

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

ד"ה מים רבים תשכ"ה מוגה

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ESCAPING THE FLOOD - INTO THE WORD

KING SOLOMON TELLS US IN *SONG OF SONGS* THAT ‘MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH love, and rivers cannot wash it away’². Rabbi Shneur Zalman in his book *Torah Or*³ applies this to the struggle to pray with deep devotion, what is called in Chabad ‘the service of Prayer’. The ‘many waters’ are the pressures or worries about making a living and other aspects of daily life in the physical world. But despite these ‘many waters’, the love for G-d of the Divine Soul is still present in the heart⁴. The task of each individual is to reveal it.

In fact the expression of this love can be even more forceful because it has to overcome concealment in order to be felt. Just as a stream breaks through a dam with extra force, so the love which breaks through one's focus on daily concerns is more intense.

How does one rescue oneself from the ‘many waters’? Like Noah being rescued from the Flood - we enter the Ark. In Hebrew, the word for Ark is *Teyvah*, and another meaning for this term is ‘word’. The Baal Shem Tov tells us that we are saved from our private Flood by entering the words of Torah Study and prayer⁵. This discourse by the Rebbe focuses on Prayer.

¹ Maamar Mayim Rabim 5725 (1964). Edited by the Rebbe and published in Dvar Malchus for Parshas Noach 5776 and 5783. This was a ‘Maamar said as a Sicha’ in 1964, and was printed *mugah* (checked by the Rebbe) in *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 5 p.288 ff.

² Song of Songs 8:7

³ Beginning of section on Noah in *Torah Or*.

⁴ And also, the love of G-d for the individual Jew, and for the Jewish people as a whole, can never be extinguished.

⁵ Keter Shem Tov, 2004, Hosafot, sec. sec.9 (sec. 8 in older edition).

The opportunity to express this love in normative Jewish life is during prayer. While both Awe and Love are important for each individual, Prayer is the ideal medium through which to express one's love⁶. As the Zohar says: 'there is no service like the service of love'. During the rest of the day, we also need the input of Awe, in order to keep us on the right path in our thoughts, speech and action. But during prayer we have the opportunity to arouse the emotion of love of the Divine.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman states that business people often make the error of thinking that they cannot engage in intensive prayer, contrasting themselves with people whose daily lives are in the world of Torah study. On the contrary, he says, they can pray with even greater intensity. However, as he explains in a letter printed in Tanya⁷, since during the week they are too busy, the time for them to focus with greater intensity on prayer is on Shabbat. Then they have no business pressures, and should put full concentration and spiritual effort into prayer, to make it a true expression of one's love for the Divine.

The Rebbe adds that there is an important concept 'he who makes the effort on the eve of Shabbat [ie during the weekdays] will eat on Shabbat'⁸. If we apply this to the concept of prayer, it means a little bit of effort needs to be made on prayer during the week, even for the businessman. Since he does not have time for lengthy prayer, let this at least be prayer with greater concentration. And the Rebbe goes on to say, if he is praying with greater concentration - let him also add a little bit extra time.

If this is true for the fully pre-occupied businessman, how much more is it true for those whose main occupation is study of Torah! They should certainly put effort into their daily prayer, making it a true expression of love.

The Hebrew text of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's words employs the plural: 'men of businesses', and 'men of tents'. We can understand that 'businesses' can be plural, for a person may be involved in many different business concerns. What about the plural 'tents'?

This term relates to the words about Jacob, that he 'dwelt in tents'⁹. Rashi explains that this meant he was studying Torah (unlike Esau, who was 'a man of the field'), and the tents were the Tent of Shem and the Tent of Eber¹⁰. The

⁶ Other texts emphasise also the importance of Awe as part of one's approach to prayer, together with love, such as Tanya ch.41. But in this discourse the focus is on love.

⁷ Tanya, Iggeret Hakodesh, sec.1.

⁸ Avodah Zarah 3a.

⁹ Gen.25:27 Toledot

¹⁰ The son and great-great grandson of Noah. The Sages describe their 'tents' as an early form of Yeshivah, where Jacob studied. The Sages understand the Torah as eternal, and accessible to certain great individuals

Rebbe explains that the Tent of Shem means the Tent of the Written Torah, because the Written Torah consists of Divine Names¹¹ (*shem* means Name), and the Tent of Eber means the Oral Torah¹².

There are different levels of study of Torah. Some people are able to study both the Written and the Oral Torah, while others study only one aspect. The same idea applies in the study of Chassidic teaching, which promotes intensity and meaning in Prayer. One kind of person is only on the level of the ‘Written Torah’ as regards studying Chassidic teachings: he or she simply says the words. For even if one does not understand their meaning, one fulfils the Mitzva of study of Torah by reading the Written Torah, even if one does not understand it¹³. Higher is the approach of the student on the level of ‘Oral Torah’, in which one understands the ideas expressed in Chassidic teachings, and can express them in one’s own words.

Both these students, says the Rebbe, have the duty to engage in intensive prayer. And from that they will reach ‘L-rd, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praise’¹⁴, their prayer will flow of itself, in expression of love of the Divine, and similarly their Torah study will flow of itself, and will express the idea that when a person studies Torah, each word is repeated by G-d Himself¹⁵.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

even before it was given at Sinai and subsequently written down.

¹¹ See Nachmanides’ Introduction to his commentary on the Torah.

¹² ‘Eber’ relates to a text in II Kings 4:9, *over aleinu* referring to Elisha visiting the home of the Shunamite woman. The Prophet coming to her home is like a spiritual revelation, compared to the way the Oral Torah reveals the meaning of the Written Torah. Hence the ‘Tent of Eber’ refers to study of the Oral Torah.

¹³ Hence one makes the blessings on the study of Torah even if one does not understand it (in the morning prayers, and also when one is called up to the Torah). See Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s *Laws of Torah Study* end of ch.2.

¹⁴ Ps.51:17. This verse introduces the Amidah prayer.

¹⁵ See Succah 38b, and Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s *Torah Or Yitro* 67b.