

In the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month... all the fountains of the great deep burst forth; and the windows of the heavens were opened. (7:11)

Someone who does not know (or refuses to know) the truth could read about the commencement of the Flood as if it were a natural phenomenon that went awry and destroyed the world's population. Nowhere does the Torah mention that Hashem choreographed everything that occurred. Indeed, during the destruction of Sodom and Amorah, the Torah writes that Hashem rained fire on the city. Why is Hashem's Name not mentioned in connection with the Flood? It was the greatest and most devastating punishment in the history of mankind; everything was obliterated. Yet, we do not see Hashem's hand.

The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that Hashem implemented two forms of punishment. (Hashem actually punishes the sinner in various ways, through various agents.) The punishment of *hashlachah*, being thrown away (so to speak), is by far the worst. It is as if Hashem removes His Divine Providence and leaves the sinner to the elements – without Heavenly protection. This is what *David HaMelech* meant when he beseeched Hashem, *Al tashlicheini Milfanecha*; “Cast me not away from Your Presence” (*Tehillim* 51:13).

At times, parents are compelled to punish their children. This punishment will present itself in various manners consistent with the offense. Heaven help the child whose parents say, “We do not care. Do what you want. We are no longer interested in you.” Obviously, in order to descend to such a sorry relationship, the child must have acted beyond egregiously. The parents punished: At first, it was with basic discipline. Then, it reached a point at which basic punishment no longer served as a deterrent. This was followed by more serious disciplinary action -- until the dam broke, and the parents raised up their hands and said, “Enough is enough. We can no longer deal with you. You are on your own.” (Obviously, this paper is not the forum for discussing the parents' actions. Parents should never give up on their child, but ... things happen. People snap and, at some point, they can no longer tolerate their child's impudence and the havoc he/she is creating.

Mahapeichas Sodom, the destruction that Hashem wrought against Sodom and Amorah, was not the result of a *charon af*, anger, such as precipitated the punishment of the generation of the Flood. The sins which the Sodomites perpetrated were reprehensible, but they were focused on their community. It was not a total societal breakdown of such gigantic proportion as the sins that brought about an end to society. Thus, Hashem “took pity” on them and punished them in a manner that was consistent with their sin.

The *dor ha'mabul*, generation of the Flood, received the ultimate punishment of being abandoned, which is much more severe than any physical or tangible consequences. When Hashem removes His Divine Providence and support, the person is left to face the consequences of his actions alone. This applies in a practical sense as well. When one's community or loved ones abandon

him (because one's behavior has become so iniquitous that it poisons his relationship with others), he loses the support system that has provided guidance and correction. This sadly leads to a profound sense of isolation and despair. Once the person is cut off, his ability to contribute meaningfully to the community that was once his home is removed. He no longer "exists." This is especially painful in tight-knit families where support and connection are highly valued.

We must remember that people have a breaking point, and, if it is reached, it is difficult to find a way to return and be accepted. One can burn just so many bridges. The fallout that results drives the offender to increased stress and anxiety, to the point that he lashes out at those whom he feels should not have given up on him. Sadly, he sees only his own side of the story and fails to acknowledge the pain and despair he has caused to others. Unfortunately, we have no easy way to navigate this problem, other than making every attempt to nip it in the bud.