

"And they will say one day, is it not because our G-d is not among us that these evils have come upon us? And I will surely hide My face in that day. For all the evil which they wrought in that they turned to other gods." (31:17,18)

Horav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch Z"l emphasizes the speaker's audacity. The sinner does not say, "I have sinned because Hashem has forsaken me." Rather, he says, "*It is because Hashem is not in my midst that I have sinned.*" He does not find fault in his own behavior, so that he accepts responsibility for his own actions. Instead, he finds Hashem's "behavior" to be the cause of his misfortune! He perceives that Hashem, whom he still refers to as his G-d, has abdicated his promise to protect and support him. If Hashem had only kept His promise, such sufferings would not have befallen him. He thinks he can absolve his misdeeds by blaming Hashem. He refuses to seek the source of Hashem's new "attitude" towards him, as this would shed light on "who" is really responsible for all his troubles.

He conveniently becomes oblivious to the reason for Hashem's withdrawal of His special care: "*For he has turned to heathenism.*" Hashem remains *Am Yisrael's* G-d as long as we are His people. As long as we place all of our endeavors solely under Hashem's auspices for the singular purpose of fulfilling His Will faithfully, we deserve the mantle of "*Am Hashem.*"

We may question this person's audacity. How does he have the nerve to blame Hashem for his personal disobedience? Such people refuse to accept appropriate responsibility for their own actions - or even their children's actions. How often do we go about our daily routine, blind to the ethics and propriety of our decisions? When things do not go exactly as we planned, we tend to blame everyone but the true culprit: "ourselves." We blame Rabbis for their lack of "flexibility" in conforming to our standards and values. We blame teachers for our inability or impatience in properly raising our children - or our misguided attitude in their upbringing. One who is either unwilling or unable to accept responsibility for his mistakes will one day commit the ultimate repudiation; he will blame Hashem for his mistakes. All these situations, however, have one common factor. In the final analysis, we will all have to suffer the discomfiture of confessing to erroneous beliefs and groundless accusations. We may only hope that the damage inflicted against others can still be rectified.