

*...and you return to the Lord your God, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day... And God will return your captivity and have mercy on you. He will gather you from all of the nations where the Lord your God has dispersed you.*

--- Deut. 30:2-3

Rabbi Levi said: **Teshuvah** is great, for it reaches to the Throne of Glory, as it says, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord your God* (Hosea 14:2). --- Talmud, **Yoma** 86a

The **teshuvah** of Israel is great, for it awakens **teshuvah** Above, as it were, like all awakening from below which awakens awakening from Above... --- Rabbi Mordechai Yehuda Leib Zaks (1906-63, Jerusalem), quoted in **Itturei Torah**

Rav Hana bar Aha said that it was said in the **Beit Midrash** (study house): God regrets having created four things. And they are exile, Casdi'im, Ishmaelites, and the evil impulse . . . The evil impulse, as it is written, *that I have made evil* (Micah 4:6). --- Talmud, **Sukkah** 52b

*He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Avram, "The wrong done to me is your fault! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May God judge between you and me!" But Avram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her. An angel of God found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the road to **Shur**. And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of God said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her harsh treatment." (lit., "Suffer under her hand") The angel of God also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude..." --- Gen. 16:4-10*

*Suffer under her hand*—It should have said, “suffer from her”! Like it said, *Sarai treated her harshly*. But the language of “suffer from her” would imply that she would want to suffer from her, like a slave who willingly accepts the word of her mistress, because she belongs to her. But to Hagar [the angel] said that God had actually listened to her suffering, as the angel would continue to tell her [that the child she would bear would be the progenitor of a great nation], so he told her that she should pretend like she was being suppressed under [Sarai’s] hand and Sarai would think that Hagar was willingly submitting to her . . . And in truth, after [Hagar] gave birth, Sarah did not use her like a slave, but as a handmaiden as when she said [asking Avraham to evict Hagar and Ishmael], *evict the handmaiden* (Gen. 21:10) --- **Ha’amek Davar** (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the “Netziv”, 19<sup>th</sup> c.), on Gen. 16:9

*You have affirmed this day that the Lord is your God, that you will walk in His ways, that you will observe His laws, commandments, and rules, and that you will obey Him. And God has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you, His treasured people who shall observe all of His commandments.* --- Deut. 26:17-18

*Return to* is **v’shavta ad**, literally, “turn around toward.” Similar, a phrase in verse 10 (**tashuv el**) means *return to*. This variation in language reflects two stages in the process of repentance. The first stage is a realization that our behavior is wrong and requires a change of direction. This is *turning toward* God. The second stage is coming into the presence of God as the result of one’s new way of life, *returning to* God. --- Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel Wisser (**Malbim**, 19<sup>th</sup> c.), noted in **Humash Etz Chaim**, p. 1169