



שמע קולנו

GALUT, GEULAH & TESHUVA

Noam Putterman (18)

In describing the outcome of *teshuvah*, the text of Parshat Nitzavim seems to include a grammatical error. The *passuk* states

וְשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךְ...

“Then Hashem, your G-d, will bring back your captivity and have mercy on you, and He will return and gather you in... (Devarim 30:3),” detailing G-d gathering the Jewish people from the exile. The *passuk* uses the word “*veshav*,” meaning “and He will return—with Bnei Yisrael,” as opposed to “*veheishiv*”—that G-d will return Bnei Yisrael themselves. Why didn’t the text use the latter option, seeing as, presumably, G-d will return the captives described in the *passuk* to their land, rather than personally returning *with* them to their land?

Rashi asks this question, and proposes two answers. Firstly, Rashi quotes a Chazal that uses this *passuk* as a source for the idea that G-d dwells with Bnei Yisrael in the suffering of their Galut. When Bnei Yisrael are redeemed, G-d will return together with them. Thus, the use of “*veshav*” is indeed fitting; G-d, as we know, is described as “*Immo anochi vetzara* (Tehillim 91:15),” always with us in the toughest of times, and ultimately returning with us during the Geulah.

Another interpretation offered by Rashi asserts that the gathering of the exiles is so very difficult for Bnei Yisrael, ever assimilated with the life in exile, that G-d Himself must, *kevayachol*, use His hands to grasp the exiled Jews and return them from Galut. The word *veshav* is again fitting, as G-d must Himself return from the exile, along with all those content with the comfort in exile, to a better land, a better life.

The Meshech Chochmah, perhaps seeking to unite both of Rashi’s answers, highlights the *passuk*’s use of the word *veshav* twice: once referring to the gathering of the captives of Israel in exile, and again in the context of the gathering of all Jews scattered among the other nations. According to the Meshech Chochmah, for those aforementioned captives, always seeking G-d, His Torah, and His redemption, G-d is with them in exile, per Rashi’s first explanation, and their redemption is G-d’s, too. Regarding the other type of people, those

assimilated amongst the *goyim*, G-d will have to enter the exile only to bring them out, per Rashi’s second interpretation.

The explanations of Rashi and the Meshech Chochmah are both inspiring and encouraging, but the question is how do we achieve this final Geulah? The answer can be found in our Parshat Hashavua. The Da’at Zekeinim notes that having both the *passuk* of “*Veshavta ad Hashem Elokecha* (Devarim 30:2)” and our *passuk* of “*Veshav Hashem Elokecha et shevutcha verichamecha* (Devarim 30:3)” seems to be unnecessary. Why the repetition? The Da’at Zekeinim answers, quoting a *gemara* in Yoma 86b, that “*Gedolah teshuva shemekarevet et ha’ge’ulah*,” “Teshuva is great, for it hastens the redemption.” By committing ourselves to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His *mitzvot*, striving to be true Avdei Hashem, we can properly yearn for “*Shuvu eilai ve’ashuvah aleichem* (Malachi 3:7),” our returning and subsequent reunion with G-d.

The Da’at Zekeinim continues, quoting a *gemara* on the same *amud*, which describes the patience of the Ribono Shel Olam in counting the sins of Bnei Yisrael. The first three times a person sins, *malachim* make a “*mehitza*,” a fence, to prevent him from sinning further. Only after three transgressions does the sin finally come before the Ribono Shel Olam. These profound *gemarot* highlight the extraordinary importance of the Geulah in the *teshuvah* process, and how G-d is incredibly patient with us when we are judged. Teshuva may be a slow and painful introspective process, requiring patience and continued effort, but this patience is reciprocated by G-d Himself.

We have been blowing the *shofar* for a few weeks now. We start Selichot this Motza’ei Shabbat. The Yemei Hadin are rapidly approaching, and it is important for us to take this week’s *parsha* to heart. On the *passuk*

כִּי קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:

“[The Torah is not inaccessible, for] rather, the matter is very near to you—in your mouth and in your heart—to perform it (Devarim 30:14),” the Ibn Ezra notes that the *dibbur* and *assiyah* aspects mentioned in the *passuk* are clear, for we often perform *mitzvot* through them. But how does one fulfill *mitzvot* in his heart? The Ibn Ezra answers, saying that the *ikkar* of every mitzvah emanates from the heart, and these origins express themselves in speech and action. Accordingly, to properly

repent, we should heed Yoel's words of "*Vekir'u levavchem ve'al bigdeichem*," "Render your hearts rather than your garments (Yoel 2:13)." True Teshuva is not only improving one's performance of the *mitzvot*, essential though that is; it is also inward tearing of the heart. Be'ezrat Hashem, we should be *zocheh* to the final redemption that we seek desperately, through our hearts, our good deeds, and our *ma'asim tovim*. Ketivah Vechatimah Tovah.

WHO NEEDS GASHMIYUS?

Yehuda Snow ('19)

"[All of Bnei Yisrael are standing here today in order] for you to pass into the covenant of Hashem, your G-d, and into his oath that Hashem, your G-d, forges with you today (Devarim 29:11)." Rashi is bothered by the *passuk's* use of the word *le'ovrecha*, and he explains that Hashem had Bnei Yisrael pass in between two walls to enter into this treaty with Him, in the same fashion that everyone made treaties during that time.

The question is, why did Hashem need to have Bnei Yisrael pass in between two walls to make a *bris* with them; why couldn't he have made a *bris* with them without this? Why did there need to be any physical aspect of this *bris* at all?

In fact, this type of question comes up in many other places. For example, the Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo (Shemos 13:17) explains that many of the *mitzvos* that we have are a remembrance of the *nissim* Hashem did for us when he took us out of Egypt, and are there in order for us remember Yetzias Mitzrayim and believe in G-d. Why isn't remembering the *nissim* in Egypt twice a day in *kerias shema* enough? How will actions help us remember it better than words?

Furthermore, there is a *machlokes* in Maseches Pesachim (*daf* 68b) concerning Simchas Yom Tov. Rabbi Yehoshua believes that on every Yom Tov, half the time should be spent davening and learning and half the time should be spent eating and drinking (which is a fulfillment of Simchas Yom Tov). Rabbi Eliezer holds that every *yom tov* should either be spent completely davening and learning or completely filled with eating and drinking. However, Rabbi Eliezer agrees that on Shavuos one needs to spend at least some of the time eating and drinking, because it was the day that the Torah was given, and we need to be happy on this day to show that it is a good day for the Jews. I don't understand. Why doesn't Rabbi Eliezer say to learn a *geshmakeh sugya* instead of eating and drinking? After all, what better way to celebrate the Torah being given than by learning Torah?

The answer appears to be based on an idea expressed by the Mesillas Yesharim in Chapter 7, which states "*Hatenuah hachitzonah me'oreres hapenimis*," meaning that our actions affect our inner feelings. Therefore, Hashem could not have just made a verbal *bris* with us, because we would not have fully grasped what it was and it wouldn't have been finalized in our

eyes. Rather, Hashem passed us between two walls in order to physicalize and thereby cement this *bris* in our eyes.

The same idea applies Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim and to Simchas Yom Tov. Concerning Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim, though mentioning it daily definitely does help us believe in it, in order for us to show ourselves that we truly believe in the *nissim* that Hashem did for our ancestors in Egypt we have to do something physical to remember it—which is why many of the *mitzvos* in the Torah are "*zeicher liy'tzias mitzrayim*".

Similarly, on Shavuos we can't just learn a *geshmakeh sugya* and get *simcha* from that, because most of us are not at the level at which one is capable of reaching a high level of happiness just from learning alone, a non-physical activity. Therefore, we need to do something physical (i.e. eating and drinking) in order to have true Simchas Yom Tov.

שבת שלום!

