*, walked over to his son and tore his silk garment to see whether he would become angry at his father. The Gemara proceeds to ask: if his son got angry, would Rav Huna not have violated *lifnei iver lo siten michshol*? The Gemara answers that Rav Huna had relinquished his *kavod*. Rav Yisrael Salanater is perplexed by this: he could understand how a father can be *mochel* on his *kavod*, but getting angry is in and of itself an *aveira*, and a father cannot forgive the *issur* of *ka'as*! Rav Shlomo Fisher answers that we learn a great principle from this story: normal human emotion is usually not an *aveira*, and an angry response by Rabba would not have been a transgression. Another proof of this idea is found in the *Sefer Hachinuch* (338) about *lo sikom*, explaining that if someone is verbally abusing you, it is not considered to be *nekamah* to respond. While it is true that it is a *midas chassidus* to not respond, according to *halachah* it is not feasible for a person to be a stone and not respond, and thus, normal human response cannot be deemed an *aveira*.

The Gemara says *lo nitnah Torah lemalachei hashbareis* (*Berachos* 25b, *Yoma* 30a, *Kiddushin* 54a, *Meilah* 14b). Why is this relevant? People have approached me feeling guilty about their

emotions in the case of this war. They're scared and they want to have *bitachon*, but if someone feels scared, that is a normal human response, and likewise, if a person feels anger and hatred, that is a normal human response. We are allowed to have these types of emotional responses. Certainly, we should try to work on our *bitachon*, but at the end of the day, to be human is not an *aveira*, and ultimately, we must have a reconciliation with ourselves and our emotional response.

There are also practical responses. In *Bamidbar*, when the Torah says to wage war against Midyan, the Torah uses the phrase “*elef lamateb*” three times (*Bamidbar* 31:4-6). The *Midrash Rabbah* explains that this phrase is said three times because it wasn't just one thousand people per tribe; it was three thousand per tribe, as the *Midrash* says one thousand people were involved in logistics, one thousand were involved in combat, and one thousand were engaged in *tefillah*. In that sense, we can all be considered part of that army. We learn, *daven*, and say *Tehillim*, and all of that is part of our *bishtadlus*. We are not uninvolved; we are part of the one thousand who were learning and *davening*.

Although the October 7th attack seems unprecedented to us, it is not unprecedented in Jewish history— people have tried to eliminate us many times. One prime example of this is Purim. Rav Soloveitchik inferred that although Sancheriv mixed up all the nations, Amalek is not only genealogical, but also ideological, and is defined as any nation that desires to destroy *Klal Yisrael*. Indeed, the response of *Klal Yisrael* here is important to look at, for it is here that we see these same three parallels. There was *tefillah* (i.e. fasting), and Mordechai taught the Jewish people Torah. We also know that the Jews fought back and

killed 30,000 Persians. The third area that *Klal Yisrael* fought against Amalek was “*mishbloach manos ish lerei’etihu*” – since the threat was to physically annihilate us, the response was to physically sustain each other. The *mishbloach manos* is not merely about sustaining; it is about the encouragement of friendship and unity, strengthening each other psychologically and emotionally. The third idea is the concept of *tzelem Elokim*. The *reshaim* who attacked us destroyed their own *tzelem Elokim*, and tried to destroy ours as well, but we do not succumb to that – we have to go in the opposite direction.

The third response is an intellectual one. Hamas’ viciousness is not the least bit surprising, but what is more bothersome is the support we have seen from the various religious and political factions. What would have to be the bar Hamas would have to pass to be condemned by these groups? Nothing. Hamas has done everything evil imaginable. What motivates these disparate groups to see Israel and the Jews destroyed? The Gemara in *Megillah* (3a) talking about Daniel says his friends were scared since they did not see the vision he saw, and asks why they were scared, answering that even though they did not see it, their subconscious saw it, and there are times when a person is not consciously aware of why they are scared.

There is something about *Klal Yisrael* and the return to our land that scares these factions. Arnold Toynbee called the Jews “a fossil remnant,” and in the eyes of Christians, the Jews are frozen – but we seem to be thawing out. Israel and Torah are flourishing, undermining their understanding of why the Jews are in exile. The Vatican rationalized our return in 1948 by saying the Jews had yet to reclaim Jerusalem, yet in 1967 we reclaimed that too; the fossils have come to

life. In Islam, it's just as scary to see us at home and is a contradiction to their belief, and to an atheist, we should not exist either. We are unaware of our own fossilization and for them, it's troubling.

Rav Moshe Shapiro used to ask what “*Hashem la'mabul yashav*” (*Tehillim* 29:10) means, and explained that when the *geulah* comes it will be like a *mabul*, and it will wipe away their understanding of civilization like a *mabul*. What all these groups detect is a *mabul* coming, but for us, it is comforting, as we know it is the footsteps of the *Mashiach*. The truth is we all know that the *geulah* is inevitable and it will come, but for them it is terrifying. If one were to see velociraptor footsteps in the wet sand, they would start to get scared. These groups are seeing fossils coming back to life, which should give us hope as well as an understanding that we are on the trajectory towards the future and our hope in *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* that we are on the path to *geulah, b'meheirah b'yameinu*.