

I am Hashem, Your G-d. You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence. (20:2,3)

The first two commandments exhort us to believe only in Hashem. No other power, however real or purported, has any validity. Only Hashem is One. He is our G-d, and the G-d of the entire universe. We understand that we may not turn to any other source for salvation, since only Hashem has the power to save. The **Alter, zl, m'Novorodok** was wont to relate the following story in support of this idea. A poor man had reached the limits of degradation. He had no one to whom to turn. He had exhausted every avenue of "income." Depressed and dejected, he did not know what more he could do, until he heard that in Frankfurt, Germany, lived an outrageously wealthy man by the name of Rothschild who had a generous heart and distributed charity to anyone who crossed his threshold. The poor man decided that he had nothing to lose. He would make the trip.

Traveling by coach was out of the question, since he could not purchase a ticket. So he took the next best means of transportation: he walked. After a few days, his feet were blistered and his food was practically depleted. With his last bit of strength, he trudged on until he reached the door of Mr. Rothschild's mansion. He fainted right there on the threshold. His last bit of strength had ebbed out. No food, no strength – he just passed out.

The servants came running, and they moved the poor man. He found himself sitting in a chair in Mr. Rothschild's study. Across the desk was the magnate himself. "What do you seek?" Rothschild asked the poor man. "I heard that you help people in need. I have nothing, and I have no way of ever having anything. I came here to plead with you for some alms, so that I could return to support my family," the poor man answered.

Rothschild was moved by the man's sincerity and wrote a check for a large sum – enough to return home and start a business with which he could support his family.

Word of the poor man's success spread throughout his village until it reached the ears of another poor fellow who wondered why he, too, should not benefit? If his friend had succeeded, he would also make the trip to Frankfort. This fellow, however, was more enterprising, stopping along the way to "fundraise" in every village that he passed. When he finally reached Frankfurt, he sought an appointment with Mr. Rothschild. Arriving at the palatial mansion for his appointment, the poor man presented his case. He thought he had made a strong presentation; thus, he was surprised when the philanthropist gave him only a few dollars.

"Is this all I get?" the poor man asked incredulously. "Fine," replied Rothschild, "here is another ten dollars."

"I do not understand," the poor man began to plead. "My friend came here, and you set him up in business, while you give me a few dollars."

“What is the comparison?” Rothschild countered. “Your friend fell on my steps. He had no one to turn to but me, so I helped him. You are an entrepreneur who has stopped in every village between your hometown and Frankfurt. You have other means of support. You do not need me.”

“Likewise,” explained the *Alter*, “the first two *dibros* are statements affirming that we have no other G-d than Hashem. We turn only to Him. Thus, He will support us – completely.”

A powerful statement; A penetrating message which we should all take to heart. Hashem is all that we have. We cannot go running to Him only when our other options run out. We must always remember: Hashem is our only option!