

# Kindert Torah

בס"ד

## Parashas Noach

### Endless Mercy

**A** bba, we have an interesting homework assignment, today."

"What is it, Avi?"

"We have to learn the *peirushim* (explanations) on the subject of the water of the *mabul* (flood)."

"Just the water?"

"Yes, Abba, just the water. The assignment has my curiosity going. After all, water is water. What is there to say about it?"

"That is an interesting point, Avi. Let us think about this for a moment. Water is usually a very good thing. It comes down from *shomayim* in the form of rain and brings blessing to the world. It is called '*geshem*,' which is the root word for '*gashmius*' – the food, clothing, and shelter, etc. that take care of our physical needs. It is interesting to note that Hashem turned this wonderful source of blessing into a powerful destructive force that wiped out life on this planet."

"It is a bit surprising, Abba."

"Now, let's have a look around the *meforshim*, Avi. The *Keli Yakar* (Bereshis 6:17) expounds on the words of our sages, explaining the relationship between the crime that sealed the fate of the generation (*gezel* – stealing), and the method of destruction (floodwaters). Honest people use only their own possessions. Hashem gives them their own *parnassa* (livelihood); they do not take from others. Dishonest people steal. What is stealing? Entering someone's yard, home, pocket, place of business, or bank account, and taking away his belongings. You cross the border between 'yours' and 'his.'

**G** *ishmei bracha* – rain waters that bring blessing to the earth – are created and fall in a very orderly fashion. Each one falls in its own place, not one crosses the border into another's spot. Their behavior mirrors that of honest people, each one keeping to his own. However, when the *dor ha'mabul* (generation of the flood) committed the crime of stealing by entering each other's place and taking their possessions, so too the rain drops all crossed boundaries, mixed together, and created a flood."

"Fascinating, Abba."

"The *Medrash Rabba* (Bereshis 31:12) mirrors this point. When the rain fell, it was called '*mayim*' (water). It was still '*gishmei bracha*.' 'Nothing bad comes down from above' (*Medrash Rabba* 51:3). Only when it reached the earth did it become a '*mabul*.' The word '*mabul*' is from the word '*bilbul*' – confusion. The waters came and jumbled everything up. We see that the sins of man took the good rain and turned it into the destructive flood."

"What a tragedy!"

"Yes, Avi."

"Why do you suppose the judgment was carried out in this way, Abba? Hashem could have sent fire or earthquakes to destroy the world."

"*Rashi* (on Bereshis 7:12) touches on your question, Avi. Hashem was merciful in His punishment. The water fell as rain. If the *dor ha'mabul* would have recognized their sins and done *teshuvah*, it would have remained *gishmei bracha*. They persisted in their evil ways, however, not taking the opportunity, and so Hashem turned it into a *mabul*."

"Hashem is so kind."

**Y** es, Avi. *Rabbeinu Bechaye* (on Bereshis 7:11) states this clearly. Hashem is very reluctant to bring punishment to the world. He gives many warnings and chances to do *teshuvah*. If all else fails, and there is no other alternative, He has no choice but to bring plague and devastation. We can add that it causes Him a great amount of *tsorus* (suffering), so to speak. Just as a father is pained when his child suffers, so too our Father in Heaven is distressed when we, His *kinderlach*, have to suffer. Therefore, we should take the hint before it is too late. We should do *teshuvah* amidst blessing and good times. Then the destruction will not have to come."



### Up The Down Escalator

**I** mma, thank you for bringing us to this shopping mall."

"You're welcome *kinderlach*. The store that we want is on the second floor. Let us go up the escalator over there."

*Chani and Shoshie go up the "up" escalator. But Moishie, always the playful one runs up the "down" escalator. He arrives at the top panting and out of breath.*

"Moishie, you really came up the hard way."

"Imma, that is what life is all about."

**W** e have spoken about the virtues of raising our *ruchnius* (spiritual) level. Noach

was a *tsaddik* who accomplished this. We may think that when we have reached a higher level we can relax and take it easy. After all, we have accomplished something truly great. *Rav Moshe Aharon Stern zt"l* explains that life is like walking up a down escalator. There is no standing still. If a person stops pressing upwards, he will slip downwards. Noach was a *tsaddik*, who was saved while his whole generation was destroyed. He toiled without sleep for an entire year, feeding all of

the animals inside the ark. When he left the ark, he planted a vineyard, picked the grapes, made wine, and became drunk. The verse states, "*Vayachel Noach*" (Bereshis 9:20). Noach's spiritual level fell. He was now called "A man of the land" (Bereshis 9:20). He was not going forward, therefore he went backward.

*Kinderlach . . .*

*We are now beginning school again. Do you remember the wonderful levels we reached during the Yomim Noraim? How we cried to Hashem in our prayers? Can you still feel the intense happiness that we all felt during Succos, when we sat in the shade of the Shechina? Who can forget how we danced our feet off on Simchas Torah? Now we are back to our school routines. Do not let yourselves slip down, *kinderlach*. Hang on to the spiritual accomplishments that you have achieved. Keep running up that down escalator.*

Parasha Questions:

- What was Nimrod's lineage? (10:6-9)
- What is the lineage from Shem to Ezer? (10:21-24)
- Why did Hashem go down (so to speak) to see the tower of Babel? (*Rashi* 11:5)

*Kinderlach . . .*

*We learn many lessons from the floodwaters of Noach, all of them showing different aspects of Hashem's mercy. Firstly, He sends His blessings down from heaven in the form of rain. The drops bring the *gashmius*, which provides *parnassa* to each and every living thing. Rain is wonderful! We should all be content with Hashem's blessings! Those who are not, and turn to stealing, cross into another's property and take what is not theirs. When the entire *dor ha'mabul* was guilty of this, Hashem turned the blessing of rain into a flood, which jumbled everything into a massive annihilation. However, even this punishment was merciful, because Hashem gave them many chances to realize their mistake and do *teshuvah*. Therefore, we must appreciate the abundant blessings of the Merciful Provider. When we err, we must take the opportunities that He provides to do *teshuvah*. In this way, we have mercy on Him (so to speak), and give Him endless *nachas ruach*.*

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