

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?" (31:17)

The *Sfas Emes* cites *Horav Bunim M'Pechischa*, who states that the actual idea that one says or even thinks that "*Ein Elokai b'kirbi*," "My G-d is not in my midst," constitutes a grave sin which may be the source of his troubles. How does one have "*yiush*," how does one despair? Every Jew is enjoined to believe whole-heartedly that Hashem is with him at all times, through all circumstances, under all conditions. Hashem does not, and will not ever, forsake us. We need to be able to say the same regarding our relationship with Him.

The *Kotzker Rov* was once asked, "Where is G-d?" to which he replied, "Where is He not?" This fact was not a question posed in order to avoid a reply, but rather the reply to a question. Hashem is always with us. We are the ones who turn away from Him. It is analogous to a loving father who watches over his child. At no time does the father ignore his charge. At times the child attempts to escape his father's purview.

In the *Haftorah* for *Shabbos Shuvah*, the *Navi* Hoshea proclaims, "*Shuvah Yisrael*," "Return O Yisrael" - Return to Hashem, return to the source. How much of a "return" is sufficient? "*ad Hashem Elokecha*," "Until Hashem your G-d." Is it enough to return unto Hashem? Is it sufficient to simply return in principle, to return with conscience, to return with one's heart? Or does Hashem demand a more substantial demonstration of the intent to return? "*Kechu imachem devarim, v'shuvu el Hashem*," "Take with you words and return to Hashem." One must take his entire being, not simply his conscience. To be a Jew at heart has regrettably become very popular, but is that really what Hashem requires of us? **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, distinguishes between, "*ad*" and "*el*" - "*ad*" is limited. *Teshuvah* takes one to the front door - but stops there. "*El*" is unlimited, it signifies a complete return. One should not simply return his consciousness; he must return his entire self, his entire essence. *Teshuvah* means a total religious comeback, a complete return to total observance, not merely lip service.