

SOMETHING AS FLUID AS THE NILE RIVER!

by Rabbi Label Lam

So said HASHEM, "With this you will know that I am HASHEM." Behold, I will smite with the staff that is in my hand upon the water that is in the Nile, and it will turn to blood. (Shemos 7:20)

And it will turn to blood: Because the no rain falls in Egypt and the Nile rises and irrigates the land, the Egyptians worshipped the Nile River, and therefore their deity was hit first and then afterwards they were hit. – Rashi

Rashi explains why the Nile River was chosen as the first target for Makos. Because the Egyptians relied on the Nile River and worshipped it, it was stricken first. This gives a window into an important dynamic that affects each of us and in every part of our lives.

The Chovos HaLevavos spells out the mechanics of how BITACHON- trust in G-d works. There are three important steps. Firstly, he states that it is impossible for a person be free from worry unless he relies upon HASHEM.

Secondly he explains that if someone doesn't trust in HASHEM he is by default trusting in something else, be- it wealth, good looks, a glib tongue, brains, brawn, popularity, or even Uncle Sam.

Thirdly, he clarifies that if someone is relying on something other than HASHEM, HASHEM takes their prompt and leaves them in the limited hands of that thing that they are putting their trust in. I realize that all this needs an explanation.

What does it mean to rely on something other than HASHEM? I have a model from Jewish Law. Hallacha states that while someone is praying it is forbidden for him to lean on a table or for example a common lectern- shtender.

We see very often in shuls and Yeshivas across the planet that people who Daven have shtenders planted before them. What then is the standard for leaning on it?

The person should estimate that if the lectern would be suddenly taken away would they be able to stand normally or would they become destabilized? If the sudden disappearance would cause the person to fall down then they were relying on it. I can have money in my pocket or in the bank but I must imagine how I would function if G-d forbid it would suddenly disappear. That could be the standard for relying. We can possess all these good things but at the same time recognize that they were sent by HASHEM.

There was a wealthy fellow who helped us out a few times and each time I was careful to thank him

by calling him an angel and reminding him that HASHEM always sends me angels. I am glad the blessing and support for this project came through his agency. Not him alone but through his agency.

If someone relies on something or someone other than HASHEM they are in a vulnerable situation. HASHEM says, so to speak, "Let us see how far money can get you or good looks, or an advanced degree, or a certain political party. They are limited and frail and anyone who threatens their existence is a personal threat to the one relying on it. The defense of that "thing" becomes the task of life. It takes on a form of worship! How is my 410K doing? How's my pension? There's the tension!

Where did the Chovos Levavos get these ideas? Were they mined from the fertile imagination of a philosophical mind or were they fished out of something as fluid as the Nile River!?