



RABBI ASAF AHARON PRISMAN

GUEST DVAR TORAH

From Chaos to Closeness: How to Embrace Challenges as Hashem's Love

The Torah describes the flood of Noach as a natural event: “All the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened” (*Bereishis* 7:11). No explicit mention of Hashem’s action is made. However, the destruction of Sodom is directly attributed to Him: “Hashem rained down sulfur and fire upon Sodom and Amora” (*Bereishis* 19:24). Why the difference?

THE WITHDRAWAL OF DIVINE PRESENCE

The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that the greatest punishment is Hashem withdrawing His presence. Normally, Hashem sustains the world through nature. When a society becomes utterly corrupt, Hashem ceases to

guide it, allowing chaos to take over. The generation of the flood was so degenerate that Hashem withdrew, and the world collapsed into destruction.

Sodom, while sinful, did not reach that level. Hashem remained involved, actively destroying them rather than passively letting nature take its course. This distinction shows that Hashem’s presence, even in punishment, is a sign of connection.

CHALLENGES AS DIVINE GUIDANCE

The serpent’s punishment in Gan Eden reflects this idea. It was cursed to “eat dust” (*Bereishis* 3:14). At first glance, this seems a prize rather than a punishment. However, based on the concept mentioned above, this is the biggest punishment, symbolizing detachment from Hashem’s care rather than deprivation. Similarly, the Gemara (*Berachos* 5a) teaches that challenges are signs of Hashem’s engagement in our lives, like a parent guiding a child. Rather than being abandoned, difficulties indicate Hashem’s presence, shaping our spiritual growth.

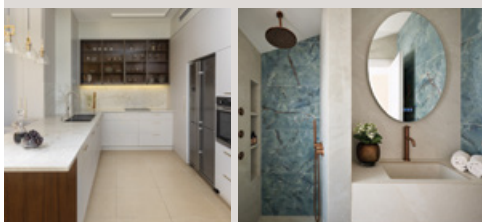
PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

Hardships are not punishments but reminders of Hashem’s presence. They

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challenge us to grow and forge a closer relationship with Him. Instead of feeling abandoned, recognize adversity as a sign of Divine guidance, an opportunity to strengthen your connection with Hashem.

NOT JUST A STORY: THE STUCK NIGGUN

Shmuel Rosenberg sat at his dining room table, his head in his hands. His voice was hoarse, barely above a whisper. He had tried tea, honey, and every *segulah* people suggested, but with Yom Kippur only two days away, it was clear—he would not be able to lead *Kol Nidrei*.

He had been the chazzan for ten years. Every year, he stood before the *kehillah*, his voice soaring, carrying their *tefillos* straight to *Shamayim*. And now? He could barely croak out a *berachah*.

His wife, Miriam, set a cup of tea in front of him. “Shmuel, maybe Hashem wants you to daven differently this year.”

“How?” he asked bitterly. “A chazzan needs a voice.”

Their five-year-old daughter, Esty, climbed onto his lap. “Tatty, can you sing me a song?”

Shmuel smiled weakly. “Tatty’s voice is broken, *mein kind*.”

“But you don’t need to be loud,” she said, swaying side to side. “You just have to sing.” And then, softly, she started humming.

Shmuel’s breath caught. It was an old *niggun*, one he hadn’t heard in years—his *zeydi*’s *niggun*. His grandfather had sung it on Yom Kippur when Shmuel was a child, his voice trembling with emotion.

Closing his eyes, Shmuel hummed along, his voice barely there but full of feeling.

The next night, as he stepped up to the *amud*, the silence in the shul was heavy. He took a deep breath. Instead of pushing for

strength, he let the *niggun* carry him. His voice was soft, cracked—but the *kehillah* leaned in, hanging on to every note.

As the tune swelled, something happened. The *tzibbur* picked it up. First one voice, then another, until the entire shul was singing together, louder and stronger than any solo voice could ever be.

And at that moment, Shmuel understood; Hashem didn’t need his power. He needed his heart. ■

Rabbi Asaf Aharon Prisman, author of “Prism of Torah” and host of the weekly podcast under the same name, cultivated his unique Torah perspective through studies at Toronto’s Yeshivat Or Chaim and several prestigious Israeli yeshivas. Now based in Ramat Beit Shemesh, he combines his roles as an author, podcaster, and a Ram at Yeshivat Ateres Yaakov where he gives the daily daf yomi shiur & gives personalized Gemara tutoring, where he makes profound Torah concepts accessible to all.