



# G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Noach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### The Retrospective Clarity on Perplexing Inequities

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1. Gemara: The devoutly righteous perished in the Great Flood due to the exactness of justice.
2. No person has a perfect record.
3. Noach survived; he found special favor in the eyes of G-d.
4. Midrash: "Antecedents bring merit to the latter and the latter bring merit to the antecedents."
5. Noach – because of his children: Shem, Cham, and Yefes.
6. Prophets: Yaakov redeemed Avraham.
7. Avraham was unscathed from fiery the kiln; Yaakov had to be born to father the Jewish People.
8. Objective of Existence: the Torah and the Jewish People.
9. The Jewish People descend from Shem, son of Noach.
10. Noach found special favor because of his value: fathering Shem.
11. G-d did not destroy the families who built the Tower of Babel – for Shem.
12. Ramchal: "The evil succeed and have it good," the possibility exists of a devoutly righteous descendant.
13. Sancherev's descendants were Shamaya and Avtalyon the teachers of Shamai and Hillel.

### Assuming New Personas to Address the Needs Of Existence

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1. No words are superfluous in the Torah: each has an intent.
2. In the first verse of the portion Noach is mentioned three times.
3. Midrash: Noach was an individual who lived in three eras.
4. When the world was in a settled state, a destroyed state and in a rebuilt state.
5. Mentioning Noach three times indicates that he is the equivalent of 3 individuals.
6. The period before the Great Flood was G-d's original creation.
7. Noach was given the responsibility to bring mankind to repentance.
8. During the state of destruction, he had to care for all living species in the ark to guarantee their existence.
9. After the flood, his responsibility was to set forth the perspective and directive of a new existence.
10. The new world functioned on a minimized level.
11. In each era, it was the same person who transitioned into another level of responsibility; to succeed he had to assume another persona.



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### Weely Video: Surviving The Great Flood Albeit Imperfect

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### Not Vulnerable Yet Incomplete

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1. Noach brings sacrifices upon leaving the ark.
2. G-d accepts: "I will no longer curse the earth because man is inclined to evil from the time of his birth."
3. Gemara: Man is inclined to evil from the time he is cast from his mother's womb.
4. The unborn is not susceptible.
5. The child is not yet fully developed.
6. If one lives his life as one who is not complete and so not yet fully invested in Torah and Mitzvos, he will not be subject to the evil inclination.
7. He is living his life as if he is not yet completed (spiritually).
8. Rambam: It is possible to live one's life in a continuous mode; the mundane takes on a spiritual value.
9. If one's physical needs such as eating, drinking, and sleeping are for the sake of serving Hashem even the mundane assumes mitzvah value.
10. One who strives for completion until the end will never be subject to the evil inclination.

### When The Mechanism To Process Data Is Impaired

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1. G-d said to Noach: Rain will come upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights and obliterate all that exists.
2. Noach did as G-d commanded him and entered the ark.
3. Noach, his sons, and their wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters.
4. Midrash: Noach was a small believer; he was NOT certain the flood would come until he was forced to enter.
5. He "Did as G-d commanded him" but then reveals it was only because of the floodwaters.
6. For 120 years, Noach told his generation that G-d will bring a flood to destroy existence if they don't repent.
7. On the 120th anniversary of the building of the ark, unlimited species converged on the ark to enter it, and it began to rain.
8. Anyone attempting to destroy the ark was mauled by lions and bears.
9. How did no one repent faced with imminent destruction?
10. Rambam: There is physical illness, and also the spiritual- where the soul is sick.
11. One sees and processes things in a distorted way.
12. Noach and his family heeded G-d because they were not spiritually impaired.



## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Noach



### G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

#### Noach's Qualification as an Ark Builder

The *Torah* states regarding *Noach*, "These are the offspring of *Noach* – *Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations..." After introducing the subject of the progeny of *Noach*, the *Torah* digresses to speak about *Noach's* personal attributes by stating, "*Noach* was a righteous man..." Why does the *Torah* digress and not continue to discuss the progeny of *Noach*? *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain, "When one mentions a devoutly righteous person (*tzaddik*) one must remember him in a context that is for blessing, as King Solomon writes in *Proverbs*, 'Zeicher tzaddik l'veracha – a *tzaddik* should be remembered for blessing.'"

*Ramban* in his commentary asks why did *Noach* need to build an ark that was designed with such a great degree of specification regarding its size and material? Factually, despite the dimension of the ark, with all of its specifications, it could not accommodate all of the species that needed to be contained within it. It is

clear, that the ark was only able to accommodate all of the species only as a result of miracle. If this is so, why did G-d put upon *Noach* the responsibility to build an ark that took him 120 years to complete? G-d could have brought about the ark in an instant.

*Noach's* true objective was to influence his generation to repent in order to prevent the Great Flood from ever occurring. G-d needed to create a setting in which *Noach's* generation would gather and ask him why he was building an ark. It was to be the focal point of curiosity in existence. When asked about the ark, *Noach* responded by saying that if the generation would not repent, G-d would destroy the world by bringing upon it a Great Flood. After the 120-year period, G-d chose to destroy the world with the Great Flood, indicating that *Noach* had failed in his objective.

The *Torah* states at the end of the Portion of *Bereishis*, "When *Noach* was five hundred years old, *Noach* fathered *Shem*, *Cham*, and *Yefes*." In the beginning of the Portion

of *Noach*, the *Torah* once again repeats itself, “*Noach* had begotten three sons: *Shem*, *Cham*, and *Yefes*.” What is the significance of repeating this fact? The *Torah* states, “*Noach* walked with G-d” *Rashi* explains this to mean that *Noach* was only able to succeed in his objective and mission because of G-d’s assistance, which was not so with *Avraham*, our Patriarch.

*Avraham*’s spiritual ascent and advancement evolved without special Divine Assistance. *Sforno* explains the verse, “*Noach* walked with G-d” to mean, that *Noach* was dedicated to espouse G-d’s existence in a pagan world. His initiative and objective was to impact upon his generation to convince them to abandon their evil ways.

*Sforno* continues, “Because *Noach* rebuked and influenced his generation in the ways of G-d, he merited to have children, despite the fact that he was five hundred years old.” The verse in the portion of *Bereishis* only reveals that *Noach* had begotten three sons at the age of five hundred; however, the *Torah* does not allude to the cause or merit that made him worthy to have the children. In the portion of *Noach*, the *Torah* goes to explain the reason that he merited to father three sons. Therefore, when the *Torah* interjects *Noach*’s personal attributes and initiative, it is not a digression from the opening words of the portion, “These are the offspring of *Noach*...” It was only due to his initiative to impact upon his generation in a spiritual context that he merited to have three sons.

*Rambam* writes that when one chooses an individual to rebuke and admonish a community, he should be devoutly righteous from his youth. Why is this so? Even if one had repented and he is currently devoutly righteous, because of his spiritual failings of the past, he is not qualified to rebuke his community. It is because his past negative record will be a hindrance to him and not allow the people to be receptive to his rebuke.

*Chazal* tell us, in a similar context, that people will say to the one rebuking them, “Instead of rebuking us for our failings, why do you not rebuke yourself for your own spiritual shortcomings!” However, if one had been devoutly righteous since his youth, since no one could find fault with him his words will be received.

The *Torah* tells us after stating “these are the offspring of *Noach*” that *Noach* was “devoutly righteous” in order to reveal to us that he was always righteous since his youth. Thus, he merited sons because he was

one qualified to rebuke and admonish his generation (because of his righteousness).

It is interesting to note that at the end of the Portion of *Bereishis*, regarding the birth of *Noach*, the *Torah* states, “*Lamech* lived one hundred and eighty two years, and he begot a son (*vayoled ben*).” *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain, “The *Torah* states he begot a ben (son) to allude to the fact that the future world (post Great Flood) shall be built from him (*Noach*). This is because the word “*ben*” is derived from the word “*binyan* – structure.” *Noach* was the future of existence because he and his family were the only ones to survive the Great Flood. Thus, the *Torah* alludes to the uniqueness of *Noach* from his beginnings by using the word *ben*.

We thus see that when the Portion begins “These are the offspring of *Noach*...” and then states “*Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations...” it is in fact not a digression to address *Noach*’s spiritual status. It is to reveal to us that he only merited to have offspring because of his righteousness which was a prerequisite for him being effective in his objective of rebuking his generation to cause them to repent. If *Noach* was so qualified, why did G-d need to destroy all existence?

The *Mishnah* in Ethics of our Fathers states, “There were ten generations from *Noach* to *Avraham*, to show how great was His patience, for every one of those generations provoked Him continually until *Avraham*, our father, came and received the reward of them all.”

*Rabbeinu Yonah* explains in his commentary, that the world needed a certain level of spiritual correction in order to allow it to continue. Every generation is responsible to spiritually advance the world through its positive choices and thus maintain its existence. The ten generations from *Noach* to *Avraham* failed in their spiritual responsibility to maintain existence. However, *Avraham*, due to his dimension of devoutness, was able to counter their evil ways through his spiritual initiatives. He gave purpose and value to existence, thus meriting the reward for all ten generations that had preceded him. *Noach*’s failure was not only that he was not able to cause his generation to repent, but also he was not able to bring about the necessary level of spiritual correction that the world needed to continue. He thus failed.

## Man's Obliviousness to Spirituality

The Torah tells us that G-d commanded Noah to build an ark that would accommodate all of the species in existence when the Great Flood would come upon the world to destroy it. The ark was to be built to great specifications of size and material based on G-d's instruction. This ark would take *Noach* 120 years to build.

The true purpose and value of this lengthy project was to establish a focal point of attention for the generation to inquire about this unusual phenomenon in which *Noach* was engaged. *Noach* would thus be able to enter into a dialogue with them, which would ultimately lead to rebuke and admonishment that would allow them to understand the catastrophic ramifications of their evil behavior. Every year for 120 years, the members of *Noach's* generation would come and engage with him in the same dialogue regarding the building of the ark and ridicule him for his preposterous behavior.

Before the actual Flood came upon the world, G-d brought about a miracle that caused all the species of the world to flock to the ark. The ark needed to contain within it two of every non-kosher species and seven of every Kosher species. In addition to the animals, all species of birds, reptiles and insects flocked to the ark.

Miraculously, the ark only admitted the species that were of pure pedigree. This event clearly confirmed that the Great Flood that was meant to destroy existence was imminent. Mankind, after witnessing this rather than repenting, they chose to threaten *Noach* that if they were to see him and his family entering into the ark, they would destroy it. G-d told *Noach* that he would enter into the ark in broad daylight and no one will interfere with his entry.

After the ark was filled with all the species of existence, the rains began to fall. What the generation had witnessed until this moment was exactly what *Noach* had forewarned them about for the past 120 years. If they at that moment would have chosen to repent, the rains would have been rains of blessing. However, they did not repent. Consequently, the rains became the rains of destruction and subsequently all existence was destroyed. After *Noach's* rebuke and description of what would transpire if they would not repent, why did they not repent after witnessing the reality of the Flood unfold?

*Ramchal* explains that after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge when evil became intermingled with the essence of man, he became less sensitive to spirituality because he had ingested into his being the essence of evil. He had minimized his spirituality and thus became more physical. Unless one engages in *Torah* study and the performance of *mitzvos* on a qualitative level to become spiritualized, he will remain limited to his physical senses. He will not be able to grasp and internalize the wrong of something that is spiritually debilitating, as we see regarding the ten generations from Adam and *Noach*.

After Adam had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, the world regressed to a degree of depravity and corruption that G-d needed to destroy it. Due to man's evil behavior, even inanimate objects and unintelligible creatures became corrupted. The world had fallen to a level of spiritual entombment that was so great, that man no longer had the capacity to recognize the truth or spirituality. There was no longer any basis for introspection or repentance.

Although *Chazal* tell us the impurity that Adam introduced into the world no longer had relevance to the Jewish people after they received the *Torah* at *Sinai*, they still can become desensitized to spirituality due to their own sins. This is because the more empowered the forces of impurity and evil become in the world, the more difficult it is even for the Jew to have a sense of spiritual matters. This is due to the Jew choosing to live his life by following his physical inclinations.

## The Differentiating Characteristic

Between *Noach* and *Avraham* the *Torah* states, "... *Noach* walked with G-d." *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who differentiate between *Noach* and *Avraham* our Patriarch. The *Midrash* states, "Relative to his generation, *Noach* was devoutly righteous. However, *Noach* needed Divine Assistance and protection in order not to succumb to the influences of the generation. *Avraham*, in contrast, did not need Divine Assistance, but rather, he inwardly was strengthened to advance himself to walk with G-d."

The *Torah* states, "*Noach* was righteous in his generations." Everyone is in agreement that his righteousness was only relative to the generations that he had lived; however had he been in the generation



of *Avraham* he would have been considered to be insignificant. Why did *Noach* need Divine Assistance to maintain and retain his level of piety, while *Avraham* our Patriarch did not? Not only did *Avraham* not need Divine Assistance to protect him from the evil influences of his generation, he was able to continuously advance himself spiritually, which *Noach* did not. Why was this so?

The *Torah* tells us regarding the genealogy that preceded the Flood, that *Noach's* father was *Lemech*, who was righteous and his grandfather was *Mesushelach* who was one of the most devout righteous people who had lived since the beginning of existence. *Mesushelach* merited to live nine hundred and sixty-nine years, which was a length of life that no other human ever merited. When he passed away, G-d delayed the coming of the Great Flood out of respect for *Mesushelach*, to honor his mourning period (seven days). We thus see that *Noach* was born into a family, which was comprised of exceptionally holy and pious individuals— despite the fact that the generation was totally evil.

In contrast, *Avraham*, our Patriarch was born into a pagan world where there was no obvious trace of G-dliness. His father *Terach* was an idolater. Despite being born into a world that was devoid of spirituality and hostile to the concept of monotheism, *Avraham* was motivated to unrelentingly seek out truth in existence at all cost.

The *Midrash* tells us that *Avraham* perceived existence as a great citadel that was illuminated; however, he wanted to know with certainty, “Who is the Master of this citadel?” He continuously pondered this question and engaged in dialogue with the greatest philosophers and theologians of his time and did not receive an answer to his satisfaction. He thus totally invested himself in the quest to come upon the true Master. It was not until G-d revealed Himself to *Avraham* and said, “I am the Master of the citadel.” *Avraham's* ascent in his spirituality to become the patriarch of the Jewish people began with his personal quest for truth to understand who is the Master of the universe.

*Noach*, on the other hand, because he was born into a family who worshipped G-d, his environment in the home was pure. *Noach* valued greatly what he possessed. Because of his understanding of evil, he needed to distance himself from it and advance himself

sufficiently to not be influenced by the evils of his generation. When he believed that his advancement was sufficient he ceased to ascend spiritually. He thus plateaued in the spiritual realm. Because his ascent was not continuous from a thirst of spirituality, he needed special Divine Assistance to protect him from the influences of the world. However, *Avraham's* ascent which was not based on removing himself from the negative (the evils of the world) but rather pursuing holiness (G-d), which is unending, he did not need that special level of Divine Assistance.

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Nidarim* states, “*Torah* comes forth from the children of the poor.” Meaning, children who come from ordinary families, where that father is not a *Torah* scholar, have a greater potential and likelihood of being greater *Torah* scholars than those born into a family of *Torah* scholars. Why is this so?

*Ramban* in his commentary explains that although *Torah* knowledge is not something that is inherited and one needs to apply himself to acquire it, when a child is born into a family of *Torah* scholars he will naturally be less motivated to advance himself because he believes that he is already superior because he is the child of a great *Torah* scholar. Therefore, he does not need to toil with his fullest ability. In contrast, when one is born into an ordinary family, because of the child's understanding of his predicament, that unless he is self-motivated and invests all of his ability in the acquisition of *Torah*, he will not succeed.

The *Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers states, “Who is the wise man? The one who can learn from every person.” *Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that if there is an individual who possesses a great amount of knowledge, but he does not feel that he can learn from others, he is considered to be a fool.

However, if an individual knows nothing, but feels he can learn from everyone, then he is considered to be wise, even before he begins his ascent to great wisdom. It is because the second individual ultimately has the potential to attain an unlimited amount of knowledge and wisdom due to his understanding of the value of applying himself to attain it. Thus, the simple person will be able to come upon many vistas and horizons of knowledge due his appreciation for wisdom.

## The Jewish People, the Equivalent of a New Existence

The *Midrash* tells us that *Noach* needed Divine Assistance to protect and maintain his spirituality, whereas *Avraham* our Patriarch did not need Divine Assistance. Despite the fact that *Avraham* was born into a pagan world in which there was no obvious trace of G-dliness, he advanced his spirituality through his own initiative and unrelenting quest for the truth. Because of this unceasing quest, *Avraham* ascended to become the founding patriarch of the Jewish people despite the fact that he came from a family of pagans.

Until *Avraham* came into existence, G-d was only known as “the G-d of heaven” meaning, He was not known on the terrestrial level. However due to his ability to extract from the unlimited universe what he needed to advance, *Avraham* made G-d a known entity on the terrestrial level. He became known as “The G-d of heaven and earth.” The *Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos* tells us that *Avraham* was the first person to recognize G-d as the Master and thus refer to Him as “*Adni* (Master).” He had come upon this understanding through his own quest for truth.

The *Torah* states in the Portion of *Bereishis* regarding Creation, “*B’Hebarom* – when He (*Hashem*) created them (existence).” *Chazal* tell us that the letters of the word “*B’hebarom*” allude to *Avraham*, our Patriarch *Avraham*. The letters of the word “*B’Hebarom*” when rearranged spell the name “*Avraham*.” *Maharal of Prague* explains that the allusion to *Avraham* through the word “*B’Hebarom*” indicates that he was not a continuation of the previous existence, but rather, he himself was the beginning of a new existence.

Although *Avraham* biologically descended from *Noach*, regarding his spiritual dimension he had no relevance to anything that preceded him. The Jewish people, descending from *Avraham* are thus also a dimension of being that has no relevance to the descendants of *Noach*, who are the nations of the world.

The difference between Creation (*Briya*) and Formation (*Yetzirah*) is that Creation is the process of bringing about something from nothing (ex-nihilo), whereas Formation is the bringing about of something from pre-existing elements. Although only G-d Himself could bring about something ex-nihilo, *Avraham* through

his own initiative precipitated his transformation to a being that was brought about ex-nihilo.

Nothing that had preceded *Avraham* had any relevance to his dimension of spirituality. *Avraham* was born into a pagan world in which G-dliness did not exist. He extracted light from darkness thus introducing G-d into existence singlehandedly. Because *Avraham* was able to bring about something that was the equivalent of ex-nihilo, he merited measure for measure for G-d to make of him a new spiritual creation, which was the equivalent of ex-nihilo.

The *Midrash* asks, “Where do we see that G-d extracts light from darkness? *Avraham* from *Terach*. Where do we see that G-d extracts that which is pure from impurity? The Jewish people from the nations of the world.” Although *Terach*, the father of *Avraham*, was a pagan and evil, *Avraham* his son was the light that was extracted from the darkness because he was devoutly righteous and pure.

The Jewish people, who are pure, were extracted from the nations of the world who are impure. Only G-d is able to extract light from darkness and purity from impurity. However, *Avraham* merited that he and his offspring should be beneficiaries due to his own extraction of light from darkness and truth from falsehood.

## The Jewish People, the Seed of Yaakov

The *Torah* tells us that G-d commanded Adam not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. By eating of the Tree, Adam introduced into his being evil, which until that moment only existed outside of himself. Being the handiwork of G-d, he had no trace of evil within his essence. The objective of his existence was to perfect his essence and thus perfect the world. However, by eating of the Tree, Adam putrefied himself by intermingling evil into his being and thus death was pronounced upon him and all existence.

Throughout the *Torah* we find, that whenever G-d identifies Himself, it is as “The G-d of *Avraham*, the G-d of *Yitzchak*, and the G-d of *Yaakov*.” When *Yaakov* defeated the archangel of *Esav*, he assumed a greater dimension of spirituality and was thus given the name “Israel.” The name “Israel” connotes that *Yaakov* was able to dominate the physical and spiritual realms.

It is known that G-d only identified Himself as “the G-d of Yaakov” after his passing. At that time, it was after he had already assumed the appellation of “Israel.” If so, why does G-d refer to Himself as “the G-d of Yaakov” and not “the G-d of Israel,” which is a quantification of Yaakov’s spirituality?

It is true that Yaakov advanced himself to be classified as “Israel,” which was the culmination of his spiritual ascent; however, it was only within the context of “Yaakov” that he had taken the initiative and made the choices that caused him to become “Israel.” It was “Yaakov” who chose to perfect himself. “Israel” is only a consequence of Yaakov’s spiritual pursuits and achievements. Thus, the name “Yaakov” represents the spiritual potential of the Patriarch, which was the basis for his worthiness to have his relationship with G-d. The name “Israel” represents the actualization of Yaakov’s initial potential.

We recite in the *Amidah* of *Shabbos* (Silent Prayer), “You did not give it (the *Shabbos*) *Hashem*, our G-d to the nations of the lands, nor did You make it the inheritance...of the worshippers of graven idols. And in its contentment the uncircumcised shall not abide – for to Israel, Your people, have you given it with love, to the seed of Yaakov...” We see that the Jewish people are referred to as “the seed of Yaakov” and not the “seed of Israel.” Why is this so?

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* in the Portion of *V'zos HaBeracha* explains that before Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, there was only one tree in the Garden of Eden. It was the Tree of Good. This was Adam himself because he was the source to produce only pure and holy fruit. All the souls that were to come from him were to be completely good. After he ate from the Tree of Knowledge and integrated within himself evil, he produced souls that were tainted with evil.

It was not until *Yaakov*, our Patriarch that the status of the Tree of Good was resorted within him. *Yaakov* was the soul that was brought into existence that was the equivalent of Adam before the sin. This is the reason the *Zohar* and the *Gemara* states, “The semblance and beauty of *Yaakov* had a resemblance to that of Adam.”

Meaning, just as Adam initially radiated with purity so too did *Yaakov* radiate with purity. This is the reason the seed of *Yaakov* was the seed that was chosen by G-d to become His people. With this we are able to explain why G-d refers to Himself as “the G-d of *Yaakov*” and not the “G-d of Israel” because *Yaakov* was born with a special pure soul that was the equivalent of Adam before the sin. He only needed to actualize his potential, which is manifested in the name “Israel.” Since *Shabbos*, as *Chazal* explain is a “semblance of the world to come” which is purely spiritual, it is logical that G-d gave it to “the seed of *Yaakov*” because they emanated from the pure soul of *Yaakov*, which was reminiscent of the initial handiwork of G-d.



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