



The Books of the Living and the Dead Parshas Nizavim

The cries of anguish sounded in the Basei Weitinberg block in Jerusalem on that Rosh Hashanah eve were heard loud and far. One of the families was experiencing a tragedy after their baby passed away just hours before the holiday.

My father, Rabbi Yisroel Grossman, lived in the nearby Basei Warsaw block. When he heard of the tragedy he rushed to help, knowing the family had only hours to bury the body before the holiday commenced, otherwise they would have to wait for at least another two days until the holiday concluded.

The burial society had already closed for the day. My father attempted to contact the managers, but to no avail. He assured the family – the burial would take place before the holiday.

My father thought of his options, and then remembered his uncle Rabbi Isaac Nissenboim who was a member of another local burial society.

My father beseeched Reb Issac for help, and he immediately joined the endeavor and expressed confidence that they could get the job done on time, on condition that my father help him with digging the grave.

Father agreed and joined his uncle. They arrived at the family's home, took the body and headed off to the Har Hamenuchos cemetery. The sun began to set, and so the pair hastened their actions.

They quickly dug the grave, held a swift burial ceremony and ended the process just in time. They returned to their homes covered in dust, just as the congregants were returning home after the festive holiday evening prayers.

Father returned home, washed his face and began to recite the evening prayers aloud while warm tears streamed down his face.

Father never shared stories about himself unless they had a moral he wished to share with us.

Our weekly parsha reads: "The hidden things belong to the Lord, our G-d, but the revealed things apply to us and to our children forever: that we must fulfill all the words of this Torah."¹

Asking about the meaning of the verse, father wondered how one could know what is happening in someone else's mind? Furthermore, why does the verse relate to "us and to our children," why not just "us"?

My father would explain the verse in the following fashion: "**The hidden things belong to the Lord, our God** – man does good deeds and thinks good thoughts that are known only to the Heavens, **but the revealed things apply to us and to our children forever** - we must not keep all of them a secret and show our good ways to our children so that they may continue in our good path and **fulfill all the words of this Torah.**"

Later on, the Torah reads: "And their children, who did not know, will hear and learn to fear the Lord, your God, all the days that you live on the land."² The essence of the commandment is to teach the children who are not knowledgeable, so that they may follow in their parents' path, and whoever does so will merit seeing his offspring following in his path, father would assure.

Father would often point to his uncle's large family and state with obvious pride: "See the reward of he who goes with self-sacrifice to bury a Jewish child, just hours before Rosh Hashanah."

Father shared with us this unbelievable story, a task he undertook to alleviate the pain of a family who might have been prevented from beginning the mourning process for days.

When telling the story, father did not acknowledge that he was actually sharing an account of his own actions.

¹ Dvarim 29:28.

² Dvarim 31:13.