

## Lessons from the Chassidische Parsha

The teachings of the Alter Rebbe in Torah Ohr and Likkutei Torah

# The businessman's mistaken belief

ד"ה מים רבים

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The Great Flood is not just a story from the distant past. It is something that most of us experience in our daily lives.

Chassidus explains that the raging waters of the flood represent the *"Tirdos Haparnasa"*, the preoccupation and perpetual worries over earning our livelihood.

One of the unavoidable realities of life, is that we need to work in order to earn a living. This is not a bad thing. It is a Torah requirement and is part of Hashem's plan for Creation. But even while we engage in our work as Torah requires, we should remain cognisant of two fundamental truths;

Firstly we need to remember that our true purpose in this world is to serve Hashem through Torah and Mitzvos. The work that we do is merely a peripheral necessity; something that we do to enable us to fulfil the true purpose of our lives.

Secondly, we must have absolute *Bitachon* and awareness that Hashem is the source of our *Parnasa*. It is only that He wants us to work for it, to make a "vessel" for His blessings, through the natural mechanisms of the world. If so, there should never be reason to worry or stress.

*Parnasa* – working for our livelihood - is not a problem. But *"Tirdos Haparnasa"* - the preoccupation and worry - is.

Earning a livelihood is not meant to consume us. But the pursuit of *Parnasa* can become a flood that consumes our minds, headspace and takes over our lives. Preoccupation, overthinking, overworking and stressing, are signs that we are struggling against the waves.

Not only do these worries affect our spiritual health, they can also take their toll on our physical health. It is also entirely questionable whether the extra worry and preoccupation will even leave us better-off or get us ahead.

Nonetheless, even when we face this struggle and are plagued by the concerns of earning-a-living, we can still use this situation to lift us up to greater spiritual heights.

The Alter Rebbe connects this message to the verse in Shir Hashirim "Many waters would not be able to quench love, and rivers would not drown it". This refers to the Neshama's deep love and yearning for closeness to Hashem.

The Posuk teaches us that even when the Neshama descends down into our earthly reality, plunged into the turbulent waters of 'making a buck' and the constant flow of thoughts of material concerns, these many waters cannot extinguish the

Neshama's love and connection to Hashem.

On the contrary, not only do the "many waters" not extinguish the love, they can become a catalyst to elevate the Neshama to a far greater level than it would have been able to otherwise reach. How so?

There is an advantage of light that comes through the darkness and a deep level of desire that can only be elicited from the distance. This is why the Neshama comes down into the world. Through the challenges and distance created by being in this world, the Neshama can reach levels of love for Hashem that would be unattainable up in Gan Eden.

In the world of *Parnasa*, the businessman, with open-eyes and an open-mind, is presented with many opportunities to see Hashem's hand. They can channel these reflections into a powerful meditation in Davening that reveals the fiery desire of their soul to escape the darkness of the worldly reality and connect to Hashem.

In Hebrew, the Ark is called the *Teivah*. *Teivah* also means a word, referring to the words of *Tefillah* - prayer. The waters of the Flood lifted the *Teivah* up. So too, the waters of worries about *Parnasa*, when channelled into our *Kavana* in Davening, lift up our Prayers with greater feeling.

The Alter Rebbe writes; "This is the mistake of the businessmen. They think that they are incapable of davening as powerfully as those who sit and learn Torah all day, isolated from the worries of the world. The opposite is true! They are capable of davening on an even greater level, because they have the advantage of the light that comes from the darkness".

The Prophet refers to the waters of the Flood as *Mei Noach* (the waters of Noach). *Noach* means both rest and pleasure. In general this is the experience of Shabbos. The three times we daven each day are a micro-Shabbos, a period of rest and respite from the turbulence of life. They are also a source of spiritual pleasure.

Through Davening, we can reveal the true purpose of the *Mei Hamabul*, the waters of the Flood; that they are really *Mei Noach*, that bring out the deepest love of the Neshama, bringing rest and pleasure.

Whether we let the waters overwhelm us, or whether we ride the waves and let them raise us to greater spiritual heights, is in our hands. Let's not make the businessman's mistake that the Alter Rebbe describes.