



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On the Air with Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio programs in Israel

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Does every bullet have an address? [Q&A from Ha-Rav's video blog]

Q: During a war, there are many bullets fired and missiles and mortars shot. Is there Divine Providence who is killed, injured or saved or is it all luck?

A: It is certainly true that not only is there Divine Providence for the entire world, there is also Divine Providence for each individual, for each thing which occurs down to the smallest detail. We obviously do not know the calculations of Hashem but there is Divine Providence in life and all the more so in when a person will die as is written in the Gemara in Yevamot (50a). This does not mean, however, that a person can take risks and say: "If Hashem decreed that I will live then I will live and I do not need to be careful." This is not so. The book "Mesilat Yesharim" (chap. 9) says that a person who sins will be punished and if he takes risks and transgresses the mitzvah of "And you shall safeguard your soul," it is possible that the punishment will be a shortening on his life. A person must therefore always be cautious but it is possible that he could be injured or killed whether he is cautious or not but if he is cautious he fulfills a mitzvah and if he is not cautious he commits a severe transgression. While there is Divine Providence, a person must also pray and the prayer may change the Divine decision. It is similar to a king who says that a person who sins will receive a punishment, but if he asks for forgiveness he will not be punished. The same here.

it is possible that Hashem says that if a person prays it will be one way and if he does not pray it will be another way. A man therefore should not fret about Divine Providence and he should act properly. May Hashem protect our Nation and the cities of our G-d.

Communal prayer at a time of danger

Q: Should we daven in a large communal prayer in shul at a time when there is danger of kassam or Grad rockets and mortars falling or in a small minyan in a bomb shelter?

A: If there is an explicit instruction not to gather communally by the Home Front Command or by the Rabbi, there is no question. If there is no explicit instruction but a recommendation, it is recommended that people not gather when there is no pressing need; but it is permissible when there is a need such as communal prayer. In truth, the risk is minute. People – to our great distress – are killed four times more often in car accidents in the State of Israel than through all of the terrorist acts and wars combined together. Even when there is a slight risk, we do not take risks by walking in the street for no reason but davening with a minyan is certainly not for no reason. In general, terror does not have power. Throughout all of history, terrorism has not succeeded in conquering a country. Terrorists can kill tens of people, hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands but there are still millions of people. Terrorism is a psychological war. There is a Chinese saying. Kill one person and frighten tens of thousands. Their goal is to disturb normal life, weaken the citizens' trust in the government, and destroy the societal glue which binds a nation together. Thus, anyone who continues with life's routine is waging war against terror. And if the media does not report about terror, the terrorist will see that their activities are not working and it will cease.

Warning siren in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei

Q: What should a person do if he hears a warning siren for an incoming missile and he is in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei?

A: He should certainly run to the bomb shelter and continue to daven the Shemoneh Esrei there. This is based on two reasons. 1. It is a case of a life-threatening situation. 2. Walking in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei without speaking is not considered an interruption. For example, if I am davening the Shemoneh Esrei and a child is bothering me something terrible and I cannot concentrate, I can move to another place. Or if I am davening by heart and I cannot remember "Ya'ale Ve-Yavo," I can go and get a siddur. Speaking is forbidden but there is no problem of moving if there is a need. Therefore, if I am in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei and I hear a warning siren for an incoming missile, I should go to the bomb shelter without talking and continue to daven in the place where I left off.

Famine

Q: Is this week's rainfall enough for us to cease praying for rain? How do we know when to stop? For which sins are we punished with a lack of rain?

A: The Chief Rabbinate of Israel decides when we begin to pray for rain and when we should stop. Baruch Hashem, this is not the situation mentioned in the Mishnah when there is not even water to drink. We have water to drink. This is a problem for agriculture which is also important since they supply the food, but it is not the problem it once was. Therefore, there is no need to say that we are being punished. In the world in general, the sources of water are diminishing and relative to the whole world, the State of Israel is doing quite well. As a result, the question is not for which sins are we being punished, but for which merits are the Nation of Israel being rewarded with living in the Land of Israel which is a Garden of Eden. This is not necessarily a reward, but a loving-kindness of Hashem. Within this our wonderful existence, there are some things lacking, but on the whole things are amazing. May we merit this kindness through repentance, Torah learning and mitzvah observance.

A nurse on Shabbat

Q: Can a religious nurse switch shifts with a non-religious nurse on Shabbat?

A: Yes. It is permissible for a nurse to work on Shabbat because of "pikuach nefesh" (potentially life-threatening situations). If a non-religious nurse is not working – to our distress – she will violate Shabbat. If she is working in the hospital, almost all of the Shabbat violation will be permissible and a mitzvah. As a result, you will save her and limit her Shabbat violation.

Reciting Bedtime Shema when not sleeping

Q: Should a nurse who is not sleeping the entire night recite the bedtime Shema?

A: You do not recite it if you are not going to sleep.

"Vidui" (confession for a deceased person)

Q: If a nurse finds a patient who is deceased, should she recite the "Vidui"?

A: No, the "Vidui" is only to be said by or for the living. The "Vidui" is a form of repentance and a deceased person cannot repent.

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