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נדפס ע"י נכדיהם שיחיו

Let's Talk About Eretz Yisroel

THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE REBBE'S TORAH

PART 6

The Experts

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On 15 Sivan 5742, the Israeli Defense Forces attacked Lebanon in an operation called “Shelom HaGalil—Peace of the Galilee” which was scheduled to accomplish all of its goals in ten days. In reality, the military operation dragged on for four months and devolved into a military quagmire and political fiasco—all because Halacha’s most basic rule of war was violated.

For years the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of Yasser Arafat *yimach shmo vezichro* built up a formidable military presence in southern Lebanon. The terrorists attacked Yidden in Eretz Yisroel by shooting rockets at towns and cities and with cross-border raids. The most shocking attack occurred in Adar 5738 when 11 terrorists attacked a bus, murdering 35 and wounding 71. In response, the IDF launched “Operation Litani” which forced the terrorists to retreat to the other side of the Litani River.

The IDF occupied the buffer zone for three months until the United Nations Interim Force (UNIFIL) was created to ensure the terrorists would not return to the area and threaten Eretz Yisroel. As expected, UNIFIL failed in its “peacekeeping mission” and the area quickly swarmed with terrorists again. Over the next three years, PLO terrorists perpetrated 1,500 terror attacks, killing 110 and wounding over 1,000. Another invasion was necessary to clear the murderers out of Lebanon and to make northern Eretz Yisroel safe, and the IDF drew up plans for such an operation.

On 12 Sivan 5742, three terrorists tried to assassinate the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, in London. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin ordered the invasion of Lebanon, setting in motion the plan to destroy the terrorist infrastructure there. The opening days of the war were miraculously successful. On the fourth day of the war, the Israeli air force carried out a historic attack (Operation Mole Cricket 19) against the Syrian army, which had joined the fight, knocking out their Soviet-provided anti-aircraft missile system and destroying many of their aircraft. Within a week, the terrorists were retreating, and the Israeli Forces were within striking distance of Beirut, Lebanon’s capital.

But the world was calling foul, as usual. While Israel initially ignored the UN resolutions demanding a ceasefire in the opening days of the war, by noon on Friday, 20 Sivan, Israel unilaterally declared a ceasefire—to the dismay of the Israeli military brass. As General Rafal Eitan wrote in his memoirs, “That Friday, we needed only three more hours to conquer the [strategically crucial] Beirut–Damascus highway.”

Accepting a ceasefire before achieving all military objectives allows the enemy to regroup, rearm, and prepare for the

next round; inevitably, the element of surprise is lost. From then on, the war in Lebanon continued in bursts and spurts, causing unnecessary casualties because politicians interfered in the war's progress for political reasons.

Halacha is clear: In medical situations, only the opinions of professional doctors on how to cure the patient matter, not insurance companies or hospital CEOs. Similarly, on the battlefield, only the opinions and directions of military professionals to achieve military goals with the fewest casualties are relevant, not the opinions of politicians and diplomats. If military experts entertain political considerations—especially if they have already retired from active duty—their opinions are categorically irrelevant. This is the only way to ensure lives are not lost unnecessarily; violating it causes unnecessary loss of life.

The same thing happened on the morning of Yom Kippur 5734. The politicians' opinions prevailed over the dire warnings of the military brass, leading to the tragically irreversible outcomes of the Yom Kippur War. Less than ten years later, the desperation of diplomats and politicians to remain in the “good graces” of the nations of the world outweighed the clear military guidance of the IDF high command, with tragic results.

Ironically, during the first week of the campaign, there was no real pressure from the world for Israel to stop. The only foreign nation with legitimate influence over Israeli policy was the United States since they provided all their weaponry. However, President Reagan embarked on a ten-day trip to Europe, sending a clear message to the Israelis that they had ten days to complete their task without American interference. Nevertheless, certain Israeli politicians were intimidated by the noise coming from the United Nations, which had lost all legitimacy in the conflict with the failure of UNIFIL, and they prematurely halted the military operation.

The bizarre behavior of politicians halting a miraculously successful military operation, and then allowing it to proceed at a snail's pace per misguided political calculations, can be compared to someone entering an operating room while doctors perform a life-saving operation. The bystander becomes frightened upon seeing the first drops of blood from the incision and insists they halt the operation to allow the patient to recuperate from the small incision and then continue with the operation.

Such behavior in the operating room is foolish and not at all compassionate. It is the cruelest way to treat any human being. In the same vein, prolonging a vital military operation for political reasons not only endangers the lives of our soldiers unnecessarily, it also causes much more suffering and loss to the enemy.

Even if there was a legitimate debate about whether starting the war was appropriate, once started, it must be



AN ISRAELI SOLDIER MONITORING THE LANDSCAPE AT THE LITANI RIVER IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE LEBANON WAR.

completed quickly and efficiently—according to the directives of active military experts. This is the only way to accomplish the war's goal of securing the safety of the Yidden living in Eretz Yisroel. If this goal is not achieved, the sacrifice of the many soldiers HY”D who had already lost their lives would be in vain.

When Hashem performs miracles, it is a clear indication that the army must behave according to Halacha and prosecute the war exclusively according to the directives of military experts. **T**

NEXT MONTH:

What is the proper way to deal with the aftermath of war?

Primary Sources: *Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos* 5742 vol. 3 p. 1663; *Ibid.* p. 1720; *Ibid.* p. 1737; *Ibid.* vol. 4 p. 1843. *Letters to Mr. Peter Kalms 3rd Light of Chanukah and 13 Shevat 5741. Berega HaEmet Chapter 10.*