



G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

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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 & 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 & have it good," the possibility exists of a devoutly righteous descendant.
13. Sancherev's descendants were Shamaya and Avtalyon the teachers of Shamai & 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 3 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 three 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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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 & 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

The World, A Setting for Spiritual Perfection

Bereishis: "In the beginning G-d created... *Bereishis bara Elokim*..."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The appellation of "*Elokim* (G-d)" connotes the Attribute of Justice, G-d initially intended to bring about existence through the Attribute of Justice. When the *Torah* mentions the creation of man it states, "These are the products of the heaven and earth...in the day that *Hashem* G-d (*YKVK Elokim*) made earth and heaven..."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The appellation of "*Hashem* (*YKVK*)" connotes the Attribute of Mercy. Although G-d's initial intent was to bring about creation through the Attribute of Justice, He understood that man could not survive the exactness of Justice (because he was prone to fail). Therefore, He "coalesces the Attribute of Justice with the Attribute of Mercy" so that man could continue.

The Attribute of Justice has relevance to man because the concept of Justice can be understood as G-d meting reward and punishment based on one's choice of behavior. By coalescing the Attribute of Mercy, G-d allows the Justice that one deserves to be meted out over a period of time in order to give one the opportunity to repent (and to perform other good deeds). If the full extent of Justice that one deserves would come upon him in an instant (without Mercy) one would not be able to survive.

The culpability of man only has relevance because he is endowed with the power of choice. As *Rambam* writes in the Laws of Repentance that man's behavior is determined by his own initiative. Therefore, the result is attributed to his decision. However, the appellation of "*Elokim* (Justice)" that is used within the context of Creation, seemingly has no relevance because its application is usually to evaluate man's behavior, yet it is being applied to all creation (including the inanimate).

King David in Psalms: “The world was created due to (His) Kindness (*Olam chesed Yibaneh*).”

Rashi in Bereishis citing *Chazal*: “The word ‘*Bereishis*’ should be interpreted to mean ‘It is for the sake of ‘*reishis* (the choicest)’ that G-d created existence, which is the *Torah* itself that is classified as ‘*reishis*.’ The word ‘*Bereishis*’ also alludes to the Jewish people who are referred to and classified as ‘*reishis*’...” The objective of the creation is to provide the setting for the *Torah* to be actualized. Thus, every aspect of existence is intended to address and facilitate the fulfillment of the *Torah*. There cannot be anything superfluous in Creation because there is nothing superfluous in the *Torah* itself. The world is the context for man to make choices within *Torah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Avoda Zorah*: The *Torah* itself is “truth” in its absolute form as King Solomon states in Proverbs, “Truth, you shall acquire – and do not sell it.” The *Gemara* explains that unadulterated truth is the equivalent of the Attribute of Justice. Justice is exactness at the most profound level. Thus, *Torah*, itself which is Truth is the equivalent of Justice.

Since existence was intended to be the setting for the fulfillment of *Torah*, it therefore must reflect the perfection of *Torah*, which is *Truth*. If the Jewish people are the only people qualified to fulfill the *Torah*, then the Attribute that has relevance to them must be the Attribute of Justice. However, because of man’s proclivity to failure is great, he would not be able to withstand the Attribute of Justice. G-d thus needed to coalesce the Attribute of Mercy into the Attribute of Justice.

Ramchal in *Path of the Just*: Although we only exist within the Attribute of Mercy, ultimately Justice will be served and meted out. Man will then receive what he truly deserves.

After WWI the predicament of the Jewish people was difficult on many levels. The *Chofetz Chaim* wanted to give a bit of encouragement to the Jewish people so that they could perceive their plight in a positive vein. He believed that at that moment in history they were experiencing the “birth pangs” of *Moshiach*. He explains that it is similar to a storekeeper who wants to close down his business. He decided to sell off his inventory. When one of the original customers came to purchase merchandise, he was told that there is no longer a line of credit. The storekeeper explained

to the customer that when one wants to develop and maintain his enterprise he needs to give credit to his customers. However, now that the business is coming to a close everyone must pay up front for the merchandise because there is no future.

Chofetz Chaim: Similarly, if the world must be maintained for an extended period of time then the Attribute of Mercy must be in effect. However, since we are nearing the time of *Moshiach*, when there will no longer be free choice to repent, the debt must be paid now before that time arrives. Therefore, the trials and tribulations experienced by the Jewish people should be viewed in a positive light because they are an indication of the coming of *Moshiach*.

The Qualifying Factor in a Spouse

Bereishis: “*Hashem* G-d said, ‘It is not good that man be alone; I will make him an *eizer kinegdo* (a helper corresponding to him)...”

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: The meaning of ‘*eizer*’ is helper and ‘*kinegdo*’ means opposed. “If one is meritorious then his mate will be of assistance to him ‘*eizer*’. However if he is not meritorious his mate will be ‘*kinegdo*’ (opposed) to him.” This does not mean that if one chooses to be evil that his wife will oppose him, but rather she will assist him in his evil. If one is meritorious she will truly be his helpmate to do good. This is the equivalent of the principle “G-d brings merit to the meritorious and tragedy to the hands of the guilty.” If one chooses to be evil, his mate will be opposed to him “*kinegdo*” in that she will assist him in doing things that are detrimental to his spirituality.

Torah: G-d told *Adam* to give names to every living creature, as it states, “And man assigned names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky... he did not find an *eizer kinegdo* (a helper corresponding to him).” It seems that the word “*kinegdo*” in this verse is not necessary because the *Torah* is telling us that *Adam* was seeking a wife who would be his helpmate to assist him in his life. There is no question that he was not seeking a wife who would be opposed to him “*kinegdo*.” If so, why does the verse state he was seeking an “*eizer kinegdo*” which is difficult to understand?

Just *Adam* had a special wisdom to identify all of the living creatures, he should have also had the wisdom

to understand that he did not have a proper 'eizer.' *Adam* understood that he was different from all of creation. He was a being that was endowed with the power of choice. He thus had the ability to choose to do good or evil and thus be deserving or culpable based on his choices. He therefore needed to find a mate that would also fit that profile of being 'eizer' if he was meritorious or 'kinegdo' if he was evil. Because no other creature has relevance to the power of choice *Adam* could not find an *eizer kinegdo*. *Adam* needed a mate that also had the power of choice.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: If *Adam* wanted to have clothing he needed to perform all of the various processes in order to make the garment. However, if we need a garment we simply go to the market to have the craftsman fashion it. If *Adam* did not have a helpmate, he would have not had time to address and actualize his spirituality. *Chava*, his mate was responsible for all of his physical needs so that *Adam* should be able to pursue his spirituality.

Depending on the focus of the spouse, man can be influenced in the positive or the negative. If the spouse's focus is to be "eizer" then the man will be able to pursue spirituality. If the man is not meritorious then he will have a type of woman that is "kinegdo." Meaning he would have a spouse that had no interest in spirituality, he will be directed away from spirituality.

Adam was told by G-d not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. When *Adam* instructed his wife, he added another level of prohibition to not even touch the Tree, which was not the dictate of G-d. He had established a fence, but he had characterized it as the Word of G-d. When the serpent pushed her unto the Tree and she did not die, he said to her that just as she did not die from touching the Tree similarly if she were to eat from the Tree she would not die. She thus chose to eat from the Tree.

Gemara: We are able to learn a lesson from the manner in which *Adam* instructed his wife, "Whoever adds (to the *Torah*) he detracts (from the *Torah*). Because *Adam* told *Chava* that G-d had said that touching the Tree was forbidden it ultimately brought about her eating from the Tree which was indeed forbidden. The basis for *Chava's* sin was *Adam's* own failing– not communicating the Word of G-d properly. When *Adam* was asked about eating from the Tree, *Adam* did not take responsibility but rather he accused G-d of providing him with a wife

who influenced him to eat. As it states, "The woman who You gave to me– she gave me of the Tree and I ate." *Adam* is characterized as an ingrate because he took the woman who was intended to be the ultimate "eizer" and caused her to be "kinegdo". Rather than appreciating the value of the woman that G-d gave him as being the one through who he would achieve spiritual perfection, he perceived her as the one who cause of his failing.

Man's Eternal Affect

Midrash citing a verse from Proverbs: "'The fruit of the righteous is the Tree of Life.'

"*Reb Yehudah HaLevy* says, 'When a *tzaddik* leaves this world without children he will be pained and cry out to G-d. G-d responds, 'Why are you crying? Is it because you did not establish progeny in this world? You have produced fruit that is even more significant than children.' The *tzaddik* asks, 'What fruit did I establish?' G-d answers, 'The *Torah*. As it is written, 'The fruit of *tzaddik* is the Tree of life.' It does not state that the fruit of the *tzaddik* is his children. Thus the true progeny of man is his *Torah* and good deeds."

When the *tzaddik* leaves the physical world, he enters into the world of truth (*olam ha emes*). When he is initially pained as a result of not leaving children as his legacy, it is understood that the children that he did not merit to have would have been devoutly righteous. Although the *tzaddik*, after his passing, is in the world of truth, (he initially does not have sufficient clarity), he believes that because he left the world without children to perpetuate his good deeds, he will remain deficient for eternity. G-d responds to the *tzaddik* by telling him that his *Torah* and good deeds are greater than establishing children, even if they were to be righteous. Why is one's own *Torah* and *mitzvos* considered more significant than leaving progeny who would perpetuate his spirituality for generations into the future?

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: "If one had a choice to execute a *mitzvah* or delegate it through a third party, it is preferable that he performs the *mitzvah* himself. A *mitzvah* has greater value when one performs it himself rather than through his agent."

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: A child brings merit to a father. When one's child studies *Torah* and does good deeds, they accrue to the father and bring him merit.

This is because if the father had not brought the child into existence, all the good that came about would not have been. Thus, the father is the cause of all the good that the child brings about. Despite this fact, one's own actualization of *Torah* and *mitzvos* surpasses what the agent (in this case his children) could have brought about.

Seemingly, the concern of the *tzaddik* is not fully satisfied with G-d's response because the degree of merit from one's *Torah* and *mitzvos* are limited to one's lifetime. After he passes, he is able to reap the reward of his accomplishment. However, when one establishes righteous progeny, all those how descend from him continuously generate *Torah* and *mitzvos* until the end of time. Evidently, G-d is telling the *tzaddik* that the *Torah* that he studied in his lifetime and the good deeds that he had done, continue to exist within the physical world and affect mankind beyond his own existence. Thus, one's accomplishment is in effect until the end of time.

Chazal: The word '*Bereishis*' should be understood to mean 'It is for the sake of '*reishis* (the choicest)' that G-d created existence, which is the *Torah* itself that is referred to as '*reishis*.' It does not only mean that the setting for choice within the context of *Torah* is the objective of physical existence, but also the *Torah* was studied remains in place and perpetuates existence.

Actualizing One's Potential

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 opening verse of the Portion? 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)." The answer given by the *Midrash* seems to be difficult. Why is it necessary to repeat the name of *Noach* three times to indicate that he had lived in three eras of existence? One could have easily understood that *Noach* had existed in three different periods of time simply by reading the narrative. What is the profound lesson to be learned by the *Torah*'s repetition of the name "*Noach*"?

Noach's name is repeated three times in order to teach us that although the *Torah* is speaking about the same individual in each circumstance, he is the equivalent of three different people. Prior to the destruction of the world *Noach*'s function and purpose was a specific mission and objective. His responsibility to mankind was to affect them through dialogue and rebuke.

Noach was to build an Ark that would take 120 years to complete. The purpose of this long project was to be the focal point that would attract the attention of his generation in order to enter into dialogue with them to allow them to appreciate and understand the impending destruction of existence if they do not repent and change their evil ways. Ultimately, *Noach* failed and the world was destroyed.

Immediately prior to the Great Flood two of every non-Kosher species and seven of every Kosher species entered into the Ark in order to perpetuate existence after the Flood ended.

Chazal: While on the Ark, *Noach* was not able to sleep because he was preoccupied with attending to the needs of every living creature that was on the Ark. He was even maimed by a lion who had bitten him because he had delayed bringing it its food.

Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin: *Noach* needed to provide a specific type of food for each species. In essence, *Noach*, the *tzaddik* in his generation, became a zookeeper.

During the period that followed the Great Flood, *Noach*'s responsibility was to reestablish existence and provide direction and perspective in its evolvment. In essence, *Torah* repeating *Noach*'s name three times communicates that although he was the same individual, he functioned as three different people whose role was completely different. This indicates the greatness of *Noach*.

Very often one advances in life by going through various stages and levels of development that are each related to one another. Each level is a prerequisite for the following level. Whatever the accomplishment that one may attain is actually in the same realm. However, *Noach*, based on the circumstances with which he was faced needed to be the equivalent of another person. In each case he needed to do the will of G-d but its manifestation was the equivalent of three different people.

Although one may be multitalented, most of the time, one functions in a single capacity. Even if there should be advancement, it is at best limited to that single role that was chosen by the individual. *Rav Aaron Kotler z'tl* at the age of twenty was so advanced in his *Torah* knowledge that he became the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Kletzk. During the war years that ensued, after he came to the US, he became the visionary and soul of the organization that saved tens of thousands of Jews throughout the world.

This capacity of saving the Jewish people from annihilation was unrelated to *Rav Aaron Kotler's* previous role as the disseminator of *Torah* as the *Rosh Yeshivah*. His level of *chesed* and self sacrifice was unparalleled. After the war, *Rav Aaron Kotler* assumed yet another role in establishing *Torah* education for children in Israel that had not previously existed. Despite his greatness in *Torah* and his function as a *Rosh Yeshivah*, he involved himself with many other aspects of building the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people.

Devarim: "Moshe said to the Children of Israel: And Now, O Israel, what is Hashem, your G-d, asking of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in all His ways..."

Chofetz Chaim in *Ahavas Chesed*: A Jew must continuously ask himself, "What does G-d want from me at this moment?" If a one is cognizant of this question in his daily life, he will merit the clarity to be able to bring about what G-d had intended for him to do.

Man Being Limited by His Own Limitation

Torah: "The end of all flesh has come before Me... I am about to destroy them from the earth. Make for yourself an Ark..." G-d commanded Noach to embark upon the building of the Ark, which would entail investing 120 years of his life.

Midrash: Since *Noach* was a world-renowned personality, through engaging in this project it would attract the attention of all humanity. Thus, allowing him to engage in the dialogue that was necessary to convince them to repent. Over the course of the 120-year period the members of *Noach's* generation would approach him every year on the anniversary of the commencement of the project and ask, "Why are you engaged in the building of the Ark?" He would respond,

"Unless you change your evil ways and reconcile yourselves with G-d, G-d will destroy all humanity with a great Flood."

The members of *Noach's* generation responded with derision and cynicism, "If the Flood will come, it will come upon you and your family and not us." On the 120th anniversary when the flood was meant to come, the members of his generation approached *Noach* and asked, "Where is the flood that you have been forecasting for the past 120 years?" *Noach* was not able to respond.

Rashi citing *Chazal: Mesushelach*, who was the *tzaddik* of that era, had passed away on the day that the Great Flood was meant to be. Out of respect for this great individual, G-d delayed the Flood for seven days.

Torah: Seven days later, "*Noach*, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him, went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "The verse is communicating to us that *Noach* was a 'small believer (*katnei amaanah*)' / deficient in his faith. Although he had believed that G-d can bring a great flood to destroy all existence as G-d had said; however, he questioned whether G-d would actually act on His Word. It was because of this mindset that he did not enter into the Ark until he was forced to do so by the Floodwaters." If *Noach* had invested 120 years of his life building the Ark, evidently he believed that the Flood was going to come. If so, why was he resistant and did not enter into the Ark until he was forced to do so by the Floodwaters?

Torah: The Red Sea, that had split for the Jewish people, closed upon Pharaoh and his armies who were pursuing them after they had left Egypt. Although the Jewish people had witnessed the miracle of the splitting and closing of the Sea, they voiced their concern and fear to *Moshe* that perhaps the Egyptian army was not destroyed in the Sea, but rather would come around the other side and pursue them further. To alleviate their fears, G-d caused the Sea to spit out the remains of the Egyptian army onto the seashore so that they could see for themselves that their pursuers were in fact destroyed.

Chazal: Because of their concern and fear the Jewish people were "*katnei amaanah* – small believers."

The Prophet *Yechezkel* was told by G-d to admonish the Jewish people and convince them to do teshuvah to avoid the destruction of the Temple. The people responded by saying that repenting was not a possibility. Since they had sinned and failed so extremely, it was futile and pointless to repent. They were beyond spiritual rehabilitation. G-d said to *Yechezkel* that he should tell them that despite their degree of failing, they are still eligible for teshuvah. Despite *Yechezkel's* urging, the people rejected his plea. *Chazal* refer to *Yechezkel's* generation as "*katnei amaanah* – small believers."

Reb Itzel Peterburger z'tl, who was one of the premier disciples of *Reb Yisroel Salanter z'tl*, explains the term "*katnei amaanah* – small believers." If one utilizes his own mode of evaluation to understand an event or G-d's degree of involvement in existence, if the *Torah's* interpretation is contrary to his understanding, he is classified as "*katnei amaanah*." Although this individual definitely believes without question that it is within G-d's power to bring about anything that He chooses; however because of his own conflict of interest, he has difficulty accepting the fact.

The Jewish people at the splitting of the Sea believed that since they were idolaters in Egypt they were not more worthy than the Egyptians. Just as they were saved miraculously from destruction despite their failing, so too would the Egyptian armies may be spared from destruction by the Sea. Thus, they were concerned that the Egyptians were going to come from

the other side of the Sea to continue pursuing them. Because they had processed their circumstance solely based on their own perception of reality they could not accept the fact that G-d would destroy the Egyptians. Thus, they were quantified as "*katnei amaanah* – small believers." If one is not able to go beyond his own limitation and thus rejects what is stated in the *Torah*, then he is considered a small believer.

The Jewish people, despite *Yechezkel's* assurances from G-d that they would be fully reinstated/rehabilitated after doing teshuvah, because of their own perception of their reality, they could accept that they could ever come back. They were thus "*katnei amaanah* – small believers."

Since the Floodwaters in fact did not come on the 120th anniversary of the building of the Ark, as G-d had told *Noach*, *Noach* was in a quandary. Maybe the decree of G-d was annulled because of His unlimited Mercy? In addition, if in fact *Noach* must go into the Ark because the destruction of the world was imminent, it would be a confirmation that he had failed in his mission. He did not succeed to bring the world to teshuvah. *Noach* could not accept the overwhelming responsibility for the destruction of the world. He thus went into a state of denial and could not bring himself to enter into the Ark. It was only because of the Floodwaters that he was forced to enter. This was a result of *Noach's* own interpretation and evaluation of events that he could not accept the reality of what was about to take place. He is therefore classified as "*katnei amaanah*."

