

# PARDES PROJECT

*Witnesses and  
Victims of Sabotage*

# RESPONDING TO TERROR

Volume 1 Number 3



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Photo: Rino Castelhovo/NYT Pictures



Between February 25th and March 4th of 1996, sixty two Jews were killed in 5 terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ashkelon.

There are a number of piercing questions that come to mind when considering tragedy, pain and terror. Age-old questions that transcend the scope of intelligence, questions that have served as the background for volumes and even movements.

Is there a difference in one's introspective obligations between a personal tragedy and a national one?

Is there a difference between a natural tragedy and a tragedy which came about due to the wickedness of others?

What about a self-inflicted tragedy?

In the future, Pardes will attempt to discuss all of these issues. For now, let us pray that God wipes the tears from all victims of horror and heals the pain of all mankind.

Yaacov Haber

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*Many of the topics included in the Pardes curriculum are far-reaching and have broad ramifications. The intent of Pardes is to promote sensitivity and spiritual growth through exposure to a variety of Torah sources. It is not within the perview of Pardes to arrive at conclusions relevant to decisions of Halacha. Please consult your Rabbi for personal decisions.*

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## How would you respond?

**I**s it proper to attempt to explain why God brings tragedies upon the Jewish people?

We must ask why the Holocaust happened. Among those who suffered were many righteous and scholarly Jews. Clearly it was a collective punishment for the sins of many generations. Continuing to stray from the proper path could, God forbid, bring further destruction upon our people.

*(Rav Eliezer Menachem Shach 1991)*

The six million Jews that were killed with the ultimate in ruthlessness could not have been a punishment for our sins. Even the Satan himself would not be able to find enough sins to warrant this level of punishment. The Holocaust was comparable to the torturing of Rabbi Akiva to death by the Romans. The Rabbis taught that God said 'Ask not why, this is a decree from before me.'

*(Rabbi Menachem Shneersohn,  
Lubavitcher Rebbe 1991)*

Could they be agreeing?

*The entire text of both speeches are available in their original Hebrew by contacting our office.*



It is customary to recite the following prayer before entering into a Torah discussion:

(Shulchan Aruch O.H. 110)

**M**ay it be Your will, Hashem my G-d and G-d of my fathers, that You illuminate my eyes with the light of your Torah and that You save me from all stumbling blocks and errors, whether it be in discussions of what is prohibited and what is permitted or in monetary matters, whether it be in any other Halachic decisions or just in theoretical study. I pray that I do not make any mistakes, and if I do, my study partners should not take delight in them. I pray that I should not proclaim the impure pure or the pure impure, the permitted forbidden or the forbidden permitted. I pray that I should not derive joy from the errors of my study partner. Open my eyes and allow me to see the wonders of Your Torah because it is from G-d that all wisdom comes forth, it is from His mouth that I will acquire wisdom and understanding. Amen.

**1** I said to myself, "Woe to me if I say, woe if I don't say. If I want to inspire our brothers in Israel to repentance, it is necessary for me to enumerate the sins of our people so that everyone will see the justice of God in all His ways and that all of the troubles we are going through are because we have sinned. To do so would be beneath the honor of the Jewish people. If I don't say and I only speak well of our people, this will cause unfounded claims on the Holy One blessed be He, God forbid, that he brings upon us unwarranted pain.....If I remain silent, then the fault becomes ours for not rebuking the people....."

*Chofetz Chaim; Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan; Bais Yisroel, Chap. 1; written around 1930. In the introduction to this volume, the Chofetz Chaim writes, "I am already old and I have had much time to study and consider some ways to improve the status of the Jewish people."*

**Source, pg. 13**

**2** Raba says: If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct.....If he examines and finds nothing objectionable, let him attribute it to the neglect of the study of Torah....If he does not find this to be the cause, let him be sure that these are chastenings of love.

*Talmud Brachos 5a*

**Source, pg. 14**

**3** It is one of the 613 mitzvos to understand God's actions when He afflicts us, whether in our flesh, in our children or in our possessions. 'You should know in your heart that just like a man disciplines his son, so too does the Lord your God discipline you.' (Deut. 8:5) This must become established in our hearts ..... that we should never say it was just a coincidence...

*Charedim 81; 31*  
**Source, pg. 15**

**4** It is forbidden to say to someone in pain 'God is giving you this pain because you have sinned.'

*Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 228; 4*  
**Source, pg. 16**

**5** Once 400 jars of wine belonging to Rav Huna turned sour. Rav Judah, the brother of Reb Sada the Pious and other scholars came to visit him. They said to him 'The master ought to examine his actions' (You may have deserved your misfortune through some sin). He said to them, 'Am I suspect in your eyes?' They replied, "Is the Holy One, blessed be He, suspect of punishing without justice?' - He said to them: 'If someone has heard something against me, let him speak out.' They replied: 'We have heard that you have not given your tenant his lawful share of vine twigs.' .... He said to them, 'I pledge to give them to him in the

future.' Some report that thereupon the vinegar became wine again; some report that the price of vinegar went up and sold for the same price as wine.

*Talmud Brachos 5b*  
**Source, pg. 17**

**6** It should be needless to say at this point that since the destruction of European Jewry was an admonishing phenomenon, an enactment of the admonishment and rebuke which the Jewish People carries upon its shoulders as an integral part of being God's chosen ones, we have no right to interpret these events as any kind of specific punishment for specific sins. The admonishment is a built-in aspect of the character of the Jewish People until the Messiah comes and is visited upon the Jewish People at the Creator's will and for reasons known and comprehensible only to Him. One would have to be a prophet or a Talmudic sage, to claim knowledge of the specific reasons for what befell us; anyone on a lesser plane claiming to do so tramples in vain upon the bodies of the holy martyrs who died in God's name and misuses the power to interpret and understand Jewish history.

*Rav Yitzchok Hutner, Jewish Observer October 1977*

**7** No one has the right to judge the reason for the Holocaust. Only someone who has suffered and felt the pain on his own flesh is permitted to offer an introspection for his generation. Rabbi Avrohom Grodzensky of blessed memory, was a brilliant scholar in the Slobodka Ghetto. He suffered all the hardships of the Ghetto. His students, the jewel in the crown of Lithuanian Jewry, were forced to slave labor in the Ghetto. He enumerated before them 12 reasons that brought about the Holocaust.

*Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe in Bein Sheishes Leasor, pg. 77, based on Torat Avrohom pg. 17*  
**Source, pg. 18**

**8** Never, even in the middle ages has there been a situation such as this where the entire Diaspora is burning like a torch. Houses of learning and Torah Scrolls are being burned in public and new evil decrees are being given daily by our enemies to separate us from our heritage. The largest and holiest communities are being uprooted from their place and the gates of all countries are closed to them ... Even the great light which shines from the East (Israel) is clouded by a heavy cloud so that no one knows what the next day may bring. So much pain, killings and murder, expulsions and wanderings. We are drowning in a river of blood and in a sea of tears. Woe, what has happened to

us .... In Western Europe there is a movement of assimilation that has brought about the evil decree to separate the Jews and remove them from amongst them. In Eastern Europe there are so many that have strayed and have caused others to stray .... and with all that is happening we still do not recognize why we are being persecuted....

*Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky in introduction to Achiezer, vol. 3, written June 1939*  
**ED. NOTE: It is significant to note that in the midst of all the turmoil Rav Chaim Ozer authored one of the most profound Talmudic volumes of recent times.**  
**Source, pg. 19**

**9** Rav Elchonon spoke quietly and calmly. The tone of his voice didn't change at all. His face expressed its usual sincerity. He spoke to everyone in the room and to all of Israel. "In the Heavens we are considered righteous. It seems we have been chosen to atone with our flesh for all of Israel. If so it is imperative that we repent here and now. There is very little time left. Our sacrifice will be better accepted if we repent. If we do we will save our brothers and sisters in America. No one should think an impure thought as it would disqualify the sacrifice. We are about to perform the biggest Mitzvah. The same fire that will consume us is the fire that will rebuild the house of Israel."  
*Eye witness report of speech given by Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman to his students shortly before they were all shot to death by the Nazis.*  
**Source, pg. 20**

**10** It was taught: R. Ishmael b. Elisha says: I once entered into the innermost part [of the Sanctuary] to offer incense and saw a vision of the Lord of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne. He said to me: Ishmael, My son, bless Me! I replied: May it be Your will that Your mercy may suppress Your anger and prevail over Your other attributes, so that You may deal with Your children according to the attribute of mercy and not of strict justice! And He nodded to me with His head. From here we learn that the blessing of an ordinary man must not be considered lightly in your eyes.

*Talmud Brachos, 7a*  
**Source, pg. 21**

## Sources

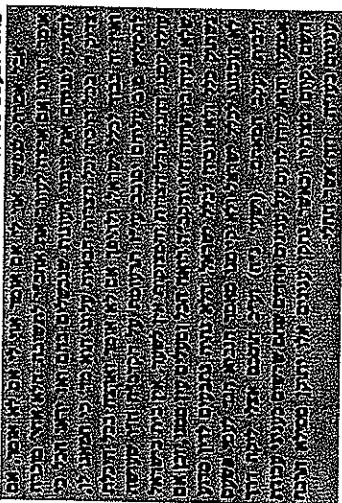
**1** Chofetz Chaim; Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan; *Bais Yisroel*, Chap. 1; written around 1930.

### בית ישראל

#### פרק א.

##### סיבוי מענין חזון וק"ש השליח.

אירא במהרה"ק (צ"ו ע"כ) על המסק לכן יזכר ד' לחגבם שוקב"ה בבבלי מהרה ומארה לבאח המשיח ומיך נבמ' כיון שנהא סוכה ואנו פרכים מי סוכב, ומיך נבמ' מות חזין מקבת שריא עומד ומקפרי' על כל ישראל, דבנוח"ק אנו רואים בסיט אלח שחבת עוקרי חוררתו חק' נקשה חמק' לזלק גדל סכל ישראל ואינם שמים על לב אה גדל חממא חמון שערשים, ולא עוד אלא שכבר חורלו ביה עד שאינם חושבים אורם להמא ובמעט שחורגו לחם. והנה אם באמת ובתמים אנו רוצים להנאל חלא מוכריזים אנו מקורם לחס' ודרכי ולחובונן במקשעו חרעים וזראת לחורחם סהם ולמקסם בכל חכמלת.



אירא באבות (פ"א) על שלשה דברים חנול עומד על חוררת וקל העברה וקל נמילת חסדים ואה שכעור"ד במל חסד"ה חלא חני זכרי מלאכי שזוי נבואים אחרונים ושוירי כהני הקטן לע המלות במקום קרבן כדרכיב ונשלמה פרים שפתינו.









