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## Operation Protective Edge -

### Is there a Problem with Tzahal Waging War during the Three Weeks?

**Question:** Is there a problem with Tzahal waging war during Operation Protective Edge since it is the Three Weeks, a period of bad Mazal? The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 551:1) says that if one has a court case against a non-Jew during the month of Av, he should try to avoid it and attempt to move it to Adar (as per Ta'anit 29b), since the month of Av is not an auspicious time for Am Yisrael. During this month it was decreed in the Desert that we would not enter Eretz Yisrael, the First and Second Temple were destroyed, the Jews were expelled from Spain, the First World War began, etc. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to postpone Operation Protective Edge until after the Three Weeks?

**Answer:**

## **1. It is a Recommendation**

The Gemara (ibid.) does not say that it is forbidden to have a court case against a non-Jew during Av but rather that he should try to avoid it. After all, it is not always possible to move a court date. If he is able, he should postpone it, but if it is not, it is not forbidden. In our case, we did not choose to wage war right now but rather the non-Jews caused us distress and we needed to defend ourselves. We did not initiate this conflict, they did. Hashem ordained that it would occur now.

This is an indescribable miracle, since the area near Gaza is full of terror tunnels which go under Kibbutzim. They could - G-d forbid - enter those communities and commit horrible atrocities, including killing and kidnapping. Who knows what could have occurred later. Hashem performs miracles. Sometimes we cannot understand what He does, but this time we can. If they had accepted a ceasefire, for example, they would still have all of their missiles and tunnels. Hashem truly performed a great kindness.

## **2. One who Performs a Mitzvah will Know no evil**

Avoiding a court case with a non-Jew is not a halachic issue but a spiritual one - "One who performs a Mitzvah will know no evil" (Kohelet 8:5). Waging war is a three-fold Mitzvah: 1. Defense of the Nation. 2. Defense of the Land. 3. The sanctification of G-d's Name. When we are being beaten and murdered, robbed and raped, it is a desecration of G-d's name. And when we fiercely respond to our enemies it is a sanctification of G-d's name (Rabbenu Ha-Rav

Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Le-Netivot Yisrael 1:118). When one is performing a Mitzvah, he will know no evil.

During one of the wars I was on reserve duty, and three guys with long beards, long jackets and black hats came along. They gave out Le-Chaims, sang and danced. They then gave each soldier a baggie with 10 Agurot in it and said that they should give the money to a poor person at the end of the war, since "Harm will not befall one on the way to perform a Mitzvah". All of the soldiers looked at me, since I was the only religious soldier in the unit, but I was looking the other way so as not to interfere (since the Gemara in Pesach 8b which mentions this concept states that it only applies in the case of an infrequent danger). One of the non-religious soldiers said: "I don't understand. I am risking my life for Am Yisrael. This isn't a Mitzvah"? The Chasid answered: What do you care - you'll have two Mitzvot: 10 Agurot and Self-Sacrifice for Am Yisrael... All the soldiers looked at me, but I was looking at the beautiful view of Eretz Yisrael.

### **3. We are Transforming in a Bad Time into a Good One**

The month of Av is a bad month, but the Maharal explains in Netzach Yisrael that although there are good and bad periods, we can transform them. For example, the month of Kislev falls in the middle of winter in the darkest time of the year, but we have transformed it into a good time with Chanukah. It all depends on us. Kislev was transformed and Av can be transformed. And we already see that this has occurred: The Exile is crumbling and Eretz Yisrael is

flourishing. Rabbi Abba states: "There is no clearer sign that the time of Redemption has arrived than that the Land of Israel produces fruit in abundance" (Sanhedrin 98a. Rashi). Now there are grapes on the vines and figs on the leaves.

When the first British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, who was a Jew, arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he Davened on his first Shabbat in the Churva Shul. It was Shabbat Nachamu and he received the Haftarah, which described the re-blossoming of Eretz Yisrael. People said: He is the Messiah! Not yet, but from that period on Eretz Yisrael was built up, the State was established and we waged successful wars. Can you see the curse has been transformed into a blessing?

This military operation is having abnormal successful, both in the realm of advanced technology and in the realm of the aid from Heaven. The number of soldiers that have been killed and injured is much lower than expected, despite the extremely difficult and complicated mission.

There are natural and supernatural miracles occurring. On a personal level, we are greatly pained by the loss of each and every soldier, but on a national level, we are in the best state since the beginning of our Exile 2000 years ago.

"I have transformed their mourning into joy" (Yirmiyahu 31:12).