

Running Away From God? Tehillim 139

Dr. Yosefa (Fogel) Wruble (yosefa.fogel@gmail.com)

1) Radak, Yona 1:3

ויקם יונה לברוח תרשישה מלפני ה' – ואיך יהיה יכול לברוח ודוד אמר אנה מפניך אברח אלא אין מלפני כמו מפני כי הנביא היה מלא חכמה ודעת ואיך היה חושב לברוח מפני ה' אלא מלפני ה' היה חושב כי פי' מלפני מדבר שהוא לפני ה' והוא רוח הנבואה כי חשב שאם יצא מארץ ישראל לחוצה לארץ לא תשרה עליו רוח נבואה

2) Radak, Tehillim 139

אשא כנפי שחר – אם אמרתי אקח כנפי שחר ואעוף בהם ממזרח למערב, **ואחרית ים** הוא המערב. ואמר: **באחרית ים** – רוצה לאמר סוף העולם, כי הים סובב הארץ, ואחרית ים הוא סוף העולם. כלומר: אם אלך ממזרח למערב ברגע אחד, אם אמצאנו, שם, לא אוכל ללכת בלתי, כי בכל מקום **תחני ירך ותאחזני ימינך**.

3) A. Y. Heschel, God in Search of Man, pp. 136-140

For God is not always silent, and man is not always blind. His glory fills the world; His spirit hovers above the waters. There are moments in which, to use a Talmudic phrase, heaven and earth kiss each other; in which there is a lifting of the veil at the horizon of the known, opening a vision of what is eternal in time. Some of us have at least once experienced the momentous realness of God. Some of us have at least caught a glimpse of the beauty, peace, and power that flow through the souls of those who are devoted to Him. There may come a moment like a thunder in the soul, when man is not only aided, not only guided by God's mysterious hand, but also taught how to aid, how to guide other beings. The voice of Sinai goes on for ever: "These words the Lord spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice that goes on for ever."

"Do not imagine that these great mysteries are completely and thoroughly known to any of us. By no means: sometimes truth flashes up before us with daylight brightness, but soon it is obscured by the limitations of our material nature and social habits, and we fall back into a darkness almost as black as that in which we were before. We are thus like a person whose surroundings are from time to time lit up by lightning, while in the intervals he is plunged into pitch-dark night. Some of us experience such flashes of illumination frequently, until they are in almost perpetual brightness, so that the night turns for them into daylight. That was the prerogative of the greatest of all prophets (Moses), to whom God said: But as for thee, stand thou here by Me (Deuteronomy 5:28), and concerning whom Scripture said: the skin of his face sent forth beams (Exodus 32:39). Some see a single flash of light in the entire night of their lives. That was the state of those concerning whom it is said: they prophesied that time and never again (Numbers 11 :25).

With others again there are long or short intermissions between the flashes of illumination, and lastly there are those who are not granted that their darkness be illuminated by a flash of lightning, but only, as it were, by the gleam of some polished object or the like of it, such as the stones and [phosphorescent] substances which shine in the dark night; and even that sparse light which illuminates us is not continuous but flashes and disappears as if it were the gleam of the ever-turning sword (Genesis 3 :24). The degrees of perfection in men vary according to these distinctions. Those

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who have never for a moment seen the light but grope about in their night are those concerning whom it is said: They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness (Psalms 82:5). The Truth is completely hidden from them in spite of its powerful brightness, as it is also said of them: Only those who have gone through days on which words were of no avail, on which the most brilliant theories jarred the ear like mere slang; only those who have experienced ultimate not-knowing, the voicelessness of a soul struck by wonder, total muteness, are able to enter the meaning of God, a meaning greater than the mind. There is a loneliness in us that hears. When the soul parts from the company of the ego and its retinue of petty conceits; when we cease to exploit all things but instead pray the world's cry, the world's sigh, our loneliness may hear the living grace beyond all power. **We must first peer into the darkness, feel strangled and entombed in the hopelessness of living without God, before we are ready to feel the presence of His living light.**