

MANAGING OUR ACTIONS

Poetic Inspiration to Contemplate Action



In the Talmud, the rabbis pose a question about what is more important: the work of study or the work of action. After a classic Talmudic game of ping pong, the rabbis decide that study is more important because it can lead to action.

Although at first glance, this Talmudic passage of a group of men pontificating about life may seem like a story of leisure, in reality the rabbis were hiding in an attic during the time of a Roman siege. And this decision of whether to act or not wasn't theoretical. It was actually one of life or death.



On October 7th, 2023, the Jewish people were under another siege by Hamas: one of life and death. And out of unbelievable necessity, people moved into action. The actions ranged from picking up arms to protect civilians to hosting families who lost their home, distributing equipment to soldiers to starting schools in shelters for kids. The country of Israel since the massacre of October 7th is in a perpetual state of action.

But what happens when we stop doing? What happens to our bodies, to our hearts and to our minds?

This poem was written by Tal Shavit in the aftermath of October 7 to express the desire to move into action when the world around you is under siege.

Suggestions for how to read the poem:

- ◆ Read the poem out loud.
- ◆ Find one word or phrase that really jumps out to you and circle it.
- ◆ Find one image in the poem that really stands out and describe it out loud or write it down.
- ◆ Find the places in your body that this poem is touching and take three deep breaths.



I want to manage all the situation rooms
 to move all the equipment
 I want to take care of all the children
 of the single mothers that are and aren't
 I want to turn myself into a vest
 For all the fighters
 and protective caps above their heads
 of all childhoods
 all of them
 to support all families
 the evacuees
 the broken ones
 the ruined ones
 to return all the losses
 to return all the abducted
 I want to collect all the donations
 And for the ages.
 to pass all the messages
 Prepare all the sandwiches
 to concentrate all efforts.

But on a good day
 I succeed
 sometimes
 to breathe
 sometimes
 to drink
 sometimes
 to call loved ones.

on a good day
 I succeed to
 sometimes
 cry.

אני רוצה לנהל את כל החמ"לים
 לשנע את כל הציודים
 אני רוצה לטפל בכל הילדים
 של האמהות היחידניות
 ושאין
 אני רוצה להפך עצמי לוסטים
 עבור כל הנלחמים
 ולכפות מגנות מעל ראשיהן
 של כל הילדות
 כלן.
 לתמוך בכל המשפחות
 המפונות
 הנשברות
 המרסקות.
 להשיב את כל האבדות
 להחזיר את כל החטופות
 אני רוצה לאסוף את כל התרומות
 ולהביאן ליעדן.
 להעביר את כל ההודעות
 להכין את כל הכריכים
 לרכז את כל המאמצים.


אבל ביום טוב
 אני מצליחה
 לפעמים
 לנשום
 לפעמים
 לשתות
 לפעמים
 להתקשר לאהובים ואהובות.

ביום טוב
 אני מצליחה
 לפעמים
 לבכות.



Your turn:

- ◆ Use the format of the poem above to write a poem for this moment of your deep desire to act and explore what happens when we allow ourselves to stop.
- ◆ Print out your poem and keep it in a place that you can look at to remind yourself that within every action, there needs to be moments of pause in order to keep the action going.



I want to manage all the _____
to move _____
I want to take care of _____
I want to turn myself into _____
to support _____
the _____
the _____
I want to collect _____
To prepare _____
But on a good day
I succeed
sometimes
to _____
on a good day
I succeed
sometimes
To _____

As we move through these days, may we find the balance between action and pausing so that we have the strength to continue on.

