



# G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Noach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**Weely Video:** The Unique Differentiation Of Noach & Avraham

CLICK TO VIEW!



**Picking Up The Slack To Keep The World Extant**

CLICK TO VIEW!



**Was It By Volition Or Coercion Entering The Ark?**

CLICK TO VIEW!



**Unilateral Empathy Precipitates Conception**

CLICK TO VIEW!



**The Three Disparate Identities Of Noach**

CLICK TO VIEW!



**The Retrospective Clarity on Perplexing Inequities**

CLICK TO VIEW!



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gemara: The devoutly righteous perished in the Great Flood due to the exactness of justice.</li> <li>2. No person has a perfect record.</li> <li>3. Noach survived; he found special favor in the eyes of G-d.</li> <li>4. Midrash: "Antecedents bring merit to the latter and the latter bring merit to the antecedents."</li> <li>5. Noach- because of his children: Shem, Cham, &amp; Yefes.</li> <li>6. Prophets: Yaakov redeemed Avraham.</li> <li>7. Avraham was unscathed from fiery the kiln; Yaakov had to be born to father the Jewish People.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Objective of Existence: the Torah and the Jewish People.</li> <li>9. The Jewish People descend from Shem, son of Noach.</li> <li>10. Noach found special favor because of his value: fathering Shem.</li> <li>11. G-d did not destroy the families who built the Tower of Babel – for Shem.</li> <li>12. Ramchal: "The evil succeed &amp; have it good," the possibility exists of a devoutly righteous descendant.</li> <li>13. Sancherev's descendants were Shamaya and Avtalyon the teachers of Shamai &amp; Hillel.</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

## Assuming New Personas to Address the Needs Of Existence

[CLICK TO VIEW!](#)



1. No words are superfluous in the Torah: each has an intent.
2. In the first verse of the portion Noah is mentioned three times.
3. Midrash: Noah 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 Noah 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. Noah 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.

## Not Vulnerable Yet Incomplete

[CLICK TO VIEW!](#)



1. Noah 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 & 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

[CLICK TO VIEW!](#)



1. G-d said to Noah: Rain will come upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights and obliterate all that exists.
2. Noah did as G-d commanded him and entered the ark.
3. Noah, his sons, and their wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters.
4. Midrash: Noah 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, Noah 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. Noah 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

### Perceiving G-d's Justice

*Torah* regarding Creation: “*Bereishis bara Elokeem ais hashemayim v’ais haaretz* – In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth...”

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: The *Torah* refers to G-d with the appellation of “*Elokeem*.” “*Elokeem*” connotes the Attribute of Justice. This indicates that G-d’s initial intent was to bring about Creation within the context of the Attribute of Justice. Creation was to exist within the context of exacting and precise judgment with no tolerance for any deviation. However, after G-d created man, the *Torah* refers to G-d as “*Hashem Elokeem* (*Hashem* G-d).”

The appellation “*Hashem*” (YKVK) connotes G-d’s Attribute of Mercy. G-d understood that world could not exist within the context of the Attribute of Justice, because Man is prone to fail. He therefore, coalesced His Attribute of Mercy into the Attribute of Justice for the sake of the continuation of existence. Although

the Attribute of Mercy would be in effect it is only to mitigate G-d’s Justice.

*Torah*: After Adam sinned by eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, G-d engaged him in a dialogue regarding his transgression. The appellation that the *Torah* uses continuously throughout this dialogue regarding every aspect of Adam’s behavior and the consequence of his sin is “*Hashem Elokeem*.”

Although death was pronounced upon Adam and Eve and all humanity, and they were driven from the Garden of *Eden*, never to return, G-d demonstrated His Mercy within the context of Justice. Although Adam became subject to death, his life was not taken.

*Torah* after Adam had sinned: “*Hashem Elokeem* called out to man and said to him, ‘Where are you? (*ayeika*)’”

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: G-d called out to Adam in a non-confrontational manner to initiate a calm dialogue with him. The purpose of this was so that he should not be overwhelmed so that he should be able to respond

and ultimately acknowledge his spiritual failing. Adam responded to G-d, "I heard You in the Garden, and was afraid because I am naked so I hid." Adam's admission that he was "naked" was an acknowledgement that he had sinned. Adam's admission to transgression is a demonstration of his advanced spirituality despite his irreparable failing.

However, after *Cain* had killed his brother *Hevel*, which is the first act of murder in existence, the *Torah* states, "*Hashem* said to *Cain*, 'Where is *Hevel* your brother?'" Although *Cain* had committed murder, G-d chose to approach him in a gentle manner so that he should not be overwhelmed. G-d wanted to give *Cain* the opportunity to admit that he sinned. By asking *Cain* "Where his *Hevel*?..." G-d gave him the opportunity to repent. *Cain* however processed G-d's question to mean that G-d was not aware of everything in existence. If G-d were truly the Omnipotent, All Knowing One, why would He ask such a question. *Cain* therefore replied, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Based on *Cain*'s response to G-d's question, it is a clear indication that he did not possess the spiritual capacity of his father Adam.

Unlike Adam, *Cain* believed that G-d could be deceived. It is because of *Cain*'s deficient spiritual level that the appellation of G-d "*Hashem* (YKVK)" is used in this dialogue. The appellation "*Elokeem*" is not mentioned because *Cain* needed the most advanced level of Mercy.

Despite G-d's overwhelming level of Mercy towards *Cain*, he chose not to repent, but rather the *Torah* states, "*Cain* left the Presence of *Hashem*..."

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: Although *Cain* walked away in a humble manner, he believed that he could deceive G-d. In his heart, he did not want to be associated with G-d to any degree.

*Torah* regarding the generation of the Great Flood: "*Hashem* (YKVK) saw that the wickedness of Man was great upon the earth..." Because of the level of evil that had pervaded existence, G-d demonstrated His ultimate level of Mercy towards mankind. He granted mankind a 120-year reprieve to repent and correct their ways. If mankind were to repent, G-d would not destroy existence; however, if they would not, He would bring about the Great Flood. If there would have been any association of the appellation "*Elokeem*," because of their degree of evil, the world would have been destroyed immediately. G-d thus interacted with existence only within the context of *Hashem* (YKVK) to allow mankind to repent.

*Torah* in *Noach*: "G-d (*Elokeem*) said to *Noach*, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery...'" This statement being communicated to *Noach* is prior to the 120-year period which G-d gave mankind to repent. It was in this period that *Noach* built the Ark. It is interesting to note that at the end of the Portion of *Bereishis* when G-d offered the 120 year reprieve for mankind to repent, the appellation of "*Hashem* (YKVK) is used; however in the Portion of *Noach* which addresses the identical period of time, the appellation of "*Elokeem*," indicating the Attribute of Justice, is used. How do we reconcile the two references of G-d within the same context?

At the end of the Portion of *Bereishis*, the appellation "*Hashem* (YKVK)" is used by the *Torah* to indicate that even within the context of G-d's Mercy one is only given the opportunity to continue if there is hope that he will repent and change his ways. However if after the 120-year reprieve the generation of the Flood will not repent, even the Attribute of Mercy will be in agreement that Justice must be served. This is demonstrated by the reference of "*Elokeem*" in the Portion of *Noach*. As it states, "The end of all flesh has come before Me..."

Mercy is only in effect if it has relevance to correction. Thus, in the Portion of *Noach*, the *Torah* uses the appellation of "*Elokeem*" to emphasize the Attribute of Justice. Mercy is only evoked when there is a possibility of repentance. For example, the *Torah* states regarding the destruction of *Sodom*, "So *Hashem* (YKVK) said, 'Because the outcry of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* has become great and because their sin has been very grave. I will descend and see: if they act in accordance with its outcry – then destruction!..."

The evil of *Sodom* was so intense, that even the Attribute of Mercy was in agreement that they should be destroyed. The communities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* had declined to such a level of evil that they could no longer repent. They had become a personification of evil. After being informed by G-d that He was going to destroy *Sodom*, *Avraham* began to supplicate Him that in the merit of the righteous He should be Merciful. He said to G-d that perhaps there are fifty righteous people in *Sodom* and in their merit *Sodom* should not be destroyed. Ultimately, *Avraham* requested that *Sodom* should be spared if there were ten righteous people. However, there were not ten righteous people in *Sodom*.

*Chazal*: *Avraham* was concerned that if G-d would destroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, the nations of the world would

say that just as G-d had destroyed the righteous together with the evil in the Great Flood so too did He destroy the communities of *Sodom* and *Gomorra*. They would thus conclude that G-d does not differentiate between the righteous and the evil. *Avraham* was concerned that if this would be the perception of mankind, it would be a desecration of His Name. After G-d said that there were not ten righteous people in *Sodom*, *Avraham* ceased to supplicate Him. How was it possible that the world would understand and appreciate the evil of *Sodom* and thus understand that they were not deserving to exist?

*Torah*: When the angels came to *Sodom*, they were invited by *Lot* to be his guests in his home.

*Torah*: "The *Sodomites* converged upon the house, from young to old, all the people of every quarter..." *Sforno* explains that since the entire community of *Sodom* (from the youngest to the oldest) surrounded the house of *Lot* and demanded that he give over his guests to them to be sodomized and killed, it was a public confirmation that there was no devoutly righteous among them. Thus, *Avraham's* concern regarding the destruction of *Sodom* would no longer be an issue.

## Noach's Preferential Status

*Midrash* citing a verse from *Ecclesiastes*: "King Solomon writes, 'G-d favors the pursued.' *Reb Hunah* says in the name of *Reb Yosef*, 'In the future G-d will demand the blood of the pursued from their pursuers. Even if it was a *tzaddik* (righteous) had pursued another *tzaddik*. Even if a *rasha* (evil person) pursued another *rasha*. Even if a *rasha* pursued a *tzaddik*, G-d will favor the pursued..., G-d favors the pursued.' Where do we find the application of this concept in the *Torah*? We find that *Hevel* was pursued by *Cain*. As a result of being the pursued, G-d favored the offering of *Hevel* and rejected the offering that was brought by *Cain*."

*Torah*: Regarding the offerings of *Cain* and *Hevel*, "*Cain* brought an offering to *Hashem* of the fruit of the ground and *Hevel* brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest. *Hashem* turned to *Hevel* and to his offering, but to *Cain* and to his offering, He did not turn..." It seems from the narrative that G-d turned to the offering of *Hevel* because it was from the choicest of his flock, as the *Torah* reveals the quality of his offering. However, *Cain* because he had brought an offering that was from the dregs of the earth (flax plant) it was rejected.

The *Midrash* clearly indicates that it was not due to the physical quality of the offering that G-d favored *Hevel's* sacrifice, but rather it was because he was pursued by his brother *Cain*. Thus, he found favor in the eyes of G-d. If in fact the quality of *Hevel's* offering was considered to be special and superior, why do *Chazal* choose to attribute the acceptance of his sacrifice being pursued rather than the degree of reverence for G-d that was demonstrated through the quality of his sacrifice?

*Rabbeinu Bachya*: The reason *Hevel* was vulnerable to *Cain's* attack, despite the fact that G-d had accepted his offering, was because there was a claim against him. If in fact the bringing of a sacrifice is an expression of subservience and being beholding to G-d for all that He provides, why did *Hevel* not initiate the bringing of the sacrifice? It was only after he had seen that *Cain* brought his sacrifice that *Hevel* was motivated to do the same. This criticism of delay was the basis for him becoming a victim of his brother's jealousy. Based on *Rabbeinu's Bachya's* understanding of *Hevel's* failing, we are able to understand why the quality of his sacrifice was not sufficient, in its own right, for G-d to embrace it. His offering was accepted because he was pursued by his brother.

*Torah* at the end of *Bereishis*: "But *Noach* found favor in the eyes of G-d."

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: At the time of the Great Flood the most intense level of Divine Justice was in effect. Only the most perfect of creation would be able to withstand this level of Justice. However, there was no such individual in existence. If so, why did *Noach* survive?

*Gemara*: It was because "*Noach* found favor in the eyes of G-d." What did *Noach* possess to be seen as special by G-d, that he should merit His favor and not be destroyed?

*Midrash*: "*Noach* was pursued by the members of his generation. As a result of this, *Noach* was favored by G-d as it states, '*Noach* found favor in the eyes of G-d.'" Why does G-d favor the pursued? One may think that if one is pursued, G-d's Mercy will be evoked because of the individual's helpless and precarious state. However, the *Midrash* tells us that even if an evil person pursues another evil person, G-d will favor the pursued. Evidently, even if one is not worthy in his own right, because of his pursued status, he will find favor in the eyes of G-d.

When one is in a pursued state one is unceasingly and relentlessly hounded by his pursuer. He does not have the ability to escape or to extricate himself from his predicament. The pursued comes to an understanding that he has exhausted all means of survival. He has no place to seek refuge. In this state of mind, when one realizes that he has no place to turn, one turns to G-d for salvation from his plight. When one realizes that there is no one other than G-d to rely upon, one naturally turns to Him for help and internalizes the reality of his predicament. The depth of this realization establishes a special bond and intimacy between the pursued and G-d. This is the basis for G-d favoring the pursued, regardless of his spiritual classification.

## **Noach, The Equivalent of Three People**

*Torah*: “These are the offspring of *Noach* – *Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; *Noach* walked with G-d.”

*Midrash*: “Why is the name of *Noach* mentioned three times in the verse? He is one of the three individuals who saw three different worlds – *Noach*, *Daniel*, and *Eyov* (Job). *Noach* had seen the world in its settled state prior to the Great Flood, in its destroyed state, and again in its settled state (after the Great Flood). *Noach* had lived in the era prior to the Great Flood, during the time that the world was in a state of destruction, and in the era when the world was reestablished.” One could have easily understood that *Noach* had existed in three different settings simply by reading the narrative. Since there is nothing superfluous in the *Torah*, what is the profound lesson to be learned by the *Torah*’s repetition of the name “*Noach*” three times?

The verse states: “...*Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations...” By mentioning “in his generations” the *Torah* is making *Noach*’s level of piety only relative to his generations.

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: “The verse can be understood as something of a praiseworthy nature or a criticism of *Noach*....Had *Noach* lived during the generation of *Avraham*, our Patriarch he would not have been considered to be special or praiseworthy. However, despite the level of the evil of his generations, *Noach*’s piety was something that was praiseworthy.” Since the *Torah* mentions *Noach*’s name three times, it is obvious that it is coming to communicate something unique about him. It is often the case that an individual may

be subject to many predicaments and circumstances in his life; however, because of his educational background, pedigree, and orientation he will be fixed to the path and course of action that he has taken throughout his life. This was not the case with *Noach*.

*Noach*’s name is repeated three times in order to teach us that although the *Torah* is speaking about the same person in each era, he is the equivalent of three different people. Prior to the destruction of the world, *Noach*’s had a specific mission and objective. His responsibility to mankind was to impact upon them through dialogue and personal behavior. Throughout the 120-year period of building of the Ark, *Noach* would seek the attention of his generation in order to warn them of the impending destruction of existence if they do not change their evil ways. Ultimately *Noach* failed and consequently, the world was destroyed.

During the period of destruction, his responsibility and function was to maintain the remnant of existence that was contained within the Ark, by attending to all of their needs. *Noach* essentially became a zookeeper who was not able to sleep because he was needed to provide for every living creature that existed in the Ark. Even before the Floodwaters had fully subsided, he first sent out the raven and then the dove to determine if the world was inhabitable. This was part of his initiative.

After he was told by G-d to leave the Ark with all that was contained within it, his responsibility was to deal with all of the issues of the new existence. *Noach* was responsible to maintain and to guarantee that the new existence should continue until the end of time. Thus *Noach* functioning in each setting is the equivalent of three different people. This indicates the greatness of *Noach*. He understood in every circumstance in which he found himself, he needed to be the type of person that was needed to do the Will of G-d at that time.

*Torah* in *Devarim*: “*Moshe* said to the Children of Israel: And Now, O Israel, what is *Hashem*, your G-d, asking of you?...”

*Chofetz Chaim* in *Ahavas Chesed*: A Jew must continuously ask himself, “What does G-d want from me at this moment?” A Jew must be cognizant continuously of his situation and what is his obligation, within that context. Regardless of one’s abilities, background, or orientation if one’s perspective is focused on “What does G-d want from me now?”

that same person could be the equivalent of multiple people depending on the circumstance.

## **Affecting Something that is Beyond One's Control**

*Torah* regarding *Noach*: "These are the offspring of *Noach* – *Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations..." After attempting to discuss the progeny of *Noach*, the *Torah* digresses to speak about *Noach's* personal attributes by stating, "*Noach* was a righteous man..." This seems to be incongruous with the initial presentation of the *Torah*. Why is this so?

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: "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.'"

*Torah* at the of *Bereishis*: "When *Noach* was five hundred years old, *Noach* begot *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*." There is nothing that is superfluous in the *Torah*. If so, what is the significance of repeating this fact?

*Torah*: "*Noach* walked with G-d."

*Rashi*: *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* explaining "*Noach* walked with G-d": *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*: "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.

In the portion of *Noach* the *Torah* goes to explain the reason 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 because of his spiritual dimension that he assumed the initiative to impact upon his generation in a spiritual context.

We can draw from the juxtaposition of *Noach's* meriting progeny as a result of his assuming the responsibility for others. If one assumes responsibility for the spirituality of others, that individual will merit things that were not previously available to him. Although *Noach* did not succeed in his mission to prevent his generation from being destroyed, he nevertheless merited to have progeny because of his undertaking the initiative. If one preoccupies himself with assisting G-d's children, then He will in kind assist that individual either to merit having children or to succeed with the children that he already had been blessed, regarding their spirituality.

The *Torah* tells us that after *Avraham* had hosted the three angels who came to him in the form of wayfarers, his wife *Sarah* had conceived, despite that she had previously been barren. The *Midrash* in the Portion of *Ki Seitzei* explains that *Sarah*, our Matriarch merited to conceive as a result of *Avraham's* hospitality. We pray and hope that each of us has the inner strength and clarity to make proper choices and that our children should follow in the path of the *Torah*. However, because each individual has free choice, one cannot control the choices of others, including one's children.

However, based on *Sforno's* explanation, one is able to conclude that if one supplicates G-d on behalf of others and devotes himself to assisting his fellow Jew, then G-d will grant him special Divine Assistance that will allow his children to follow the proper path.

## **G-d's Tolerance of Man's Behavior**

*Torah*: "These are the offspring of *Noach*..."

*Midrash Tanchuma*: "Blessed is G-d Who chose the Jewish people from among the seventy nations of the world to become the seventy-first nation..." What relevance do the words of *Chazal* have to the opening verse of the Portion of *Noach*?

*Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Before G-d created man, He presented His plan before a group of angels. The angels upon hearing what G-d had planned responded, "Man is not even worthy of remembering and the human being is not worthy of being acknowledged."

*Gemara*: “He placed His small finger between them and burnt them.” G-d created another group of angels who responded to His plan in an identical manner and were thus dismissed. Then G-d created a third group of angels who said, “It is Your Existence, You may choose to do with it as You please.” He then created man.

As time evolved, the world was destroyed through the Great Flood because of the intense level of evil of existence. It was followed by the rebellious behavior of the generation of the dispersion. The third group of angels said to G-d, “Seemingly the first two groups of angels were correct in their assessment of man.” G-d responded by saying, “I will tolerate them until old age.”

*Rashi*: G-d’s response to the angels was that G-d will tolerate the individual until the end of his life because there is always the possibility that he will repent and abandon his evil ways. However, *Maharsha* explains that “until old age” is referring to the *Sinai* event, when the Jewish people would accept the *Torah*.

G-d will tolerate the evil of existence, despite its lack of worthiness because ultimately there will be a Jewish people that will emanate from the seventy nations and who will accept the *Torah*. Their acceptance of the *Torah* will give meaning and value to creation because it was G-d’s initial objective. Therefore the *Midrash* states, “Blessed is G-d Who chose the Jewish people from among the seventy nations of the world to become the seventy-first nation...”

*Midrash*: “He gave the *Torah* to the Jewish people in writing (Written Law). There is much hidden and alluded to in it. He thus gave the elucidation of the written *Torah*, which is the Oral Law to the Jewish people. The Oral Law is detailed and unlimited while the Written Law is relatively small and concise. As it states in *Eyov* regarding the Oral Law, ‘It is longer in measure than the earth and wider than the ocean...You will not find the *Torah* in the land of the living.’ What is the meaning of this? Will one find the *Torah* in the land of the dead?

Rather scripture means to say that *Torah* will not be found among those who seek the material pleasures of life such as desire and glory. But rather, the *Torah* will be found with the one who is willing to sacrifice his physicality for it. As it states, ‘This is the statute of the *Torah*, the man who dies in the tent.’ As the *Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers states, ‘Bread and salt you shall eat, water in small measure you shall drink, on the ground you shall sleep, and a life of deprivation you shall live...’ Does the *Mishna* mean to say that the one who desires to excel in *Torah* must deprive and afflict himself to such a degree?

*Rambam* in the Laws of *Torah* Study: “If one’s heart compels him and is inspired to acquire the Crown of *Torah*, he will eat bread and salt, drink water in small measure etc.” If one is truly inspired to excel and advance himself in *Torah* he will not experience any sense of deprivation or suffering by being denied the material. Because his focus and objective is only to address and develop his potential through the pursuit of *Torah*, the material only becomes an incidental rather than anything of meaning. It is a means and not an end unto itself.

*Torah*: At the age of 137, *Avraham* our Patriarch rose early to hitch his own donkey to take his son *Yitzchak* go to the *Akeidah*. *Chazal* tell us that we are able to draw from *Avraham*’s behavior that “Intense love disrupts all protocol.” Although *Avraham* was one of the wealthiest individuals of his time and could have had one of his servants attend to the hitching of his donkey, he chose to do it himself. It was because of his intense love for G-d that *Avraham* became negated at that moment.

Regardless of his age or wealth, he did not exist as an individual. He thus attended to the menial task of hitching his own donkey. Similarly, one who is inspired by his heart and yearns to acquire the Crown of *Torah* will only see and sense the objective of acquiring the *Torah*. All other considerations, including his personal amenities, become irrelevant.

