

BS"D Parashat Truma 5785

Tzahal's failure to protect

What happened on the night of Shabbat Shemini Atzeret (22nd of Tishrei, Oct 7) 2023 when the mantra "never again" was dashed to pieces? And what is the most important lesson and decision that should arise from this tragedy?

A Lesson from Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nasi

The Gemara (Bava Batra 8b) relates that during a period of severe drought in Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nasi, head of the Sanhedrin and compiler of the Mishna, ordered the public storehouses to be opened for distribution of food. He made the stipulation that only those who were erudite in the Torah would be eligible for public help; but the "amei ha'aretz" (those ignorant of the Torah and subsequently commit sins) would not be eligible since they are the cause of the calamities that befall the nation.

Getting to the root of the failure

We are now entering the investigative phase of why Tzahal did not react immediately to prevent the murderous onslaught that took the lives of 1400 Israelis on that day, in the most Nazi-like sadistic ways – too gruesome and frightful to detail.

The army and other security organizations will present their unreliable reports because a failed entity cannot be objective towards itself.

What Mr. average citizen knows so far, is that in the early hours of Shabbat morning there were clear and present signs of military movement near the Azza security fence between them

and our towns and kibbutzim to the east.

The intelligence observer units, consisting mostly of women soldiers who have proven to be more capable than men to sit hours before electronic screens observing every inch of ground, informed their superiors of a continuous buildup of Arabs close to the dividing fence and other irregular movements in the hours after midnight.

Most of the officers made nothing of these movements, while others passed the information on to their superiors in military intelligence. At around 2:00 AM they informed the IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi; and the Head of Military Intelligence Directorate (Aman); and the Head of Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), and the General of the Southern Command. The air force commander General Bar was not made privy to the information until later in the morning.

The Chief of staff decided that the information was not sufficient to call up the forces, so it did not reach the Prime Minister. The generals decided to go back to sleep and talk in the morning.

On that fateful Morning, 1400 Jews were brutally murdered; women were raped, little children were put into ovens and burned alive, and additional atrocities which are not being revealed, and more than 200 were taken hostage.

The big question is what happened to our military leaders? Is it the duty of the Chief of Staff to decide "go back to sleep; we'll talk in the morning".

Here I refer the reader to the above incident involving Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nasi.

If instead of going back to sleep, any one of those officers would have picked up the phone to the Chief Rabbi of Tzahal or to any rabbi for advice, I have no doubt that "to a man" the rabbi would scream, "Are you insane? immediately call up all

necessary forces, because even in a situation of a possible danger to human life, action must be swift and uncompromising”.

How am I so sure?

The “Rama” (Rabbi Moshe Isserles, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 116,5) based on the Gemara (Chullin 10a) states:

אדם צריך להיזהר מכל דבר אשר יאמיר את חיי אדם, וכן אמר רבינו חנניאל זצ”ל, דאדם צריך להיזהר מכל דבר אשר יאמיר את חיי אדם, וכן אמר רבינו חנניאל זצ”ל, דאדם צריך להיזהר מכל דבר אשר יאמיר את חיי אדם.

*One should beware of all things that might endanger life, because **danger is worse than prohibition**. The Halachic principle is that in situations where life might be endangered, we must act with greater caution than in matters where there might be a violation of even a Torah law.*

For example, where there is a doubt if there exists before us the possibility of committing a Torah sin (kosher vs. non-kosher food) and the matter is brought up for a vote of rabbis, the majority view is the accepted one even if the decision is towards leniency. However, when the issue is one of life and death and the **majority** vote for the lenient approach of inaction, and the minority opinion is to be proactive, we accept the minority opinion.

The root problem on that night was that those senior officers are secular or semi-religious and unaware of Halachic principles of Judaism. A cardinal principle being in cases of even slight possibility of danger to a Jewish life, we act as if it is a major threat.

If even one of the officers had had a good post high school Torah education, he would not have gone back to sleep.

There are very many religious and Torah educated officers in

Tzahal, but there is a glass ceiling covering the general staff that leaves no room for Torah orientated generals. Among the usual number of about 20 generals one can find one or two who are Torah educated, but their commands are of a secondary nature, not of strategic or tactical value.

Whatever the outcome of the investigations, one of the conclusions must be to increase the general staff with Torah educated and oriented generals.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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