

Rabbi Noah Arnow  
Kol Rinah  
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How does God call me to be in the world? How does God call me to be in my work? How does God call me to be in and with my family? These are all versions of the same question: “How does God call me to be?” And I could ask it differently. How does God call you to be? How does God call us to be? And for some of us, it will resonate more phrased as “How are you called to be?” without referencing God.

If we were to parse these questions, we might wonder about the mechanism—the “How does God call?” part of it. But I’m more interested in the last part—“to be.” How does God call us to be—to act, to behave? And it’s not about what we do or accomplish, necessarily—it’s how we be—how we carry ourselves and behave.

It feels like something that is doable and approachable because it’s not a huge project—it’s just one action or interaction at a time.

Now, we don’t usually speak in this language of God calling us to do or be. For me, there was something in the unfamiliar formulation that caught my attention. And the question came from a Christian minister I was speaking with earlier this week.

The next day I found myself having a number of conversations with people going through very difficult times in their lives, and I found myself trying to be in those conversations as I might imagine God calls or would call me to be in them.

That involves meeting each person where they were, and not inserting too much of myself and my needs into the conversations.

Another powerful element of this kind of question is that it’s about reawakening within each of us that sense of who we truly are, or strive to be, but sometimes forget to be. It’s like bringing up at a budget meeting the core, focusing question, “what’s our purpose as an organization?” It brings us back to our core commitments and reasons for being.

But the way we’re called to be is not static—it may change, or the way we understand it may change.

The Torah on several occasions, including the first verse of this week’s parasha, urges us not merely to follow God’s commandments, but to *walk* in God’s statutes. There’s motion, and journeying, movement, effort, and change inherent and inevitable in living a life of mitzvot.

Have you ever been in a place with poor cellphone reception? You walk around, trying different places, constantly trying to see if you can hear better, and it fades in and out. I remember doing this in the pre-cellphone days, trying to listen to Mets games on a radio while at summer camp. For a few minutes, the game would be so clear, but then a cloud or a mosquito would pass by and everything returned to static. I’d keep trying the same place, the same place on the AM dial, but it would never be the same.

This, I think, is one way of understanding this idea of walking in the mitzvot—we’re always trying to hear better the ways we are called to be in the world. And so we walk around, doing mitzvot, hoping this way or that, to get that rare, clear broadcast.

The Torah portion offers that if we walk in God’s statutes, then good things will happen, and some blessings are enumerated. But if we do not, then the many curses that are

enumerated will befall us. But the language preceding each section of curses is noteworthy. It's not simply if we don't do this or that. Over and over, it uses the language of hearing. If we don't hear (often translated as obey, but literally: hear), then these curses will come.

We each need to strive to hear the way God calls us to be—in our work, in our friendships, in our families, in our volunteer positions, and fundamentally, in every interaction we have with another human being.

Before a hard conversation, ask yourself, "How is God calling me to be in this moment?"  
Shabbat shalom.

**ויקרא פרק כו**

(ג) אם בַּחֲקֹתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם :

**ויקרא פרק כו**

(יד) וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה :  
(טו) וְאִם בַּחֲקֹתַי תִּמְאָסוּ וְאִם אֶת מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת בְּרִיתִי :

**ויקרא פרק כו**

(יח) וְאִם עַד אֵלֶּה לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי

**ויקרא פרק כו**

(כא) וְאִם תֵּלְכוּ עִמִּי קָרִי וְלֹא תֵאָבֹוּ לִשְׁמַע לִי

**ויקרא פרק כו**

(כז) וְאִם בְּזֹאת לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקָרִי :

We need to be sensitive to that call. In our work here at the shul, to be doing it the way God calls us to. To be with our families the way God calls us to. And to be in the world the way God calls us to.