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AND NOW WHAT?



By | SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Despite our vows of “never again,” we were indeed once again caught by surprise. And once again, we thought we had learned our lesson



After two harrowing years, there are many dead and injured soldiers, many soldiers still on the frontlines, hostages still in captivity, and much that remains unknown. But as I am writing this, there does seem to be light at the end of the tunnel.

Although it is unclear exactly where the tunnel will end, the light at the end of it may be quite dazzling. Two years after the devastating Simchas Torah events, it is likely that Hezbollah has been dismantled; Syria is no longer focused on the destruction of Israel; Iran has been dealt a blow powerful enough to cool its enthusiasm for fighting Israel through proxies or on its own, and there is a real possibility that Hamas will be removed from power. The signs point to a period of quiet respite for our war-weary nation.

But when we look back at our history, we cannot help but remain apprehensive. We've had spectacular victories before; the Six Day War was a triumph beyond anything imaginable. But it was followed, only a few years later, by the shock and calamity of the Yom Kippur War. Not only was that war devastating in absolute terms, it also highlighted our terrible unpreparedness. Despite our vows of “never again,” we were indeed once again caught by surprise. And once again, we thought we had learned our lesson.

Nevertheless, we fell into the same trap of complacency on October 7. Although the investigations into what went wrong are not complete, it seems that we were once again grievously and unnecessarily caught off guard. We had incredibly sophisticated and multilayered monitoring systems in place, but we didn't catch on to the meaning of what we were observing. And once we understood what was happening, our response was woefully inept and delayed.

Shocking as this failure was, it reflects human nature. Psychologists explain that time erodes a person's sense of urgency. We cannot remain on "red alert" as a permanent state. Historians point out that all great empires rise and fall along the same pattern. They gain power as they focus on war and conquest. But once they feel that their power is consolidated, they turn their attention to pleasant, civilized pursuits. That's when an up-and-coming power finds its opening to attack and conquer the old regime.

But let's understand this phenomenon from a Torah perspective.

Dovid Hamelech proclaimed upon the dedication of the future Beis Hamikdash, "And in tranquility I said, I will never falter. Hashem, so long as You so desired, I had been firm as a mountain. But the moment You hid Your face from me, I was overwhelmed. I then cried out to You, Hashem...." ([Tehillim 30](#)).

When all is well, Dovid Hamelech is "firm as a mountain," but when he doesn't feel Hashem's presence, he's left frightened and overwhelmed. In portraying these emotions, Dovid Hamelech describes one of humanity's greatest ongoing challenges. We are conditioned to expect tranquility, perceiving the present state as the default setting of the universe.

We see the laws of nature as permanent. Gravity will pull, the sun will rise, and the water will flow without our input. Although we know that in reality, natural phenomena occur only because Hashem constantly keeps them in motion, this has little practical application for us. We can and are meant to take nature as a given.

But the Divine Providence that determines our personal fortunes is not meant to be perceived as operating on "automatic pilot." Though a constant state of well-being lulls us into complacency, we are meant to appreciate each moment as a renewed gift. Thus, when a healthy person wakes up in the morning and opens his eyes, he is meant to feel *techiyas hameisim*. When he recites "*Elokai, neshamah shenasata bi*," he should be experiencing the wonder of the life Hashem has granted him that day.

Yet under normal circumstances, most people greet their renewed lease on life with no more sense of wonder than they feel upon noticing that the sun rose again. Thus, Dovid Hamelech's words describe the ongoing saga of human complacency, rude awakening, and realization of *emes*.

In truth, this is the point of prayer. We are keenly aware of tefillah in times of clear need. Our struggle is to find the same poignancy in our tefillah for things that we baruch Hashem already have. This is difficult, because there seems to be no point in beseeching Hashem for *parnassah* when we're wealthy, or health when we're healthy. But this misconstrues the purpose of tefillah.

To gain a sharper understanding, let us draw an analogy: Imagine a man has a close friend who often loans him his car. The friend graciously hands the man the keys with a smile, anytime he asks. But what if the man starts taking the keys to the car without asking the owner? The owner will certainly be upset, not because he resents lending the car, but rather because the borrower has stopped recognizing that the car belongs to the owner. He has stopped appreciating the fact that he is receiving a favor from his friend.

Likewise, recognizing Hashem as the Owner of everything — appreciating His graciousness in allotting us our portion of His unlimited bounty — is the heart of tefillah. If we wake up in the morning and take a breath, it's not because living things automatically continue to live. It's because Hashem infused us with life. And as we put our mind to achieving our agenda for the day, it's not because our brain has a default "on" setting. Rather, it's because Hashem is endowing us anew with wisdom. Nothing we have is a leftover from yesterday's allotment. Everything is given to us anew, at every moment.

The Ramban ([Shemos 13:16](#)) makes this point when he states, "From the great and famous miracles, a person

acknowledges the hidden miracles....”

Therefore, we need to start incorporating a new mindset into our collective tefillah. Hopefully, we will soon wake up to a reality in which all is quiet on the western front, as well as on the northern front, southern front, and eastern front. Let us not, however, be lulled into the complacent belief that this is normal, or that the victories of the war have vanquished all our enemies. They are always there, always scheming to get rid of us by any means possible. If our world is peaceful, it is because Someone is keeping it peaceful.

A relative of mine, who is part of a family of true *bnei aliyah*, was blessed with many, many beautiful children *bli ayin hara*. During his wife’s last pregnancy, they were expecting twins, and the doctors felt that something was amiss. After the babies’ birth, the doctors performed extensive scanning and testing. The wait for the results seemed to take forever, but finally, the couple received the devastating news: Both children had extensive brain damage.

The wife looked at her husband helplessly and asked him, “Where do we go from here?”

He replied, “We will take out our Tehillim now, and the first order of business will be to thank Hashem for the health of all the children He has granted us until now.”

(One of the children turned out to be perfectly fine, baruch Hashem.)

This is the underlying spirit of the song of Dovid Hamelech wrote to dedicate the Beis Hamikdash that would be built through him. Now there would be a permanent place in which the Jewish People’s relationship with Hashem could vest, where the Tamid sacrifice would be brought every day, twice a day. We would acknowledge Hashem’s renewed hashgachah, day in, day out. And even when that Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, we would substitute our regular tefillos for the Tamid ([Berachos26b](#)), keeping us ever alert to Hashem’s constant benevolence.

As Dovid Hamelech proclaimed, “Hashem, we have become smug and complacent, oblivious to Your constant and consistent benevolence. You shook us up terribly, and we finally woke up.”

May we continue to be ever aware of Hashem’s constant benevolence, and may that be the cornerstone of our tefillah, and the cornerstone of the House of Tefillah ([Yeshayahu 56:7](#)) that will be speedily rebuilt in our days.

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