

You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence. (20:3)

The prohibition against having any other gods is quite simple: A Jew believes only in Hashem as the Only Source of anything in his life. To ascribe power of any form to any other entity is pure idol worship. The *Sefer HaChinuch* considers this the *ikar gadol*, great/primary principle concerning upon which all the *mitzvos* are dependent. As *Chazal* (*Sifri, Parashas Re'eh* 11:28) state: "Whoever concedes to *avodah zarah*, idol worship, it is as if he has denied the entire Torah." Essentially, a Jew by his very faith in Hashem must be totally committed only to Hashem, realizing and acknowledging that at no moment of his existence may he think that he can "go it alone", without Hashem as his driving power source. For a Jew to say that he requires no help from Hashem is absolute *kefirah*, heresy.

Another aspect of our self-delusion is common. When we think about it, we subtly and inadvertently deny Hashem's powers every moment of our lives. *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, presents a simple, common situation. A person prays to Hashem for success in a given endeavor: a *refuah sheleimah*; to be cured of an illness; a *shidduch*, matrimonial match for a child; or financial undertaking. After much prayer, he receives a positive Heavenly response. All goes well. He is now in the clear, home free. He feels great. Everything has worked out. He is in seventh heaven, jumping for joy. Now what? When someone asks him, "How's everything?" his reply is: *Ani k'var b'seder*, "I am all fine" or "I am good, I have nothing to worry about (any more)." At this point, he is expressing that he no longer needs Hashem. The Almighty "came through" for him. Now everything is on the up and up. It is at this point that he could lose it all. Why? Because he forgot about Hashem. Nothing is sustained unless Hashem sustains it; nothing lasts unless the Almighty wills it.

In his commentary to the words, *Va'ta'amod mi'ledes*, "And she ceased giving birth" (*Bereishis* 29:35) *Ibn Ezra* alludes to this idea. He explains that Leah *Imeinu* ceased to have children after Yehudah was born because she intimated that she no longer needed children. She was one of Yaakov's four wives, and she already had four sons. (There were initially supposed to be twelve. Thus, she felt that she had already received her quota.)

A similar idea applies to the *Shunamis*, mother of Chavakuk, whom the *Navi* Elisha blessed that she would have a child. Once she gave birth to the child, she stopped visiting the *Navi* until the child died, and she needed a miracle to bring him back.

Rav Zilberstein posits that this happens more than we care to acknowledge. We are in need of a Heavenly blessing. An individual prays and prays, pleads and beseeches Hashem until that moment that He responds affirmatively. Then, suddenly, he stops praying. His request was fulfilled. What should he pray for now that Hashem has fulfilled his request?

“I need nothing. It is all good in my life” is a statement that presents the speaker as a devout Jew who refuses to impose more on Hashem than is necessary. He asked. He was answered. He is now happy. Why bother Hashem? He is in error. It is never a bother for Hashem. On the other hand, his attitude indicates that all is well, when, in fact, it could change at any time. The only endeavor that can avert disaster is *tefillah*, prayer. We convince ourselves that all is well, not thinking that all is well only when Hashem wills it so. The *Brisker Rav, zl*, would constantly repeat the *pasuk*, *Lishiyascha kivinu kol ha’yom*, “For Your salvation we hope all day” (*Shemoneh Esrai*). This was his way of reiterating his constant belief in Hashem as the only Source of salvation.