

If you behave casually (happenstance) with Me and refuse to heed Me. (26:21)

The word *keri*, translated as “happenstance,” is used quite often in the *Tochechah*, Rebuke. Following the text, we observe that chastisement and further punishment are meted out to *Klal Yisrael* because they behave toward Hashem with happenstance. Thus, Hashem responds by acting toward us in a like manner. The *Rambam* defines *keri* as denying Hashem’s role, His orchestration of events. When we view what takes place in the world in general, and around us in particular, as random occurrences, we are acting with happenstance toward Hashem. The *Ramban* calls ignoring *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, “A path of cruelty.” **Horav Noach Weinberg, zl**, explains that it goes without saying that one who ignores Hashem’s messages, attributing them to coincidence, is a heretic. Instead, he is explaining the root of this heresy: cruelty. It takes a very cruel (and crude) person to imagine (and even suggest) that a loving Father would abandon His children to the treacherous whims of fate, allowing them to suffer for no apparent reason. Furthermore, by reducing what are really Hashem’s messages to random occurrences, one deprives himself of the possibility of repenting to correct his ways.

Our *parshah*’s central message is that there is no such thing as coincidence. Whatever occurs is the result of Divine intervention. Hashem has a reason, and if we are privy to the occurrence, it is because He is sending us a message. All too often we are more concerned with either complaining or questioning Hashem’s actions to realize and think about the message He is sending us. *Rav* Weinberg relates the story of a young man who stopped by *Aish HaTorah* as part of his world tour. Upon meeting the *Rosh Yeshivah*, the young man said, “I do not need a *yeshivah*. You see, G-d and I are quite close. He even performs miracles for me.”

He explained, “Recently, I was riding my bike up a winding mountain road. A large truck swerved into my lane, coming straight at me. With no other choice, I drove off the side of the mountain, falling some fifty feet onto jagged rocks. Immediately before impact, I yelled out, “G-d!” When I hit the ground, I felt G-d’s Hand cushioning my fall. Nothing happened to me – not even a scratch! It was clearly a miracle. You see why I say that G-d and I are very close.”

The *Rosh Yeshivah* was a wise man, and, with one astute question, he shattered the young man’s self-deluded mindset. “Tell me, my friend, who do you think pushed you off the cliff?” he asked.

The young man no longer had an answer.

“G-d is not superman, waiting for you to stumble off the cliff and then coming the last minute to your rescue. Everything in your life is controlled by G-d: both the problems and the solutions; the challenges and the resolutions. Hashem first sent a truck to run you off the cliff, and then He saved you. You might wonder why G-d would cause you to fall off a cliff only to save you moments later. He wants your attention. He wants to teach you a lesson. What is it? In order to discover the

answer to this question, you must work on your relationship with Him. How? By going to *yeshivah*. There you will discover the answer to all your questions.”

Hashem is constantly speaking to us via the many messages that He sends. The problem is that we are not listening. Listening demands application, lending an ear, caring enough to want to know what is being conveyed to us. In order to have the proper mindset to connect with Hashem, to hear His message, to truly care about its contents and significance, one must acknowledge the fact that Hashem loves us and that everything which takes place in our life is for the good. They are actions of a loving Father Who cares deeply about us. Otherwise, if one's relationship with Hashem is pervaded with distrust and anger, the message will be misinterpreted, its meaning distorted by the individual's subjective perspective on life. Our attitude will determine the interpretation and application of Hashem's message. In other words, when we hear what we want to hear, we do not listen, resulting in a failed message.