



## Watch Closely Now

*By Rabbi Ariel bar Tzadok  
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*"Watch closely now, and you'll observe a curious exchange of energies. Is this a figment of my imagination or one of yours? Watch closely now, are you watching now?"* Kris Kristofferson, A Star is Born

These words ring in my ears every time I read the news today about what is happening (and not happening) in the latest Middle East war and how the world is responding (and not responding) to it.

In the martial arts, there is a trick I teach to all my students when sparring. If you wish to strike with you right fist, always lead with a fake, with your left fist or with a kick. Draw your opponent's attention away from what you really want to do.

Distract and attack. In this way, your movements will be undetected, your intentions hidden. Your distractions will enable you to penetrate your opponent's offenses, strike, immobilize and win, without having to face any serious opposition. This is the art/science of physical and psychological warfare and operations.

Just as you maneuver and distract your opponent's attention in physical combat, so too do you distract his mind in the games of war, politics, business and in every other arena where two are pitted against one another and only one can or must come out triumphant on top. This is almost most true and applicable to the news media.

Every aspect in life is in its own way a struggle. Every day has its challenges. Every circumstance under every condition requires of us a choice of what to do and how to do it. One who has learned the subtle movements of the ebbs and flow in life can face daily obstacles with triumph after triumph. One who knows how to go with the flow can navigate life's course successfully.

The great mistake made today by all too many souls is to think in absolutes. Things have to be either this way or that. Reality in their eyes is black and white. Good and evil exist as opposite polarities and all life is a struggle between them. While this concept might be fine for the arena of philosophy and the discussion of ideas, nonetheless, it holds no bearing and is totally out of touch with the reality of our present world and society.



Judging from all accounts recorded in the Bible, later Torah literature and especially the annals of Jewish history, Heaven certainly has not treated the Jewish people, or the rest of the world within the context of absolutes. Indeed, Heaven's understanding of good and evil certainly differs from that of human beings.

I am sure Heaven had good reason to allow the destruction of Jerusalem twice, each time with the murder of millions. I equally believe that Heaven had good reason to allow the Holocaust with the murder of six million more. Yes, Heaven allows these things to be. In the eyes of Heaven, these serve a positive purpose and promote the Divine plan for mankind. Just, please, do not ask me to explain to you the logic or ways of Heaven.

All I can say is that Heaven has its own agenda and its own definitions of good and evil, right and wrong. I cannot judge Heaven by mortal human standards; I cannot influence Heaven by mere mortal means. As the pasukim in Isaiah 55:8-9 state, *"for My Thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not My Ways, says HaShem. For as the Heavens tower over the earth, thus do My Ways tower over yours and My Thoughts over your thoughts."*

One may believe whatever one wishes. Yet, history proclaims to us the Way of Heaven. Nisan and possibly Tishrei are the times for miracles and supernatural Divine interventions, not Beyn HaMitzarim. The Three Week period between the fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz and Tisha B'Av is not a time of salvations and miracles. On the contrary, it is a time when very bad things happen to Israel and the Jewish people. Learn from the times and see the Way of Heaven.

The only force on earth that can counter the edicts of Heaven are mankind's deeds of resolve and righteousness. Only when we do the right things, the right way and in the right times does Heaven take notice and adjust its course accordingly. Yet, all too many fools believe they can influence Heaven with less than influential shows of improper piety. Heaven will judge what it deems acceptable and what is not. Yet, during Beyn HaMitzarim, with its clear record of misfortune. Now is not the time to test Heaven's hand.

While I may not understand why Heaven does what it does, I can nonetheless learn from its ways and adjust my thinking and actions accordingly. This is what is called living in accordance to the Will of Heaven. I may not understand everything, but then again I do not have to. I am not obligated by Heaven to understand the Heavenly way. I am only obligated to follow it. Mind you, following the Way of Heaven is for my own earthly good, for by doing so I can live right and best all the days I dwell here on earth.



*"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts..."*  
William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (II, vii, 139-143)

As anti-semitic as Shakespeare was, his words here still ring with truth. We are watching the unfolding of a war in the Middle East. What will happen next is anyone's guess. Yet, let no one be deceived, let no one be fooled; do not believe for a minute that whatever does transpire happens haphazardly. Nothing could be further from the truth; nothing could be more illogical and unrealistic.

Everything that transpires in the Middle East and for that matter in every other part of the globe is being very precisely directed by an invisible, yet, powerful guiding hand.

And in case you misunderstand me, I am not talking about the Hand of G-d. I am letting it be known, as Shakespeare has said, that everything we see is just a well-orchestrated act ordained and directed by the powers that be in this world. Frankly, it is all a melodramatic play, and believe it or not, it will soon all be over.

With all the escalations that will happen over the next few days, after that, you will see, things will die down. And not because it is the wise and right thing to do, but rather because that is what the script calls for, a script that was written long before the first soldier was kidnapped in Gaza.

Watch closely now. Do not allow yourselves to be distracted by what you see in the news. Pay attention to the Way of Heaven and you will learn the secrets of life and good living. Watch closely now... Are you watching??

*"Seek HaShem while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the evil individual change his ways and the sinful person change his thoughts and return to HaShem, and He will be merciful to him, [and return] to G-d for He will greatly forgive."*  
Isaiah 55:6-7