



Parashat Vaetchanan



English version

THINKING about ME.org

THE ART OF THE UNANSWERED PRAYER

There's a question most people are too embarrassed to say out loud. Why doesn't my davening seem to do anything? Rav Saadia Gaon answered it a thousand years ago with a list of seven reasons a prayer is not heard. Six of them are about you.

1. Kavana: A heart that stayed behind while the mouth kept moving. Only in a Minyan, a prayer without kavana is accepted. But when you pray alone, you need Kavana for your prayers to work. 2. Torah: An ear closed to Torah. You don't listen to G-d, so G-d does not listen to you. 3. Tzedaka: An ear sealed against a poor man, causes G-d to seal off His "Ear" from that person's prayer. 4. Theft: Praying while you have in your hands what belongs to someone else. 5: Purity: Praying with hands or a body that aren't clean. 6. Teshuva. Do Teshuva before you pray.

Six problems, and every one of the six is fixable. If you want your prayers to be answered, make sure you first fix these six. But there is a seventh reason your prayers are not answered, and that reason is not fixable. It is when the decree was already sealed. The example of this is the prayer of Moshe Rabbeinu. He prayed 515 times to be allowed into Eretz Yisrael the numerical value of ואתחנן — and the answer came back: רב לך, אל תוֹסֵף דַּבֵּר אֵלַי עוֹד בְּדִבְרֵי הַזֶּה. Enough. Do not speak to Me about this again.

Moshe's heart was in every word. His ears were open to Torah and to the poor. His hand and body were clean. He did Teshuva if he ever did anything wrong. Not one of the six reasons that prayers are not answered applied to him. And he was refused

anyway. Which raises the only question that matters here: why?

The Ohr HaChaim gives an answer why Moshe was refused that changes everything. Had Moshe entered the Land, he would have built the Beit HaMikdash. And a Beit HaMikdash built by Moshe Rabbeinu could never have been destroyed. After all, Moshe is Midat Netzach, eternity. Nothing Moshe made is destructible. No enemy could have touched it. Now follow that to its conclusion. The Jewish people would still have sinned over there years in the Holy Land. And when they did, G-d's anger would have had to land somewhere. With the Temple standing untouchable, there would have been only one place left for it to go. Us! So, Moshe was kept out of the Holy Land. Not as a punishment. As a shield. The Temple had to be breakable, because as long as it can break, it can absorb what would otherwise fall on people. And the astonishing thing is that the pasuk says this outright. Moshe himself tells us why he was refused. וַיִּתְּעַבֵּר ה' בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם. G-d was angry with me — for your sake. The greatest unanswered prayer in history was an act of mercy toward the entire Jewish Nation for all time!

There's a chapter of Tehillim that opens מְזִמּוֹר לְאַסָּף — a song of Asaf — and then describes the nations storming into G-d's inheritance and defiling His Temple. The Midrash asks the obvious question. A song? This should have been a lament.

And it answers with a parable. A king had a son. The son did something terrible, and the king went into a rage — and instead of turning on his son, he

went and overturned the boy's wedding canopy and tore it to pieces. The king's servant watched and started to smile. What?! The king has destroyed his son's chuppah and you're standing there smiling? And he said: Yes. Because he took it out on the canopy and not on the child. That is what the Churban was. G-d spent His anger on wood and stone rather than on His children. Which is why Asaf calls it a song. And it is only possible because Moshe never built it.

If G-d can leave the greatest prayer in history unanswered for the sake of the future of the entire nation — then the silence from Heaven you're hearing after your prayers, may not be what it looks like either. It is not that your prayer was not heard. G-d said No, because He knows what is best for you.

Ask yourself honestly: what would happen if everything you davened for landed? If the parnassah came in, the situation resolved, the worry lifted, the life smoothed out — what exactly would you be asking for tomorrow? If only I had a few million dollars in my account, then I could solve almost all my life's problems, and then life would be much better! Not! That would be the life, that you don't need G-d in it! This was the sin of Adam, when he wanted to eat from the forbidden fruit, he wanted to be like G-d, where he could create his own Worlds, and not need G-d! Adam did not want to be dependent! And we all deserve his punishment of death, because we all strive for a life, that we don't need G-d! A life with no problems, no worries, no stress... basically a life that has nothing left to pray to G-d for! One thing for sure! If you had all your prayers answered, you would almost certainly not be praying for the Beit HaMikdash!

A person who is comfortable does not want the Temple back. He may say the words of the prayers of returning to the Land, the Temple, and Mashiach... But he will not mean them. Nobody aches for a home while they're happy where they are.

There's a parable that makes this concrete. Stick through till the end, so you can really understand where this is going. Its deep, but it is the story of the Jewish People for the last 2000 years! A tailor needed money. He borrowed it, and left his tools with the lender as collateral. The lender wasn't worried for a moment — without those tools the man can't earn a thing. He'll be back.

Years passed. The tailor gave up the trade and opened a shop instead. And now the lender lost hope. "He doesn't need a needle anymore. He's never coming back for them!"

Then word came that the shop was failing, month after month. And the lender was glad. Not out of cruelty — out of certainty. When the shop goes under, he'll go back to his needle. He'll need his tools. He'll come back to pay me my loan, because he needs his tools!

Now notice something in the Hebrew. The word for the Temple is מִשְׁכָּן — Mishkan. The word for something pawned, left as collateral, is מַשְׁכֹּן — mashkon. The same letters. And the Midrash says it outright: the Mishkan wasn't only destroyed. It was pawned. Hashem took the Two Temples, as collateral, that we do Teshuva!

This is so deep about the mourning over the Temple. Mourning over the Temple is different than all other types of mourning. Usually, you mourn something destroyed. You don't mourn collateral. Collateral is something you go back for. But only if you still want what you put down. So the "shop" is never quite allowed to succeed.

All the restlessness of your life, all the prayers that are not answered after you took care of all the six conditions of prayers being answered, are all because of one thing. G-d wants you to be homesick, until the Temple is rebuilt! All the things that cause your restlessness in life, are so that you should have a Temple to cry for! That restlessness of life you can't account for — the sense that you've built a decent life and something still isn't sitting right — is not a flaw in your life. It's the tailor noticing his hands are empty. You tried



setting up a shop, so that you don't need your tools, your needle, thread and measuring tools,... but for no explainable reason, your shop never makes it. You never get it off the ground! You need to come back, and pay the loan, to do Teshuva, to learn Torah, to Pray, to Give Tzedakah, and then, G-d will give you back the Temple!!!

You know where I got that Mashal from? It is in our prayers!!! Our Rabbis even set up a special Viduy, just for the Destruction of the Temple. Here's the full vidui, of Ashamnu mikol am, said in Selichot and on public fast days: אֲשָׁמְנוּ מִכָּל עֵם, בְּשָׁנוּ. מִכָּל דֹּר. We are guiltier than any people, more shamed than any generation. גָּלָה מִמֶּנּוּ מְשֹׁשׁ, דָּוָה לִבּוֹ. Joy has gone into exile from us; our heart is sick with our sins. וְנִפְרַע פָּאֲרָנוּ. Our desire (Temple) was **seized as collateral**, and our glory stripped away for what we owe. זָבֹול בֵּית. The dwelling of our Temple lies ruined through our sins. טִירְתָנוּ הִיָּתָה לְשָׁמָה. Our palace became a desolation. וְכִי אֲדַמְתָנוּ לְזָרִים, כִּחְנוּ. The beauty of our soil to strangers, our strength to foreigners. לְעֵינֵינוּ עָשְׂקוּ עֲמָלָנוּ, מִמַּשְׁוֹד וּמִמָּרָט. Before our eyes they robbed our labor, our children; what was drawn out and refined was taken from us. נָתַנוּ עֲלֵינוּ עֲלָמָנוּ, עָלֵינוּ עֲלָמָנוּ. They placed their yoke on us; we bore it on our shoulder. עֲבָדִים מְשֻׁלֵּי בָנוּ, פָּרַק אֵין מִיָּדָם. Slaves ruled over us; there is none to pull us free of their hand. צָרוֹת רַבּוֹת. סָבְבוּנוּ, קָרְאוּנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Many troubles surrounded us; **we called out to You, Hashem our G-d.** רַחֲמֵךְ

מִמֶּנּוּ בְּעוֹנֵינוּ, שָׁבָנוּ מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ. **You went far from us because of our sins**; we turned away from following You. תַּעֲיֵינוּ וְאַבְדָנוּ. We strayed and were lost. וְעַדְּכָן לֹא שָׁבָנוּ מִטְעוּתָנוּ. And still — we have not turned back from our error.

When your having problems with your kids, when you feel that your are being ruled by your Evil Inclination, when you feel like you have no place you can call Home, and all the other suffering in life, and you call out and G-d does not answer, it is because the Temple was taken as a collateral! If you had all your prayers answered, you would not yearn and do everything you can to bring the Temple back!

None of this means your pain is deserved, and none of it is a reason to stop asking. Moshe didn't stop. He asked 515 times. It means the silence may be facing a different direction than it feels like from where you're standing. Some prayers go unanswered because of something you can fix — and Rav Saadia listed six of them so that you could go and fix them. Some go unanswered for your sake. Because an answer would settle you, and a settled person stops reaching for anything.

It is so interesting. The same 515 prayers of Moshe, that are the numerical value of וְאַתָּחֲזַן are also the numerical value of שִׁירָה. In the end, all those prayers that G-d did not answer, you will turn G-d's NO, into a song, and thank Him for it!

THE FATHER WHO FELT SOMETHING MISSING

There is an unassuming man that prays on the other end of my bench in shul. He is a quiet fellow, but he prays with fire. He must be about sixty years old and looks somewhat of a loner. He never comes with kids or grandchildren to shul. I have never said a word to him. Not that I am not friendly or social. It is just that this fellow prays with such fervor, by the time we are all finished and ready to leave, he is still deeply immersed in his talking to G-d.

Just recently, my wife showed me something that shook me to the core. There was a front page article in the Mishpacha magazine (Hebrew version) of a sixty-year-old living in my neighborhood in Jerusalem who just had his first child after many years. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the picture of my bench-mate from shul, smiling and holding a new born baby in the hospital. I thought he was just “praying nicely”. Now, I realized how much of his heart he put into beseeching G-d in his prayers. How much heart *he put now into thanking G-d in his prayers.* This is



one of the things I love about living in Jerusalem. The spirituality of the people, the closeness to G-d here is just so unassuming. A regular-looking Avreich can have vast knowledge of Shas at his fingertips. At the still of midnight, in the Three Weeks, I hear from my bedroom window a neighbor wailing Tikkun Hatzot (all my neighbors denied it was them). And the man on the other end of the bench in shul, who did not have kids all his life – turned over the Heavens in prayer and merited a child at a ripe old age.

“These are the people in your neighborhood, the people that you meet each day.” Whenever I contemplate moving back to America, this thought buckles me down in Bait Vegan, Jerusalem. My greatest wishes, my deepest desires are that people like these might make an effect on me and my family. I might one day pray the way a Jew is supposed to. Maybe I will know some part of Shas well. And, hopefully, I will cry for the Beit Hamikdash along with that neighbor. It is not that the whole of Jerusalem is filled with such people. It is just that they exist here. Just a reminder of what things are supposed to look like.

Whenever I see the sixty year old young father, a thought floods my thinking. When someone has a child after waiting so long, the happiness is no less than ecstatic. If we would make some kind of a scale of all the happiness of the world, including the greatest happiness that a person feels, it could very well be that this fellow has experienced it. The reason for this is that when someone wants something so very much and then gets what he felt he was so sorely lacking, the happiness is in proportion to how much he wanted it. Whenever there is something lacking, like a missing part of a picture, the more its absence is felt, the greater the happiness when what is missing is filled. A couple without a child is a family missing a member. Immense happiness is felt when the picture is complete. This is the way G-d made the emotion of happiness – it springs from the heart when the missing thing is found. Unhappiness is wanting something and not getting it. And this sort of “wanting”, deep yearning, comes when a person

feels there is something significant, basically necessary and important to his life, missing. Like the feeling that things, in general, are not the way they are supposed to be.

On the half hour bus ride to the Mirer Yeshiva from Bayit Vegan, one of the budding young Torah scholars would give a class each Thursday. I heard his class every Thursday for four years. The last class before Tisha B'Av, he would tell about the time he took a walk alone with his Rabbi, studying deep parts of the Talmud. “At sunset, we stood in a place where we saw the sun disappearing over the horizon, and my Rabbi stood, quietly, watching as the sun went down. I just stood next to him, not knowing what to say. Then, he pointed to the sun, and said: ‘We still have a chance to bring the Korban Tamid of the afternoon. We still have a few more minutes, if Mashiach just comes...’ As the sun set, he frowned, and said, ‘We just lost another Korban.’”

R' Shimshon Pincus was quoted once as having said: *If you would find out that you were mistaken in thinking that you are Jewish – that you are actually a gentile, what is the first thing that you would do?* – Each person gave a different answer of things that are forbidden to them that they wished they could do. R' Shimshon answered, *“If I would be able allowed to do what a Jew can't do, I would go up to the Temple mount and bring a korban.”*

When someone wants holiness so much, when someone feels that Honor of Heaven is lacking in the world, then he can be happy and rejoice when it is restored. כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בנחמתה. Anyone who mourns over Jerusalem will merit and witness it in its consolation.

There is something missing in the world. There is a lack of Honor of Heaven. This explains a part of Kaddish that otherwise has no explanation. לעילא מן כל ברכתא שירתא תשבחתא ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא (The name of G-d is) *Greater than all the blessings, songs, praise and consolation that we can express in this world...* What is the word נחמתא, consolation, doing in this context?



The answer is that as much as we can praise G-d and say how much we pray that He should be accorded Greatness in this world, we still do not realize how much we lack His Presence. Consolation is needed when there is a lack and the degree of consolation must be to the degree of the lack; as much as the lack is, that is how great the consolation must be when the missing item is found or restored. There is no greater lack in this world than the open revelation of G-d's Honor, the Beit Hamikdash, and the Jewish People living in accordance with the Torah. The world is one big, incomplete picture. The Talmud in Berachot 3a says ,” I heard a Heavenly Voice that was wailing like a dove and saying, Woe is to Me that I destroyed my Home...” In Kaddish , this is part of our expressing G-d's greatness. We sanctify His Name saying how much we need Him and His Glory, and that the greatest consolation of all consolations will be when the world will recognize Who is Boss. That is when G-d and His people will be consoled, and in the biggest way. לעילא מן כל נהמתא...

Let us take a look at the Hebrew word נחמה. The word נחמה means *consolation*. The word נחם also means to *regret, take back or feel bad*. (שוב מחרון) . כי נחמתי כי עשיתי(ם) and אפך והנחם על הרעה לעמך . G-d does not regret, for He knows the future before it happens. But the connection between the two meanings of the word *in relation to humans* is that although they seem to have contradictory meanings, they actually just signify one stage before the next. People who feel bad about something, who regret, will eventually be consoled. The same is true about mourning the Temple.

So, G-d tells his People, those who mourned His Temple, those who went through and are going through this bitter exile, נחמו נחמו עמי – Be consoled, Be consoled , my people...

May those who mourn on Tish'a B'Av cry no more.

A MINUTE WITH G-D

My son asked me a good question. We recite Kriat Shma in the morning and at night. The purpose of this recital is to accept on ourselves the yoke of G-d's Kingship. Why does the Torah say only בשכבר ובקומך when you go to sleep and when you wake up? Why don't we have to accept the yoke of Heaven in the middle of the day, when we pray Mincha?

The answer I gave my son satisfied him. In the way the world ran for thousands of years, people would work during hours when there was sunlight. They would get up before sunrise and go to sleep not long after the stars came out. The light hours were used for working. We are supposed to accept on ourselves G-d's kingship every day, all day. But to say the Sh'ma needs proper focus and thought, and during the day people are busy at work. The Sh'ma recital cannot be done properly if you just speed through it. If you do not have the proper concentration during the Shma, you missed the reason for reciting it. You have to say it again

slowly. This is time consuming. However, when people first got up in the morning, before beginning their day, and at the end of the day's work, when they went to bed , they could be more focused on prayer, instead of on work. During the day, when one could not dedicate proper Kavana (concentration) to saying the Sh'ma and accepting G-d's kingship, they were not required to do so. At night, when the people who did not have artificial lighting finished their work and could enjoy the stillness of the night, it was the opportune time to recite the Sh'ma and devote to it the proper concentration. Nowadays, people have no time for concentration; their minds are always at “work”. If they get up early, they check their e-mails. They overwork themselves during the day and come home overly exhausted. You may have religious people reciting Kriat Sh'ma every day, but never once saying it properly. Is there any way that we can get just a few minutes with G-d into our daily schedule?



WHO REALLY BURNT DOWN THE TEMPLE?

In the Nacheim prayer we say on Tisha B'av afternoon, we recall the destruction and rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash with these words: **כִּי אַתָּה בָּאָשׁ הִצַּתָּה וּבָאָשׁ אַתָּה עֵתִיד לִבְנוֹתָהּ וְכוּ** *You set it on fire, and You will ultimately rebuild it with fire.*

The Midrash cites this statement – together with the verse in the Torah teaching that the one who sets fire to the possessions of others is liable for damages (שמות כ"ב:ה) And then the Midrash quotes the Holy One as making the following amazing statement: *"I have to fix the damages that resulted from the fire I set".* (ילקוט שמעוני-זכריה ב:ט)

Now, this is all very strange. We have all been taught that the Temple was destroyed because of the sins of our People. Through sin, our forefathers caused G-d's Presence to leave the Holy Site, making it vulnerable to the torches of our gentile enemies. How, then, can we understand that G-d is liable for its rebuilding, and not the Jewish Nation?

Oddly enough, this paradox can be explained by another paradox:

The Talmud (ברכות לא) tells us that when Eliyahu HaNavi (Elijah) attempted to defend the Jews against the charge of idolatry, he went out on a limb, and pointed an accusing finger at G-d: "You caused their hearts to go astray by creating the Evil Inclination (מלכים א' י"ה, לז)." [The Talmud criticizes this statement, but goes on to say that G-d actually agreed to this charge.]

GOOD INTENTIONS

ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך *You shall love your G-d with all your heart...* The word heart in Hebrew is לב with only one letter ב. Here, the Torah says to love G-d with all your לבב, which implies to love Him with both hearts. The good and evil inclinations are found in the heart. We are to love G-d with both our hearts, or both inclinations. How can one serve G-d with his evil inclination? By redirecting material desires and distractions to serve G-d, we are serving Him

How are we to understand this?

The Siftei Chaim offers an explanation which, I think, resolves both these paradoxes. *Indeed, Man has freedom of choice, which ultimately makes man liable for sin. But once a person repents, G-d judges him favorably, and acknowledges that "I was the One who created him with such a strong evil inclination and passion; I will therefore take responsibility for the sin."*

In other words, although the sin was committed by the sinner, his liability continues only until he repents sincerely. After repentance, G-d is willing, as it were, to bear the responsibility, since, ultimately, the sin was a result of the negative drive (yetzer ha'ra) created by Him.

*

Taking responsibility for our foolish actions can be very difficult. We often find ourselves denying responsibility for our mistakes, making all kinds of excuses and trying hard to keep up a self-image of perfection. But, if we can internalize the refreshing concept discussed above – that G-d forgives us when we candidly admit our sin – we will have a great new source of hope. And we will be able to approach Elul and the Days of Repentance in the right frame of mind.

with our desires. We might have difficulty understanding why G-d needs to command us to serve and love G-d even with our Yetzer Tov. Isn't that the natural habit of the good inclination, to love G-d?

Rabbi Michael Bernstien (Windows to the Soul, Shaar Press) answers that sometimes the Yetzer Tov comes up with good ideas that are not necessarily the will of G-d. Communism has something that sounds like a good idea. *The road to*



hell is paved with stones of good intentions. The Torah makes sure that we know that having a good intention does not necessarily mean that this is the will of the Torah.

R' Chaim Volozhiner approached his Rabbi ,the Vilna Gaon. He had this great idea to build a yeshiva, the first of its kind. The Gaon, after hearing the plan of R' Chaim, did not respond. R' Chaim understood that the Gaon was not behind this project. He left the Gaon and did not say anything.

Several years passed, and still thinking that building the Yeshiva was a good idea, R' Chaim returned to the Gaon and presented the plan once more. This time the Gaon gave his approval. R' Chaim did not understand. Why was he turned down the first time, and this time, he got a “yes”?

To this the Gaon answered. “When you came the first time, you came with such excitement. That does not usually happen with mitzvot. Excitement for good deeds usually stems from ulterior motives. Now, years later, I see that you are still thinking about this Yeshiva project, but now, with a calm mind. For this, I give my approval. (adapted from Impact, Targum Press)

It is hard for us to know when and why we do things. Today, it is very hard to do even good things without ulterior motives. Although ulterior *motives* can be *pasul* and invalid , they do

not disqualify the act itself. The act must be done, while the motives must be worked on. This is what is meant to serve G-d with your good inclination.

Some people wonder as to how, exactly, we can be commanded to love G-d. If we do not have His love in our hearts, how can we get it? The answer is that deep down, we all have love for G-d in our hearts. It is blocked sometimes because of our busy schedule, thoughts of the past and worries of the future. We can tap into it by stopping these thoughts and focusing on our prayers. 80 percent of the thoughts that go through our minds are about the past and future. Not about the “Now”. If we think about the now, the good that G-d bestows on us, – *שעשה לי כל צרכי* – that he provided me with all my needs, then we can love Him.

There is something interesting in the Midrash about this passuk. The Midrash explains that the mitzvah to love G-d is actually to make the Name of G-d loved by others through you- *שיהא שם שמים מתאהב* על ידך This is strange. The simple explanation of the passuk is, “You should love your G-d.” Why the change?

G-d is complete. He does not need our love. He does not need our care. However, we must show our love and care to Him. The greatest level of love of G-d is our getting others to love Him, as well. Loving G-d in a way that we care so much that we want more love of G-d in the world, *that* is the true love of G-d.

DOUBLE PUNISHMENT / DOUBLE CONSOLATION

When people speak of “support,” they are usually referring to one of three types: emotional support, physical support, or monetary support. Indeed, the human psyche relies on these three types of support to stay balanced and healthy. If one of these is missing, an individual often feels like he is drowning. This feeling will be most intense when *emotional* support is missing.

What is emotional support? It is by no means limited to encouragement. Basic honor and respect also provide emotional support to an individual. If

these are missing, not only will mental and emotional health be likely to deteriorate, but bodily health as well. Subconsciously, we are always looking for support from our family, friends and acquaintances. Unfortunately, some people do not get support from these parties. This may be because they simply do not have a circle of relatives or friends – or because the relatives and friends fail to provide the appropriate level of respect and honor. We sometimes forget just how powerful and vital this kind of support is.



It emerges, then, that one of the biggest acts of *chesed* we can perform is to simply lend an ear. If someone we know is suffering, it may be difficult to let them rattle on and on. We might feel that we do not have any way to help. But this feeling is misleading. The fact is that even if the person is suffering from lack of physical or monetary support, a listening ear and emotional support can do much to soothe their pains.

If possible, though, we should do even more when we are approached by someone who is subconsciously looking for support: We should try to open up their eyes to the truth that ultimately it is not family, friends, etc., that hold us up. This is actually all a mirage. There is no-one who loves us and respects us more than our G-d in Heaven. He is the source of all support. Needless to say, wisdom and tact are necessary to convey this message effectively.

One powerful way to do this is to point to people who have succeeded in realizing – and living by – this basic truth. One such person could be a man or woman who lost their spouse at an early age, or a senior who never found a spouse at all – but managed to stay happy, and even become a source of support for others!

How did they accomplish this? The answer is that they found support by observing how the Creator supports them. They then went on to support others. They realized just how much G-d loves us and supports us even though we often ignore Him. And He is still there for us when we come back to Him.

In the *Haftarah* of Shabbat Nachamu, we read: נחמו עמי יאמר אלוֹקֵיכֶם (*Be consoled, be consoled my nation – so your G-d will say*). The Midrash comments: They were doubly punished, and they will be doubly consoled (*ילקוט שמעוני*). How can we understand this? Why did G-d punished us doubly for our sins, and then give us a double amount of consolation?

The answer lies in the *Haftarah* of Parashat Masei (*Yirmiahu 20:13*): כי שתים רעות עשה עמי- אותי עזבו

מקור מים חיים לחצוב להם בארות בארות נשברים אשר לא יכילו המים (*My nation committed two evils against Me: They abandoned Me, the source of living waters, to go and dig wells for themselves – broken wells that cannot hold water*). This calls to mind the parable of the queen who ran off with a farmer. Not only did she leave the king – she left the king to marry a simple farmer!

The *Chovot Halevovot* notes that the Prophet is not only referring to abandoning G-d for idol worship. He is also referring to abandoning our trust in G-d to trust in the more immediate things that support us. We trust that if we are breathing now, we will still be breathing a minute from now. We trust that as long as we have an investment/business/rich parent, our financial situation is stable *due to these means*. We trust that if we are happily married or supported, things will remain that way. What this really boils down to, however, is that we are *relying on means* because we built a certain amount of trust *in them*. We may then, unfortunately, forget to turn to G-d to keep asking for those blessings. By doing this, we are abandoning our relationship with G-d, who is like the spring of fresh waters itself. We rely on our broken wells that we dug that cannot even contain the water we put in them from the spring. We are busy focusing on the wells and rivers and pipelines through which G-d sends us good, but we forget that He is the source of all our bounty. These are the two evils done by our nation – abandoning our trust in G-d to trust in other means of support, and forgetting that these means are actually provided by G-d.

In His great mercy, however, He is willing to accept us back even after we have behaved so badly. Our King does not forsake his queen – the Jewish People – after she ran off with the farmer who is himself supported by the King. He still calls Himself “your G-d.” He does not forsake us even if we have forsaken Him. There is no greater consolation than this. He is always there watching over us. Furthermore, when we come back to Him, not only does He not get angry at us for leaving



Him, He also shows that He is overjoyed to have us back. This is the double consolation.

IF YOU ARE ENJOYING THESE ARTICLES FREE EACH WEEK, PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THIS PUBLICATION!

SPECIAL OFFER! Take upon yourself to spread the papers/emails and receive free coaching sessions with Rabbi Y. Farhi! Send an email to rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com for details.

One week's sponsor to cover all costs is \$300.

These articles are being distributed to over 20 thousand readers each week!

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H

