



## ***Talk To Me***

**D**id you ever play “Peek-a-boo”? Did you notice how the baby laughs and giggles when your hands suddenly open and your face reappears? What would happen if those hands didn’t open? Think about it; a frightening prospect, no? How many of us today feel like we are waiting for those hands to open, but they aren’t? We all know that times are hard. Life itself has a strange feel to it, but we just can’t put our fingers on it. Something is bothering us, we all sense it, but no one admits it; no one wants to talk about what is happening to us. Instead, as always, we bury our heads in the sand like ostriches, and pretend that nothing is wrong. But the knocks in life are harder these days, and

we can't hide anymore. We need G-d now, but where is He? Where did He go? The answer, my friend, is not blowing in the wind. G-d never abandons us; he never leaves. If you're lost and lonely in life, ask yourself, "Where have *you* gone? How did *you* veer so far from G-d?" Perhaps, like so many of us today, the challenges of living in the modern world confused you. Torn between the knowledge of what you should do and what you wanted to do left you stumped. Unable to make a choice, you've shifted aimlessly through life on a path that made no sense, and now you feel far from G-d. How did I let so much time pass without achieving anything and developing myself? Where do I go from here? Is there still time or am I too late? The truth hurts, but you don't have to go on hurting. If you can't stand the distance you've created between yourself and G-d, then start getting close to Him. Where do you begin? Simple; anywhere! Select a private area in your house, in the yard or out in a forest

and strike up a conversation with G-d. Think of it as if you're speaking to your friend, or as if you're a child speaking to his father. Feel like you're talking to the four walls? That's O.K. You've been out of touch with G-d for a long time; that's why you feel so hopelessly forsaken and abandoned. You've been miserable for so long, and it seems like it will never end. The pain is overwhelming and you need to talk. But, who's going to listen? Who's going to care? With no relief in sight, you withdraw further inside yourself and become more and more broken. Stop! You don't have to suffer. Let the pain out. Find that little spot in your world and tell G-d everything. Don't worry, He's listening. Of course you don't believe it, that's because you've lost belief in yourself. You don't think that you mean anything to G-d; that you're precious in His eyes; but you are! You've been living life too long without including G-d in the picture so everything in life seems arbitrary, robbed of any real

meaning and goodness; everyone is stepping over the next to get ahead, and all your efforts seem in vain. You just want to give up and give in to despair. Hold on. You're missing one thing. You haven't told it to G-d. Pour out your heart to Him again and again. Tell it like it is. Be real. Slowly, G-d will become real to you. The hands will open; you will be delightfully reassured, like the peeking baby hearing the words, "I see you!" The magic is there, because prayer is special. You never thought you can get close to G-d, well now you will. And that's what G-d wants. He wants to hear from you; He wants to be close to you; He wants to give to you, as the Sages said, "G-d said to them [the Jewish People]: 'Be diligent in prayer, because there is no other practice nicer than it; it's higher than all the sacrifices; and even if a person is not worthy to be answered in his prayer and to be shown compassion – because he prays extensively, I will show him

kindness” (Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Vayera). How encouraging! But, you’re still not convinced? That’s because the whole concept of prayer has become stale to our society. We are so driven by self-interest we’ve lost interest in G-d. More money, more pleasure, more work-outs, more vacations; it never stops! And that’s the idea. Fill up the minds and days of the people with enough commercial distractions that they won’t have time or care to reach out for G-d. Saturate the media with images of partying and fun, and you’ve raised a generation that could care less about religion and G-d. Try to make a prime-time TV addict aware of G-d and His remarkable workings in the Universe. Can the idea that a person cannot stub his finger down here without it being decreed from above (Chullin, 7b), generate any enthusiasm in him? Does he fathom that a person cannot touch that which has been designated for his friend, nor does one regime overlap another by

even a hairsbreadth (Yoma, 38b), and that even the chief of sanitation is appointed to his position through Divine decree – such is the scope of G-d's control over us. Every move we make, every breath we take; our comings and goings are all determined by heaven, “The feet of man take him to where he is destined to be” (Succah, 53a). Has all your talk about faith made a dent in him, or are you still met by his cool indifference? Everything he could possibly want or need he can order on-line, hear on his Itouch, or text to his friends and family, so why does he need to be in touch with G-d; he doesn't get it, he can't relate. Prayer doesn't mean anything to him; its trivial and unimportant, as the Sages commented (Berachos, 6b), “Prayer is a lofty matter that people are careless about”. The damage is done; we can't even imagine that G-d hears us, that He listens to what we tell Him. We don't feel important enough to G-d, so how can our words matter to Him. But they do. The

Sages, commenting on the verse (Devarim, Ch. 4 V. 7), “In all that they call...” In any language that a Jew calls out to the Almighty – He answers them (Yalkut V’Eschanan, Chap. 825). Prayer – our prayers – are so precious to G-d. But now it’s the morning after; the party is over. Look in the mirror. Are you happy with yourself? What have you done with your life? Where do you take it from here? Are you tired of all the loneliness and emptiness? You can’t keep it up. You need someone to talk to. Life has been so hard. G-d knows; He’s waiting. It’s as if all this is happening in your life because G-d is telling you, “**Talk to me**, tell me about it!” Why wait. If it seems that He’s not listening, it’s not Him, it’s you. You’ve taken everything in life as one big joke. Now it’s time to get serious. Your relationship with G-d is chilled? Then warm up to Him. Keep at it. Keep talking to Him. You’ll see the cracks start to form

in the ice, and you'll feel His warmth once again.

## 2.

It's 7 am and you just can't move. Once again you toss the covers over your head like a protective shield. While laying frozen in fear, you start thinking about facing another day, and your heart fills with dread. You stare into space lost in your thoughts; it doesn't feel real; it can't be happening. Your mind races wildly in panic over the nosedive your life has taken. Life has never seemed stranger and so full of pressure. You don't want to function, but you have no choice. You're reluctant to continue, but what else can you do. You're jumping out of your skin, "G-d, it's not supposed to be this way!"; "What should I do now?"; "Where can I escape?"; "Why are You doing this to me,



why are You so silent; I need help, It's all over, I'm doomed." Dear friend, we all find ourselves burrowed deep in the trenches sooner or later in life. The battle rages on about us; the enemy is in hot pursuit; and there is nowhere to turn. You can wave the little white flag and give up, or you can stop resisting so much and surrender to G-d. Come out from under cover and start revealing yourself to G-d. There's never been a better time to open yourself up to Him and get the help you need, as the Sages said, "The Almighty said: The moment trouble strikes the Jews, and they seek Me out, and they involve My Honor with them [in their cause] – precisely, at that moment, I will answer them" (Shocheh Tov, Tehillim, Chap. 20). It's when you are at the end of your rope and you least expect it that, paradoxically, you can get out of any predicament. With the truth staring you in the face there's no more pretending; you have no choice; you have to face G-d in your life with all your

neediness and vulnerability and pour your troubled heart out to Him, as is written, “Thus says the Almighty to the Jews: “If you see that problems are overwhelming you – precisely at that hour you will be redeemed” (Ibid). It doesn’t have to be logical, and it may not even make sense; it can be so unlikely that it defies probability, yet never, ever despair. Run to G-d, and you will be helped. Admittedly, you’re frightened and panicky. Your will is steadily dissolving, and you just can’t push faith anymore. You can no longer shake off the incessant messages of defeat that play like a broken record in your head such as, “G-d doesn’t need me – why should He care about me”. Feeling very small, your imagination easily plays on your fears. But G-d is our merciful Father, and He does care. You need to find that out for yourself. Take the dare and embark on a journey of discovery. Find a private place, with no one around, and start opening up yourself to G-d. Talk to

Him. It's natural to feel in the beginning as if your talking to the walls; don't let that stop you, as the Sages said, "If tragedy strikes a person, let them not call out to [the angel] Michael or [the angel] Gavriel, but rather to the Almighty Himself" (Yerushalmi, Berachos Chap. 9, Halacha 1). Be stubborn; be persistent! Let nothing stop you from reaching your goal, and that is to reach G-d. The insurmountable challenges in life are designed with the unique purpose of prompting you to turn your attention to G-d; it's G-d's way of telling you, **"Talk to Me!"** So why get discouraged? Tell G-d what's going on; tell Him about all your problems. Your obstinacy will pay off, and you will get the assistance you need, but you have to keep chipping away at the old block; give it time, because it's process. Up until now, you've spent your life participating in a culture that conveniently chooses to ignore G-d. He doesn't fit into my plans, so I just easily

delete Him from my contacts. Science and medicine have all the answers to my physical needs; psychology and philosophy are always churning out new theories to make me feel better, and I'm free to use the internet to indulge in any passion I choose with the touch of a button – so who needs religion? Why do I need G-d? Days, weeks and years of dabbling in this type of thinking has gradually eroded your attachment to G-d. In your mind He has become a mere afterthought; in the worst case you may even deny His existence. Now, when you're in trouble, you want to tear down the walls between you and G-d instantly? Yes, even in the midst of the most painful ordeals you have to practice gradual re-approachment? The returns may come in slowly at first, but cheer yourself on. Remind yourself that G-d is a merciful Father, Who's ready to help, but He's waiting for you to make the first move. He's waiting to hear from you. Your

prayers and pain mean something to Him, and He will surely help. To be sure, the waiting is hard; you may run scared and be tempted to start relying again on others to save you. Don't be foolish. No one will help you, no one will listen to you, no one will pay attention to you; most people are out for themselves. Learn this lesson early on; you can only rely on G-d. So hold on tight, and don't lose yourself. Life can shake you down big time. Indeed, in these perilous moments, it's easy to feel that you're finished and that it's all over. Just start talking; don't stop. You can move mountains and turn everything around, because G-d is moved by our words. You have someone to talk to; you have someone who will listen to you; you have someone who loves you! G-d is there and He is looking out for you. "No, He's angry at me, He doesn't want me." Wrong. You're angry with yourself for all the years you turned your back on Him, and now you can't face it. Get back on track and work

your way back to G-d. Be patient. It takes time to untangle your heart and mind from the all the twisted thoughts you have absorbed from today's way of thinking. It will come; the path towards awareness of G-d will slowly become uncovered, and your soul will emerge from the thicket of its confusion. G-d does want you, and you will know it. You will surely get out of your problems by getting to know G-d. But, for heavens sakes, talk to Him!

## 3.

**L**ife is full of ordeals, let us count the ways! First, there is your own deal; it started with a little indigestion. Your doctor recommended a routine test. It was supposed to be nothing. Now they found something on the x-ray and they took a biopsy; you're terrified and thinking the worst. But wait, the nightmare is not over; you have a daughter who's thirty seven, living at home and still not married.

She's had enough of the singles scene and is giving up on ever getting married. It's 6 pm, you arrive home exhausted from work; you're standing at the door reluctant to enter. Like most days, the sounds of shouting and bickering reverberate from the window all the way down the block. The thought of another unpleasant encounter with your wife's glares and accusing eyes for being late turns your stomach. "Have I really been stuck in this loveless marriage for twenty-five years?" you wonder. Then the door nearly slams in your face as your drop-out son, sporting an earring, rushes past you, ignoring you completely. You can't help but ask, "Where did I go wrong?"; you catch yourself, "At least I have children, look at all the other couples who can't conceive!" A trail of envelopes lines the floor of the foyer. From the corner of your eye you catch a glimpse of the postmark. It finally arrived; lying amongst the usual, threatening cut-off notices is the mortgage

foreclosure notice from the bank. Your heart sinks. The world is caving in on you. “I can’t take it anymore, what do I do? – I need to talk to someone, but who?” “Who’s going to listen, who cares about me and my problems?” “Where can I get relief – I need help!” Dear friend, I’m sure you can relate. Most of us do. But, we just don’t want to face the oncoming tsunami rushing at us, so we’ll keep our heads buried in the sand. Right? But, how long can you wish your problems away? To be sure, denial helps you get by for the moment, but that’s the point – it’s only for the moment; eventually the pressure gets to you and you break? But, should you? Isn’t G-d always watching out for us? Why do you feel so lost and alone? There is support out there; you just have to find it. You need these words, and you need to hear them from people who really mean it.

In every generation, there are unique individuals, *tzaddikim*, who are there to revive our faith. They eye us with



sympathy and love as they observe us driven to the heights of folly in our mad pursuit of instant gratification. They wait patiently as we gorge ourselves on *glatt-kosher* everything, pamper our bodies in the gyms, tanning salons and with designer-wear, and fill our time playing with the latest gadgets that technology makes so readily available. And on that day, when we finally wake up and realize that not everything we want in life can be gotten at the touch of a button, there they are; catching us when we fall. Tragedy may strike; someone becomes seriously ill; you lose your job or your money; your kids are flunking out of school or joining the counter-culture; old age creeps up on you. What do you do? How do you cope? You start to panic. You're convinced you're finished and it's all over, but the *tzaddikim* insist not. We freak-out because we feel we have no where to turn, so they point us to G-d. Yes, they dedicate themselves to getting it through our thick skulls that the

only answer to everything in life is G-d. They work on creating in us a “G-d awareness” by pushing us to constantly speak to Him, and to make it a habit to turn to Him for all our needs. The problem is that we resist. Most of us are facing such enormous problems and turmoil in our everyday lives that we don’t have a head to focus on G-d and all the religious stuff. We’re just not in the mood. Besides, we feel so defeated and bad about ourselves that we can’t even fathom that G-d cares about us. The *tzaddikim* understand this; they get it; that’s why they are so effective in inspiring hope even in the most broken soul. They continuously prod us and nudge us not to give up, but rather to turn to G-d and talk to Him about all we’re going through. They prompt us not to dwell on the doom and gloom, and urge us instead to switch our thoughts to think about G-d. This concept of always orienting your mind to G-d is very much connected to the idea

underlying the mitzvah of *Tefillin* (phylacteries). *Tefillin* acts like a plug-in connection to G-d, as the Sages commented of the verse (Shabbos, 153a) “‘And oil on your head should never be lacking’ – this is [referring to] *Tefillin*”, because *Tefillin* represents the brain and its lubricating spinal fluids. Now it makes sense why a Jew is obligated to actually touch his *Tefillin* every hour that it’s worn; he’s actually checking that his concentration on G-d hasn’t lapsed. The *Tefillin* themselves contain four *Torah* chapters affirming G-d’s existence and control over all reality, of which a Jew is reminded every hour when he places his finger on them (Shabbos, 12). We are so out of touch with G-d, that this may seem extreme. But it’s not; it’s a very high level of awareness that every Jew can achieve. And when you do, others will sense this about you and will be inspired with fear. *Tefillin* is one of the distinguishing hallmarks of a Jew, of which it is said,

“And the nations of the world will see the name of G-d called on you, and they will fear you.” The Sages explain that this refers to the *Tefillin* worn on the head (Berachos, 6a). This is your private moment of intimacy with the Creator, how can you even think of missing one day of putting on *Tefillin*. Get yourself a kosher pair of *Tefillin* and don’t miss out. Watch the difference it will make in your general well-being. You see, it all has to do with a G-d - mind connection. That’s why the word *Tefillin* and *tefillah*, (Hebrew word for prayer), are related; *tefillah* (prayer and regular dialogue with G-d), like *Tefillin*, is also a conscious act of connecting with the Creator. Rachel the Matriarch alluded to this idea when naming one of the Tribes “*Naftali*”. The letters of the name *Naftali* when rearranged spell out *Tefillin*. As a further play on the word *Naftali*, the verse quotes Rachel as saying, “Sacred schemes [*Naftulai*] I maneuvered to equal my sister [*Niftalti*]” (Beraishis, Ch. 30 V. 8); meaning

that Rachel named the child *Naftali* to recall how she stubbornly employed all means of persuasive arguments and debates in her prayers with G-d to get what she wanted – which was to have children like her sister, Leah – and she prevailed. What it boils down to is that whatever you're going through, just simply turn to G-d and tell it to Him in plain English. Furthermore, to enhance concentration and focus, put on kosher *Tefillin* every day and get really connected to Him. Your whole family will notice a change for the better, and they will follow in kind.

Sounds too easy? Well, it is and it isn't. Talking to G-d is the easy part; believing in what you're doing is another. That's where you need the most encouragement. Yes, it's been weeks and months and you don't feel anything, and you haven't gotten anywhere. Don't stop! Be disciplined, keep going. Many famous people accomplished great things in life because even though it

seemed as if nothing was happening, they bided their time and were fiercely persistent. If you had a hard knock life, you need to be doubly persistent, and never give up. A Jew has to know that in performing the *mitzvos*, G-d's will, you have to cast aside all personal opinion and bias and just do them. The *mitzvah* of *Tefillin* – winding black boxes on your arm and head - makes no sense to you; it doesn't matter. Stop thinking into it so much; it's G-d's will, just do it. Formal prayer and talking to G-d requires even more stubbornness because there is always that voice of doubt inside your head that mocks you and whispers, "Fool, you're talking to the four walls!" How many of us have been urged to throw in the towel and give up because of that small voice, thus condemning ourselves to a lifetime of pain and misery. It cannot be underscored enough how stubborn you have to be when it comes to talking to G-d, as the Sages said, "And when she (Chana)

excessively prayed' – from here we [derive], whoever prays exceedingly – is answered” (Yerushalmi Berachos, Chap. 4, Halacha 1). “Oh! But it’s so hard”, you moan. “Does is really help? Is G-d even listening to me?” you whine in a tone full of doubt and skepticism. Never mind! Ignore all the nay saying and keep it up. G-d loves to hear from you. Even if you think you’re the worst person, and you did everything wrong possible, He wants you to talk to Him. Yup! that’s what He wants, so just do it, as the Sages said (Vayikra Rabbah, Ch. 30, V. 3), “In our generation, where there is no king, no prophet, no priest and no breastplate, rather just prayer itself,” King David pleaded with G-d, “Do not despise their prayers.” And G-d promises that He, “will not despise or be disgusted by the prayer of the poor.” Normally, a person who has committed heinous crimes or is morally corrupt is despicable and shunned by society; not by G-d. Present yourself before Him with a truly contrite

heart and broken spirit, and tell Him all your miseries and He'll accept you back. If it's any comfort, you should know that G-d is even more receptive to words of the wayward than of the righteous, as stated in the *Zohar* (Balak 195a), "there are [introductory paragraphs in the *Tehillim* (Psalms)] such as 'The prayer of Moshe' , the prayer of David' and 'the prayer of the poor' , yet see how 'the prayer of the poor' is heard and accepted above the 'the prayer of Moshe' and 'the prayer of David'. Furthermore, when it states in the *Tehillim* (Chap. 102, V. 1),"A prayer of the poor when he is enwrapped [in affliction]" its underlying meaning is that that his prayer encompasses both the prayer of Moshe and the prayer of David". How poignant and inspiring! The poor guy who is completely broken, feels like a pathetic failure, totally worthless in the eyes of everyone including himself, suddenly summons enough courage to sob before G-d and even argue his case saying, "How



is it possible that I'm so bad off?" This is what G-d turns His ear to hear. This is the prayer that G-d listens to. So sorrowful a lament shatters the very heavens and even carries the prayer of the righteous ones with it on its wings. Why? Because poverty is not only a lack of money, it's also a state of spiritual deprivation. It's a person waking up to the fact that he has morally devastated himself through years of straying and fooling around. Nonetheless, if a person feels sorry enough for himself, and he stubbornly approaches G-d and doesn't give up; on the contrary, he cries out to G-d and shouts for mercy and compassion – then he can move mountains! The heavens rejoice and even the prayers of the righteous ones long to be swept up by his prayer. Remember, there is really no true poverty except for ignorance of G-d (Nedarim, 41). All the pursuits of man are vain. Our days are numbered and pass by in a flash. There is no greater misery than a spiritual malaise,

and there is no greater poverty than a lack of *Torah* and good deeds. Even worse is if a person falls into a trap of being a borrower – meaning that he owes G-d for all the wrongdoing he committed – all the straying and fooling around that goes on these days. And with what does he have to pay G-d back, except prayer and supplication? That's why it's so important to be honest with yourself and confront what you've done. Sense your spiritual emptiness and the pangs of hunger. Stand before the Almighty humbly, like a beggar at the door with a broken heart. Beg G-d to wake you up and stir your soul up so that you can feel once again - before it's too late and you're six feet under, as King David pleaded, "What gain is there in the shedding of my blood? In my going down to destruction? Will the dust acknowledge You [G-d]? Will it proclaim the truth? Hear me, O' G-d, and be gracious to me. G-d be a help to me" (Tehillim, Chap. 30). Persuade G-d that it's of no use to be rid

of you – “after all who will praise You?” Rather, “help me G-d to be better”. Similarly, King David shouted, “Rescue my soul from the sword, from the grip of the dog, my very soul” (Tehillim, Chap. 22). How indescribably moving is the primal scream of the poor man, pouring out his heart in prayer before the Almighty! “But that’s not me”, you argue; “Every time I attempt to open my mouth to G-d, I’m completely at a loss of words. I feel like no one is listening, and I’m not getting anywhere”. Don’t worry; it’s normal to feel this way. Believe me that not one single word or syllable is lost on G-d. Every single word that drips out of your mouth counts and is lovingly stored away in His repository. Mortal eyes cannot discern such fine and delicate spiritual matters, but if you accomplish a mere hairsbreadth in service of G-d, once in your life, it’s worth more than a whole lifetime spent in this world. The slightest movement exerted in G-d’s direction down here spans tens of

thousands of miles in the upper realms. Are you feeling more reassured? Then get to work! Stop looking at others. Plunge into the unknown waters with fierce determination. You only have G-d to rely on, so tell Him what you're going through. You will see wonders. "But, I feel like a louse, a total loser", that's OK. G-d knows you're hurting and He feels your pain, as it's written (Yalkut Tehillim, Ch. 764), "Whoever is aware that he sinned, and prays every day concerning his sin, and engages in a give and take with G-d – is forgiven." G-d enjoys a good debate, so to speak – meaning that you have to approach Him daily, with determination to win Him over to your side. Gradually you'll get out of the hole, and the sun will shine for you. Take these words seriously. Take a moment and listen to what G-d is telling you, "**Talk to Me**, if you would only **talk to Me**"? Really, that's all it takes to make the G-d connection. So the next time your faced with a problem, feeling sad, or just

need a shoulder to cry on just turn to G-d  
and say, "Can we talk?"

