

תשובה

נצבים - וילך נצבים - וילך

One of the best-known verses in *Parashat Nitzavim* teaches (29:28), "The hidden [matters] are for *Hashem*, our *Elokim*, but the revealed [matters] are for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah." The words "for us and our children" are written in the Torah with *Nekudot* / dots above them. On the level of *P'shat*, this verse is referring to sins—i.e., we are obligated to address sins that are committed publicly ("revealed"), and *Hashem* will address sins that are committed privately, without witnesses ("hidden"). (See *Rashi z"l* regarding the meaning of the *Nekudot*.)

Speaking in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940, R' Klonimus Kalmish Shapira z"l Hy"d (*Chassidic Rebbe* of Piasetno, Poland; killed in the Holocaust in 1943) found another message in this verse. He said: Whenever a person is beset by troubles, he cries out to *Hashem*. In truth, we pray even when we do not have troubles, for *Tefilah* / prayer results in closeness to G-d. Either way, we are encouraged to pray aloud, for audible prayer enhances *Kavanah* / concentration.

What can we do, however, when we cannot pray aloud, or even to gather to pray together (as in the ghetto)? R' Shapira asked. The answer is that we must "scream" to *Hashem* deep within our hearts. This, R' Shapira explained, is the meaning of the verses (*Tehilim* 130:1-2), "From the depths I call to You, *Hashem*. My Master, hear my voice; may Your ears be attentive to the sound of my pleas." Even when we are forced to pray only in the "depths" of our hearts, hear us; be attentive even to our whispers! – **Continued in box inside** –

Teshuvah

"And you will return until *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. . . For this commandment that I command you today--it is not hidden from you and it is not distant." (30:2, 11--in our *Parashah*)

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) writes: The verse is foretelling that we will return to *Hashem* with our full hearts and our full souls, and that we will accept upon ourselves and our children for all generations to do what I (*Hashem*) am commanding you today, just as our ancestors did at the time of the second redemption (i.e., when the Jews returned from Bavel and built the Second Temple). About that event we read (*Nechemiah* 10:30), "They entered into a curse and an oath to follow *Elokim's* Torah, which was given through the hand of Moshe, the servant of *Elokim*, and to observe and fulfill all the commandments of *Hashem*, our Master, and His laws and His decrees."

Ramban continues: The words "this commandment" refer to *Teshuvah*, for "You will return" is a *Mitzvah* that we are being commanded to observe. Nevertheless, it is not written as a commandment in order to hint that this return is guaranteed to come about eventually. The verse is promising: Even "if your dispersed will be at the ends of heaven" (verse 4) and you are in the hands of nations, you will always have the chance to return and do what I (*Hashem*) am commanding, for "it is not hidden from you and not distant." (*Peirush Ha'Ramban Al Ha'Torah*)

R' Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* (*Rosh Av Bet Din* of the *Eidah Ha'charedit* of Yerushalayim) writes: This verse teaches us the definition of *Teshuvah*. "You will return until *Hashem*"—until you feel that He is close to you. "And listen to His voice"—as if He commanded you with the *Mitzvot* anew. "With all your heart and all your soul"—to serve Him out of love.

(*Shu"t Teshuvot V'hanhagot* II 296)

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“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Behold, you will lie with your forefathers and arise this people will and stray after the gods of the foreigners of the Land . . .’” (31:16)

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 90b) relates that the sect known as *Tzedukim* asked the sage Rabban Gamliel, “From where do we know that *Hashem* will resurrect the dead--i.e., that He will perform *Techiyat Ha’metim*?” Rabban Gamliel answered them that there are sources in all three parts of *Tanach*--the Torah, the *Nevi'im* / Prophets, and the *Ketuvim* / Writings. The source in the Torah is our verse, said Rabban Gamliel: “Behold, you will lie with your forefathers and arise.” This indicates that Moshe Rabbeinu will be resurrected. (And, just as he will be, so others will be.) The *Tzedukim* challenged this source, however, saying that perhaps the correct reading of the verse is: “Behold, you will lie with your forefathers. And arise this people will and stray . . .” (In English, that reading sounds unnatural, but not in the original Hebrew.) The *Gemara* continues, relating that the *Tzedukim* rebutted Rabban Gamliel’s proofs from other verses until he quoted the verse (*Devarim* 11:21), “The Land that *Hashem* has sworn to your forefathers to give them.” The verse does not say, “to give you,” but rather “to give them”--i.e., the Patriarchs. Obviously, they cannot receive the Land unless they experience *Techiyat Ha’metim*. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Tuvia Ha’levi z”l (Tzefat, *Eretz Yisrael*; late 16th century) asks: What led Rabban Gamliel to prefer the reading that links “arise” with the first part of the verse (“Behold, you will lie with your forefathers and arise”)? He preferred it because linking “arise” with the second part of the verse (“And arise this people will and stray . . .”) makes the verse unnecessarily wordy. Instead, it could have said simply, “Behold, you will lie with your forefathers and this people will stray.”

Nevertheless, it does seem that Rabban Gamliel conceded that the *Tzedukim*’s reading was a potentially valid one. If so, what is the purpose of the word “arise”? R’ Tuvia explains:

We read (*Devarim* 8:14), “Your heart will become haughty (literally, ‘will rise’) and you will forget *Hashem* . . .” This, writes R’ Tuvia, reflects the principle: “*Aveirah goreret aveirah*” / “One sin draws another sin in its wake.” For example, one who commits the sin of haughtiness will commit another sin--forgetting G-d. As long as Moshe was alive, this was not a concern, for he was the model *par excellence* of humility. However, says the verse, “Behold, you will lie with your forefathers”--you, Moshe, will die, and then you will no longer be an example of humility to *Bnei Yisrael*. Then, “arise this people will”--they will become haughty--“and [then they will] stray after the gods of the foreigners of the Land.” (Chain Tov)

“It is not in the heavens, [for you] to say, ‘Who can ascend to the heavens for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?’” (30:12)

Rashi z”l writes: For were it (the Torah) in heaven, it would still be your duty to go up after it and to learn it. [Until here from *Rashi*]

Is it really possible that each individual would be obligated to ascend to the heavens to study Torah there? R’ Avraham Leib Grodka z”l (*Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim; died 2008) explains:

Tradition records that the Patriarchs and leading figures of subsequent generations observed the Torah even before it was formally given to Moshe at *Har Sinai*. The question arises: How, then, did Yaakov Avinu marry two sisters (Rachel and Leah), which is prohibited by the Torah? How did Moshe Rabbeinu’s parents (Amram and Yocheved) marry each other, considering that Yocheved was Amram’s aunt--also a marriage prohibited by the Torah?

R’ Chaim of Volozhin z”l (Belarus; 1749-1821) explains (in *Nefesh Ha’Chaim*, I 21) that because the generations before the Giving of the Torah were not commanded to observe the Torah, they could choose among the *Mitzvot* as they understood them to fit their souls’ missions. For example, Yaakov saw prophetically that Rachel and Leah were both meant to be the mothers of the Jewish People, so he married them, although they were sisters. Likewise, Amram saw that Yocheved was his intended spouse, so he married her, even though she was his aunt. R’ Chaim emphasizes that this is absolutely prohibited after the Torah was given, when the Torah’s laws apply equally to everyone. [Until here from *Nefesh Ha’Chaim*]

R’ Grodka continues: It is to this that our verse and *Rashi* are referring. Had the Torah not been given, each person would need to “ascend to the heaven”--i.e., he would need to discover the “root” of his soul and ascertain how the laws of the Torah apply uniquely to him. However, the Torah is not in heaven, so that is not necessary or even permitted. Rather, we must “listen to it and perform it” as it was given.

(Quoted in *Orchot Chaim Keter Rosh*, Vol. II, p.227 n.29)

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Likewise, R’ Shapira concluded, our verse is addressing this situation. At a time when our *Tefilah* and our Torah study must be “hidden,” we pray that they may nevertheless be accepted by *Hashem*. How can we merit this? By accepting upon ourselves in the deepest *Nekudot* / points (dots) in our hearts that when we are liberated and can serve *Hashem* as we please, our Divine service will be “revealed”--i.e., it will be audible and with proper concentration. (*Eish Kodesh*)