

THE PORTION OF **LECH-LECHA**



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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Hourly Video: Parshas Lech Lecha

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

A Sefer by
The Chafetz Chaim

A portrait of Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, an older man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a simple indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall.

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How Weighty is The Debt of Gratitude

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1. G-d told Avraham to leave his homeland, birthplace, and family.
2. He separated himself from every member of his family including Lot.
3. Why did Avraham agree to take his nephew Lot with him?
4. When Avraham was told by Nimrod to bow to the idol or be thrown into the kiln- he chose to die.
5. Haran, Lot's father and Avraham's brother, stood by the sidelines thinking that if his brother came out unscathed, he would follow.
6. He entered and perished.
7. Haran was the first man to die to sanctify G-d's name.
8. Avraham believed that Lot, as Haran's son, was the exception to the family.
9. Avraham separated from Lot when it was revealed he was a thief.
10. Lot, with all of his possessions, moved to Sedom- the seat of all evil.
11. Before separating, Avraham made a pact with him to be there for him at all costs.
12. When Lot was taken captive by the four mightiest kings, Avraham miraculously saved him, regardless if it cost him his merits. Why?

A Metamorphosis To Begin A New Existence

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1. Avraham was told by G-d that He will make his name great.
2. Rashi: The letter Hey will be added to his name: Avraham is numerically 248, which is equal to the number of parts of the human body.
3. Before Avraham was circumcised he did not have full control over his physicality.
4. He fathered Yitzchok after he was circumcised and added Hey to his name.
5. Gemara: G-d created the world to come with the spirituality of the letter Yud and the physical world with the spirituality of letter Hey.
6. Midrash: Just as the letter "Hey" brought about all existence, when added to your name, it will cause a metamorphic change within you.
7. Avraham became a new creation; one that did not previously exist.
8. The innateness of the Jew is the equivalent of all existence.
9. Midrash: G-d said "I will make you into a great People, not one that will evolve into a great People."
10. The Jewish People coming into being is the equivalent of Ex nihilo.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Lech-Lecha



The Spiritual DNA of the Jew

Midrash Tanchuma citing a verse from *Shir HaShirim* (Song of Songs): “A young sister (achos) whose breasts have not yet developed...’ To what is this verse referring? It is referring to *Avraham* when he was cast into the fiery Kiln of *Kasdim* by *Nimrod*. The term “young (kitana)” alludes to the fact that when *Avraham* went into the fire he did so without having seen G-d’s miracles.

Although he had not yet been exposed to them, he was willing to give his life for G-d. Why is *Avraham* referred to as “achos- a sister” in the verse? (*Eecha* in Hebrew means to mend). *Avraham* was the achos to the world because there was no tear in a fabric that he was not able to mend. [There was no issue to which *Avraham* could not address and respond. He was able to refute every false philosophy and theology within society. He dispelled their heretical views – thus mending the fabric of existence as the expert mender darns the fabric].

Why is *Avraham* referred to as the one whose “breasts had not yet developed?” Because at this time, *Avraham* did not yet have children.”

Midrash: “*Avraham* is like a wall upon which I (G-d) will build upon it an elaborate palace of silver. He is like a wall that stands unmovable even after being battered by war. Since *Avraham* was willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of G-d – after battling with all of the idolaters of his generation, he merited to be the father of the Jewish people...However, if *Avraham* would have been unwilling to go into the fire for the sake of G-d, then he would not have had any value. *Avraham* said to G-d, “I am like the wall...not only am I going into the fire for Your sake but also my children and the children of my children will give their lives for You. It was because of *Avraham*’s selfless sacrifice to G-d that he emerged from the fire unharmed.” Although *Avraham* himself gave his life for G-d, how did he know that his descendents would do the same?

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl in *Ruach Chaim* (commentary on *Pirkei Avos*): The reason every Jew throughout history has the ability to give his life for the sake of G-d is because *Avraham* had inculcated into his own spirituality the ability to sacrifice himself to sanctify G-d's Name. The Jewish people, being *Avraham's* spiritual heirs, are thus endowed with that same ability. *Avraham's* selfless commitment to G-d was unique and pure. It was only because of his level of purity that he was sure that his descendent would also possess the ability to give their lives to G-d.

The Ten Martyrs (*Rebbe Akiva* and his colleagues who were killed by the Romans) gave their lives for the sake of teaching *Torah* in public when it was punishable by death. *Avraham* gave his life for G-d rather than bowing to the idol, which would have been an act of idolatry. However, his descendent gave their lives even for the sake of one mitzvah not to be uprooted.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: A Jew must give his life to sanctify G-d's Name (*Kiddush Hashem*) – even when the decree relates to a mode of dress. For example, if it were decreed that the Jew, who normally wears black bootstraps, must wear red bootstraps (as the gentile) – the Jew must give his life.

Avraham – the Founding Father of the Jewish People

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: “At what age did *Avraham* our Patriarch recognize G-d?” One opinion is that he recognized G-d at the age of three. The other opinion is that he recognized G-d at the age of fifty-two.

Midrash Tanchuma citing the opinion of *Reb Chanina*: *Avraham* recognized his Maker at the age of three. G-d had said to *Avraham*, “*Eikev asher shemata beKoli* –Since you have heeded My Voice.”

Reb Chanina explains that the numerical value of “*Eikev*” is 172 [The numerical value of the letter “*aayin*” is 70, “*kuf*” is 100, and “*bais*” is 2] Meaning, at that time *Avraham* was 175 years of age and he had heeded the Voice of G-d for 172 years; thus he was three years old when he recognized G-d. Regardless of his age, how did he come upon his Creator? *Avraham* was born into a pagan world. Therefore, how was a three year old child or even a fifty-two year old adult able to come upon G-d when no other individual in his generation did so?

Mishna in Tractate *Avos*: There were ten generations between *Noach* and *Avraham* who did not recognize G-d. The world was devoid of G-d's Presence. It was only *Avraham* who recognized Him and thus merited the reward of all ten generations. One may say that perhaps *Avraham* was the most astute individual of his generation and was able to come upon monotheism through his superior intellect.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: *Avraham* was the first individual to refer to G-d as “*Adni* – My Master.”

Tosafos: “How could the *Gemara* say that *Avraham* was the first person to refer to G-d as “Master” when *Adam* did so prior to *Avraham*?” *Tosafos* answers, “Because *Adam* was the handiwork of G-d, and was placed in the Garden of *Eden*, G-d's Presence was obvious to *Adam*. However, *Avraham* who was born into a world that was devoid of G-d's Presence came upon G-d through his own quest for truth. He was thus the first human being (through his own initiative) to recognize G-d as *Adni* – Master.” How did he come upon this reality?

Yalkut: There is an allegory. “*Reb Yitzchak* states – There was a traveler who had come upon a magnificent citadel that was fully illuminated. The traveler had asked, ‘Is it possible that this magnificent, illuminated, citadel has no master?’ The master of the citadel emerged and said to the traveler – ‘I am the master of the citadel.’ Similarly, *Avraham* looked at the world as something of a magnificent dimension. He had wondered – is it possible that such a universe has no master? G-d revealed Himself to *Avraham* and said, “I am the Master.”

Avraham's quest for truth caused him to reject all false philosophies and beliefs. Thus, he remained with the question – “who is the master of the universe?” He had no answer. He was willing to remain with the question rather than succumb to a position that was not absolute truth. *Avraham* did not come upon G-d, but rather He came upon *Avraham*. In reality it is impossible to come upon G-d without Divine revelation. There are too many variables which are not understood by man to see the full picture.

Mahril of Prague z'tl in *Gevuras Hashem*: One cannot fully comprehend and appreciate what one sees in existence visà-vis G-d's Presence. We see reality only on a superficial level. The depth and breadth of reality is so expansive and extensive that we are not able to see the entire picture in order to appreciate G-d in existence.

We can only see a single limited aspect of reality – and even that aspect we cannot fully comprehend how it truly relates to existence.

King David in *Tehillim*: “Who can utter the strength of G-d?” Since one’s perception of existence is so limited and even what one sees is incomprehensible, then how did *Avraham* come upon his Creator? G-d revealed Himself to *Avraham* because he sought Him out relentlessly through his quest for absolute truth. *Avraham* entered into dialogue with the greatest minds of the world and was not willing to accept their positions on the functionality of existence. It is because of *Avraham*’s uncompromising position regarding truth that he merited to be the founding father of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are G-d’s nation – the chosen people. We were only taken as His treasure “*Aam sigulah*” when we were given His *Torah*, which is Absolute Truth.

Gemara: “The signet of G-d is Truth.” Thus, the only one who can have any relevance to truth is the one who does not compromise on truth – such as *Avraham* our Patriarch.

How to Misperceive the Obvious

Torah: There was a war between the four kings and the five kings. The five kings were defeated by the four. One of the five kings was the king of *Sodom* – who had fled to the Valley of *Siddim*, as the *Torah* states, “The Valley of *Siddim* was full of lime pits. The King of *Sodom* and *Amorrah* fled and fell into them while the rest fled to the mountain.” Why does the *Torah* need to tell us that the King of *Sodom* fell into a lime pit? Why is this pertinent information?

Rashi cites *Chazal* who explain, “This is to reveal that a miracle was performed on behalf of the King of *Sodom*. In the past no individual who entered into a lime pit emerged alive. G-d performed this miracle on behalf of the King of *Sodom* so that the nations of the world would believe that *Avraham* had emerged unscathed from the fiery kiln of *Kasdim*. Until this point, this information was rejected as being authentic. However, after the King of *Sodom* emerged from the lime pit unharmed, they retroactively believed what they had heard about *Avraham*.”

What is the value of this verification regarding *Avraham*’s experience? Evidently, it was not to prove that *Avraham* was a spiritual being who merited a miracle, because

the King of *Sodom*, who personified evil and had no relevance to spirituality, experienced a similar miracle. If so, then what is the value of performing a miracle on behalf of the King of *Sodom*?

The King of *Sodom* initially was one of the five kings who had entered into battle against the four kings. After *Avraham* had defeated the four mighty kings, the King of *Sodom* became *Avraham*’s chattel – as a result of the victory. Despite the fact that he was a captive, the King of *Sodom* brazenly dictated terms to *Avraham* saying, “Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself.” Seemingly, if the King of *Sodom* was dictating terms to his captor, *Avraham*, he must have perceived himself as *Avraham*’s equal – despite the fact that he was the *Avraham*’s chattel. What was the basis for his arrogance?

Since the King of *Sodom* had miraculously emerged from the lime pit unharmed, he thought that it was an indication that his deity was protecting him. It was not possible to survive the lime pit without supernatural intervention. Just as *Avraham* was being protected by G-d – who the King of *Sodom* had considered a deity, so too was he being protected by a powerful deity. Thus, he believed he was *Avraham*’s equal. He felt that he was able to speak to *Avraham* as a peer and not as the chattel of a victor because he too merited the protection of a deity.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: *Chananya*, *Meshael*, and *Azaria* were the only Jews who would not bow to the image of *Nebuchadnezzar* (Babylonian Emperor) and were cast into a fiery kiln. They miraculously emerged intact. The *Gemara* states, “After they had emerged from the fire, the nations of the world seriously criticized the Jewish people for bowing to the image. They had said, ‘If you have such a powerful god how could you bow to an image?’”

As a result of this chastisement, the Jewish people shamefully admitted to their sin and did *teshuvah* (repentance). If the nations of the world perceived G-d as such a powerful being, why did they not become monotheists? If they had the clarity to criticize the Jewish people with such potency, how could they retain their pagan beliefs? They did not believe that G-d was the Omnipotent Being. They believed that G-d was a powerful deity with whom the Jewish people had a special relationship. G-d was no different than any other power.

Similarly, the King of Sodom thought – just as Avraham has his personal deity, so too does he have his own deity. After the King of Sodom miraculously survived the lime pit, the nations of the world believed with certainty that Avraham survived the kiln – because of his G-d. The fact is the King of Sodom was defeated by the four kings – who were eventually defeated by Avraham. Thus, it was a clear indication that the G-d of Avraham was more powerful than the deity of the King of Sodom.

The value of G-d saving the King of Sodom from the lime pit, although he was the epitome, was to convince the world that the G-d of Avraham was greater than the deity of the King of Sodom. Although the King of Sodom's deity was able to save him from the lime pit, he was not able to defeat the four kings. However, the G-d of Avraham, who was able to defeat the four mighty kings, was definitely able to save Avraham from the fiery kiln. Thus, the saving of the King of Sodom brought about the ultimate Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G-d's Name) – G-d was seen in another light.

Maharal of Prague z'tl: The primary miracle of Chanukah was the victory of the Jewish people over the Greeks. However, in order to reveal and shed light on the fact that the basis for the victory over the Greeks was the Hand of G-d (and not their acumen in battle), there needed to be a revealed miracle to occur at that time – the oil that burned for eight days. Just as the vial of oil that burned for eight days was caused by G-d's revealed miracle – and could not be understood in any other context – identically, the victory was attributed to G-d's intervention. Similarly, the miraculous survival of the King of Sodom revealed retroactively that Avraham had been saved by G-d, consequently the victory of his battle was attributed to that same superior being.

The Standard to Which a Jew is Held

Midrash Tanchuma at the beginning of Lech Lecha: discusses the obligation of bringing a *korban olah* (burnt offering).

Gemara: The bringing a *korban olah* atones for the non-performance of a Positive Commandment. For example, if one did not recite the *Shema* in its proper time or did not fulfill the mitzvah of *tefillin* (which are both Positive Commandments), one has an obligation to be atoned through a burnt offering/*olah*. The *olah* offering also atones for the transgression of a Negative Commandment that was corrected through the

performance of a related Positive Commandment. For example, if one had stolen and subsequently returned the stolen item. In addition the *olah* atones for “*hirhur haleiv* – inappropriate thoughts,” which are doubts or concerns that are not necessarily verbalized.

Gemara in Tractate *Zevachim*: The bringing of an offering must be predicated on *teshuvah* (repentance) in order to bring about atonement. If one does not do *teshuvah* prior to the bringing of the sacrifice, it is considered a *toeiva* (abomination).

Gemara: “If one is fully atoned after doing *teshuvah* for a Positive Commandment (*teshuvah* is a prerequisite for bringing the *olah*), then what is the value of the *olah* offering?” There are two aspects to the atonement process – *teshuvah* (repentance) and full spiritual reinstatement. If a person sins against the king, he may be forgiven but in order to be in the good graces of the king, he must present him with a gift. Similarly, the *olah* is referred to as “gift” that is brought to G-d to demonstrate one's reverence in order to fully reinstate the relationship.

Rabbeinu Bachya in his introduction to *Vayikra*: the correlation between the *olah* and “*hirhur haleiv* – improper thoughts/doubts.” Since the nighttime period is a time when one sleeps, and the body is dormant, the only part of the person that functions is the “thought process”/dreams. Thus, the primary time that the *olah* offering was brought was during the nighttime period. The service of the blood (slaughtering, receiving the blood, and sprinkling it on the altar) was performed before sundown; however, burning its limbs and fats was done during the nighttime period.

Torah: After Avraham had miraculously defeated the four mighty kings, G-d said to Avraham, “Fear not Avram I am a shield for you; your reward is very great.”

Midrash Tanchuma: “After miraculously defeating the four mighty kings, Avraham reflected upon and questioned the *Midas HaDin* (Attribute of Justice). He had said in his heart, “I am concerned that perhaps I have depleted all of my merits that I accomplished throughout my life in order to bring about this miracle. Since G-d has assisted me in defeating the four kings and rescued me from the fiery kiln, perhaps I have been rewarded in this world (and not in the world to come) for my good deeds. G-d said to Avraham, “Because you have this concern and questioned your spiritual

standing, you must bring a burnt offering. You must bring your son, your only beloved son (*Yitzchak*), as an *olah*.”

Since *Avraham* had questions regarding his future, he was obligated to bring *Yitzchak* as a burnt offering. Thus, the most difficult of the tests that faced *Avraham* (the *Akeidah*) came about because of a slight spiritual failing. *Avraham* was concerned about the depletion of his merits. What was *Avraham*’s failing that he needed to bring an *olah*? Since many miracles had been performed on his behalf, his concern may have been valid. Nevertheless, *Avraham* needed to be atoned for this seemingly inappropriate feeling.

Torah: There is a Positive Commandment, “You shall be pure with your G-d.” The standard to which a Jew is held is greater than that of the nations of the world.

Ramban in *Kisvei Ramban*: A Jew is not permitted to consult with a soothsayer who conjures the dead because it is contrary to the Positive Commandment “You shall be pure in your G-d.” A Jew must have absolute trust in G-d and not be concerned about his predicament in life – if he cannot do anything about it. The relationship between the Jew and G-d is that of a father and a son/child. Just as a child does not need be concerned that the father is not acting in his best interest, so too the Jew must understand that it is the nature of his relationship with G-d.

Ramban: There is an opinion that the Jew is not permitted to consult with a soothsayer because he has no special ability whatsoever. The *Torah* does not want the Jew to be distracted and convinced by something that has no value or meaning. However, *Ramban* cites many sources that demonstrate that in fact the soothsayer does have special ability to communicate with the dead – such as the incident when *Shmuel* the Prophet was summoned from the dead by a soothsayer on behalf of King Saul.

Ramban: The Jew is not permitted to consult with a soothsayer not because it has no efficacy, but rather, so the Jew should not be misled. The souls/forces conjured by soothsayers provide the non-Jew with accurate information; however, since the Jew has an obligation to be totally faithful in G-d, these souls/forces provide inaccurate and false information to the Jew. It is a breach of the Positive Commandment “You shall be pure with your G-d.”

If one is initially hesitant to be involved in a certain activity because it may deplete his merits, he is

justified. However, *Avraham*’s concern was post facto after he had already been rescued from the fiery kiln and was victorious in battle. What is the value of being concerned about the past – whether he had depleted his merits or not? These events had already past and whatever his predicament would be in the future, vis-à-vis his merits, is in the Hands of G-d. Thus, his concern was a slight breach of the Positive Commandment “You shall be pure with your G-d.”

Avraham needed a spiritual correction/atonement for his *hirhur haleiv* – thoughts of the heart. That correction was facilitated through the *Akeidah*, which was to bring *Yitzchak* as a burnt offering. The Jew is held to a special standard by G-d. It is true that *Avraham*’s failing was commensurate with his special spiritual dimension; however, we are all faced with situations in which we must have purity of faith in G-d despite the questions we may have.

Avraham Our Patriarch- The Founding Father of Existence

Torah: After G-d had promised *Avraham* the Land of Canaan and other blessings, he had said to G-d, “See, You have given me no offspring; and see, my steward inherits me...” *Avraham* was concerned that since he was childless, his heir was going to be *Eliezer* of Damascus. G-d assured *Avraham* that his heir would be his physical child. G-d took *Avraham* outside (of his tent) and said to him, “Look at the heavens “*shamaimah*.” Just as you are not able to count the stars in the heaven, so too will your offspring not be able to be counted.”

Yalkut: The word “*shamaimah* – heavens” is spelled with additional “*hay*.” The *Torah* could have used the term “*shamayim*” (without the letter “*hay*”). What is the significance of the additional “*hay*”?

Avraham was an expert astrologer and was able to read the stars. His reading of the stars was, “*Avram* and *Sarai* will remain childless.” G-d said to *Avraham*, “Your reading is accurate as you have read; however, the stars say that *Avram* will not have a child. *Avraham* (with the “*hay*” added to his name) will have a son.” Thus, G-d added the letter “*hay*” to *Avram*, making him *Avraham*.

King David writes in *Tehillim*, “*B’ kah Hashem tzur olamim* – with the Name of G-d (“*Yud*” and “*Hay*”) G-d formed the worlds.”

Gemara in Tractate *Menachos*: “The physical world was created with the spirituality of the letter “*hay*” and the world to come was created with the spirituality of the letter “*yud*.”

Meaning, the spiritual energy contained within the letter “*hay*” brought about all physical existence. G-d said to *Avraham*, “Just as the spiritual energy in the letter “*hay*” was needed to bring about all physical existence, that same dimension of energy is needed to bring a change within you to be able to father a son.”

The additional “*hay*” is not merely another letter added to *Avraham*’s name (a name change); but rather, it brought about a profound metamorphosis within him; his dimension of person became the equivalent of all existence. In order for *Avraham* to father *Yitzchak*, to be the Patriarch of the eternal people, the change that needed to take place within *Avraham* was equivalent to that which was needed to bring about all existence. *Avraham* was the beginning of a new existence. From a spiritual perspective *Avraham* (with the additional “*hay*”) was unrelated to *Terach* (his father) or any of the generations that preceded him. He had transcended his status as a limited being to that of being unlimited.

The Jewish people are identified as the eternal people with relevance to the infinite only because they are the spiritual descendants of *Avraham*. With this we can understand the meaning of “*veyhei beracha* – and you will be the blessing.

Rashi: “*Veyhei beracha*” can mean “They (the Jewish people) will conclude their blessing with you (*Avraham*).”

In the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) the opening of the first blessing is “Blessed are You...G-d of our forefathers, G-d of *Avraham*, G-d of *Yitzchak*, and G-d of *Yaakov*...” However, the conclusion of the blessing is, “...Blessed are You, *Hashem*, Shield of *Avraham*.” One would think that the conclusion should mention all of the Patriarchs as they were mentioned previously in the blessing; however, G-d says it will conclude only with *Avraham*.

On a simple level, the reason the blessing concludes only with *Avraham*, and not with all of the Patriarchs, is because had it not been for *Avraham*’s coming upon G-d there would not be a “G-d of *Yitzchak*” or a “G-d of *Yaakov*.” However we are able to understand this on a more profound level with our understanding of the significance of the additional “*hay*.” When the letter “*hay*” was added to *Avram*, he became a different dimension

of person which was the equivalent of all existence because of his uncompromising quest for truth. Since he was the one to bring about a new existence it is appropriate to conclude the blessing with him.

The Difficulty of Recognizing One’s Own Failings (*From Noah*)

Torah: “*Noach* did (*vayaas Noach*) according to everything G-d commanded him, so he did (*kein aasa*).”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “*Vayaas Noach* (*Noach* did) refers to the fact that *Noach* built the Ark as he was commanded by G-d.” Why is it necessary for the *Torah* to allude to *Noach*’s building of the Ark when it states it explicitly after this verse? After *Noach* had completed building the Ark (after 120 years) and gathering all the food that was necessary to feed all the species that would enter into the Ark, the *Torah* states, “And *Noach* did (*vayaas Noach*) according to everything that *Hashem* had commanded him.”

Rashi: This verse is referring to *Noach* entering into the Ark. The following verse continues, “*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*: This verse is telling us that *Noach* only entered into the Ark because of the Floodwaters. He was thus considered a “small believer” (*katnei amana*) because he did not enter the Ark immediately upon G-d’s command but only when he was forced to do so. Seemingly these two verses contradict one another. After the completion of the Ark, the *Torah* tells us that *Noach* had done all that G-d commanded him to do – meaning he entered into the Ark. However, the following verse tells us that he entered only because the Floodwaters forced him to do so indicating that he did not do as G-d commanded him. How do we reconcile these two verses?

Chazal cited by *Rashi*: *Noach* was a small believer because he doubted whether the Great Flood would actually happen. Thus he only entered into the Ark because he was forced to do so. *Noach* devoted 120 years of his life to building the Ark and gathering all of the food that was necessary. On the 120th anniversary of *Noach*’s project, an unlimited number of species of animals began streaming towards the Ark (two of the non-Kosher species and seven of each Kosher species–

male and female) and were admitted into the Ark. This seemingly indicated that the end of existence was near, as G-d had told him. Despite this, *Noach* resisted entering the Ark until he was forced to do so because of the Floodwaters. *Noach's* behavior clearly indicated that he did not believe that the Flood was going to actually occur. How do we understand this?

G-d had told *Noach* that the Flood was only going to happen if the people of his generation did not repent within 120 years. His mission and responsibility was to influence them to the point of *teshuvah* (repentance) and thus avert the destruction of the world. The Prophet identifies Great Flood as "*Mai Noach* – the waters of *Noach*" indicating that because *Noach* had failed in his mission, the world was being destroyed. *Noach* was culpable for the destruction of the world because of his spiritual standing (as a *tzaddik* – righteous). He was given the task and responsibility of bringing humanity back to G-d. Initially when G-d commanded *Noach* to build the Ark, the *Torah* tells us that *Noach* did as he was commanded.

Chazal: The building of the Ark was only to arouse the attention of the generation to inquire – why this unusual structure was being built? The Ark was only a medium to bring about a dialogue between *Noach* and his generation. *Noach's* agreeing to build the Ark was the equivalent of assuming responsibility for this monumental task- averting the destruction of the world. After the Ark was completed, 120 years later, *Noach* was

told by G-d to enter into the Ark. Meaning, the world was going to be destroyed. This directive of G-d to *Noach* was the equivalent of saying – "*Noach* you have failed in your task. The world will be destroyed due to your failing."

Noach had difficulty accepting this reality admitting to himself that he had truly failed. Thus he did not accept the reality of the Flood until he was forced to enter into the Ark because of the Floodwaters. This is why he is referred to as a "small believer" (*katnei amana*). He did not accept G-d's command at face value. Why is *Noach* only identified as a "small believer?" His classification should have been "nonbeliever" because he did not believe that the Flood was going to happen – similar to the rest of his generation.

Torah: Initially when it began to rain, if the generation would have done *teshuvah*, the rainwater would have been "rains of blessing" – *gishmei beracha*." However, if they do not, then it would be a deluge/flood – "*mabul* – flood." Their level of rejection was to such a degree that although all the indicators were in place to confirm destruction, they did not do *teshuvah* because they were "non-believers." Contrastingly, although *Noach* hesitated to enter, ultimately he did enter as G-d had commanded him. If he would have been a non-believer as the members of his generation, he would have perished in the Floodwaters as they had. Therefore his classification is "small believer" (*katnei amana*)."

