

PLUGGED IN

by Rabbi Label Lam

But if **you do not listen to Me** and **do not perform** all these commandments and if **you despise My statutes** and **reject My ordinances, not performing any of My Commandments**, thereby **breaking My covenant** then I too, will do the same to you; ...Your enemies will rule over you; you will flee, but no one will be pursuing you. And if, during these, you will not listen to Me, I will add another **seven punishments** for your sins: (Vayikra 26:14-18)

1 But if you do not listen to Me: to toil in the study of Torah in order to know the understanding of the Sages **2** and do not perform: If you do not learn the Torah, you will not perform its Commandments properly **3** and if you despise My statutes: This refers to one who despises others who perform the Commandments **4** and reject My ordinances: refers to one who hates the Sages **5** not performing: refers to someone who prevents others from fulfilling the Commandments **6** any of My Commandments: refers to one who denies that I (G-d) Commanded them. This is why the verse says "any of My commandments" and "not any of the commandments." **7** thereby breaking My covenant: This refers to one who denies the main tenet, namely, that God is the Omnipotent Creator of all existence. (RASHI)

Rashi finds in thenot performing: [refers to someone who] prevents others from fulfilling [the commandmentsand if you despise My statutes: [This refers to one who] despises others who perform [the commandments];-But if you do not listen to Me: to toil in [the study of] Torah in order to know the exposition of the Sages verses the seven corruptive steps that justify seven more punishments. Each descending level is a more serious attitudinal transgression and a worsening in one's relationship to HASHEM. What Rashi outlines succinctly is the anatomy of a total abandonment of Torah and Mitzvos. This little piece needs to be studied over and over again and in great depth.

How does someone plummet from the top of the ladder to the lowest of rungs to the point they are despising Mitzvos, hating Sages, preventing others from fulfilling, Mitzvos, and denying HASHEM? How does one lose it all? How does one get it all back?

Imagine someone buys the ultimate deluxe vacuum cleaner. It costs him many-many hundreds of dollars. He even takes out a payment plan to pay it off over time. For the first few months it's humming, and doing its job as promised. At one point while the person is vacuuming the plug becomes disconnected from the wall.

The operator of the machine is unaware and he continues to massage the carpet. It becomes

difficult to push the machine over the thick rug and it is obvious that it is not affective anymore. Whatever particles it rolls over remain there no matter how many times he tries and tries.

Eventually he kicks the machine repeatedly in frustration. He complains to a friend about his disappointment in the product. He discourages someone who is about to purchase the same appliance. He tells everyone he knows now not to buy this product. He stops making the monthly payments. Now things have gotten serious. His credit is affected and he fights forward in righteous indignation and out of principle.

The head of the maintenance department comes to his house to check out his claim that the vacuum cleaner is a dud and huge failure. After examining the machine he finds nothing wrong. He plugs it in and eureka, it works perfectly. Aha! At that point the fellow discovers his terrible mistake. Just plug it in! Without that live juice from the wall socket this finely tuned piece of machinery is reduced to nothing more than an oversized paper weight.

The verse reads, "But if you do not listen to Me". Without proper learning one is automatically disconnected from the source. The Torah becomes a heavy academic exercise, and the Mitzvos impossibly burdensome. The person becomes a complainer and rebel with a false cause. The solution is simple, though. Listen while learning like HASHEM is talking to YOU, and you will be **plugged in**.