



## **I NEED SOME BOOTS**

The Alenu prayer contains a verse from this week's portion, "Know therefore this day and take it to heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath: there is no other" (D'varim 4:39).

Thinking of this verse, a Chassidic teacher, Rabbi Simcha Bunim, told the following parable.

A son rebelled against his father, the king, and was sent into exile. After some time, the king calmed down and commanded his messengers to find the young man and look after him. Eventually a messenger found him, barefoot and dressed in rags, drinking and dancing in a tavern.

The messenger said, "I have been sent by the king to find you and give you whatever you need. What can I do for you?"

The young man burst into tears and said, "I really need some warm clothes and a pair of boots - that would keep me going!"

What a pity, said Rabbi Simchah Bunim; the boy could have said, "I would love to see my father again and to be brought back home" - but all he could think of were boots and shirts and trousers.

That's how it is with us - we concern ourselves with the little material things and forget about coming back to God and receiving the Divine favour again...

The rabbi was, however, more than a preacher and admonisher. He added, "When man is estranged from God, God too is estranged from man."

One might almost say that without His creature, man, God is, as it were, not God. A king is no king without subjects; a teacher is not a teacher without pupils; a doctor is not a doctor without patients.

God needs man - not merely because, in the words of a High Holyday poem, V'AVITA T'HILA, "You desire praise" - but because God's nature is to be a loving parent, and without children there cannot be a parent.

It is not good for man to be in exile from God; nor is it good for the Divine Presence, the SH'CHINA, to be in exile from man.