# Mourning the Three Murdered Israeli Teenagers

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Some thoughts from Rabbi Marc D. Angel on Jewish approaches to coping with tragedy

The Torah records the reaction of Aaron when he learned the sad news of the tragic deaths of his sons: “Aaron was silent,” vayidom Aharon. Commentators have offered various explanations of Aaron’s silence. He may have been speechless due to shock; he may have had angry thoughts in his heart, but he controlled himself from uttering them; he may have been silent as a sign of acceptance of God’s judgment.

Within biblical tradition, there are a number of phrases relating to confrontation with tragedy.

“Min haMetsar Karati Y-ah,” I call out to God from distress. When in pain, it is natural to cry out to God, to shed tears, to lament our sufferings and our losses. To cry out when we are in distress is a first step in the grieving process.

“Tefillah leHabakuk haNavi al Shigyonoth.” Dr. David de Sola Pool has translated this passage: “A prayer of Habakuk the prophet, in perplexity.” After crying out at our initial grief, we move to another level of mourning. We are perplexed. We want to know why this tragedy has happened? We want to understand how to reconcile this disaster with our belief in God’s goodness. We are in a state of emotional and spiritual confusion.

“Mima-amakim keratikha Ado-nai.” I call out to God from the depths of my being. This introduces the next stage in confronting tragedy. It is a profound recognition, from the deepest recesses of our being, that we turn to—and depend upon—God. It is a depth of understanding that transcends tears, words, perplexity. It is a depth of understanding and acceptance that places our lives in complete context

with the Almighty. We may be heart-broken; we may be perplexed; we may be angry—but at the very root of who we are, we feel the solace of being in God's presence. When we reach this deepest level of understanding, we find that we don't have words or sounds that can articulate this inner clarity. We fall silent.

"And Aaron was silent." Aaron was on a very high spiritual plane. While he surely felt the anguish of "Min haMetsar," and experienced the perplexity of "Shigyonoth," he experienced the tragedy "Mima-amakim," from the very depths of his being. His silence reflected a profound inner wisdom that was too deep for tears and too deep for words.

All the people of Israel, and all good people everywhere, mourn the tragic deaths of three Israeli teenagers who were kidnapped and murdered by Palestinian terrorists. We all experience the anguish and the perplexity. We all have feelings of anger. Yet, we also need to reach out to the Almighty "mima-amakim," from the depths of who we are. We know that God, in His infinite wisdom, will punish the murderers and their sympathizers. We know that God, in His infinite love, will bring healing to the mourners of these Israeli teenagers. Right now, the deepest response is silence. We need time to let this tragedy sink in, to absorb its impact on our lives, and to find a positive way of moving forward.

"May happiness multiply in Israel, and may sadness be driven away."