

And many evils and distresses will encounter it. It will say on that day, “Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?” But I will surely have concealed My face on that day because of all the evil that he did. (31:17,18)

If the People finally came to the realization that the source of their troubles was Hashem's concealing Himself from them, why does Hashem continue the punishment by concealing Himself even more? Why add more punishment if the people already have become aware of the reason for their troubles? The point has been made; now, it is time to move on. **Horav Shlomo Teichtal, zl**, explains this with a parable. A person had tried for some time to meet with a government official to discuss a zoning variance. It was crucial for his business that the zoning laws be modified so that he would have more room for his business to grow. After repeated calls and a number of delays, he was finally able to obtain an appointment for the following Friday at 12:00 P.M.

The businessman was not going to be late. Knowing how long he had waited for this appointment and acutely aware of certain failure if he were to be late for the meeting, the man left early in the morning, allowing sufficient time for him to arrive at his destination. He was not counting on the traffic or the two accidents that stalled traffic for some time. Finally, at 11:40, he arrived at the government office. Alas, parking was non-existent. He drove around the block twice, checked the “full” signs at all of the parking lots and still had no parking space. It was 11:55. He began to pray, promising Hashem that he would be on time to *daven* three times daily in *shul*. He would even recite *Tehillim* before *davening* and learn *Mishnayos* after *davening*. What more could Hashem want from him? “Please Hashem, help me!” he cried out.

Suddenly, a spot became available, as a person leaving for lunch pulled his car out. It was 11:58. As he was pulling into the parking spot, he looked up and said, “Hashem, thank You, but I was able to work things out. A spot became available, and I will be on time for my appointment.” No *Mishnayos* and no *Tehillim*. The situation improved “all by itself.” Apparently, he had not needed Heavenly intervention.

We have all been there – some more, some less. When the situation appears bleak and we are up against the wall with nowhere to turn, we turn to Hashem. We pray; we cry; we beg; we make all forms of promises, well-meaning and sincere. Suddenly, our problem is resolved; the situation takes a positive turn. We have hope. Our promises disappear. Our *tefillos* are as dispassionate as always. Our fervor is, at best, tepid. Why? Because the challenge has passed. When they have no imminent adversity, people turn back to themselves – not to Hashem.

What we often fail to realize and acknowledge is that the relief that we experienced was Hashem's way of listening and responding to our prayers. If we stop praying, the problem might return with a

passion. *V'amar ba'yom ha'hu*, “and it will say on that day” – only on that day will he pray. Only on that day will he acknowledge that he is beholden to Hashem. What about the next day – when the scare is over? Will he then forget all of his promises to be good, his many prayers to keep his word to Hashem? Otherwise, Hashem will conceal Himself. The Jews turned to Hashem, but, as soon as the tide changed and life was looking up, they reneged on their promises. They forgot to Whom they had made promises. After all, what difference did it make? The situation had changed. Life was now good. When Hashem sees that our commitment was short-lived, that our promises were made out of necessity, that we no longer care, He will surely conceal Himself. We must always keep our word, maintain our commitments – especially to Hashem.