



G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Noach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Noach Found Favor in the Eyes of Hashem

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Toldos Noach

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Why Noach Merited Children

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Midas HaDin Intervenes

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Noach Was Lacking in Faith

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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 3X.
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

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 end 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: This can 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: The verse, "*Noach* walked with G-d" means 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: "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.

Torah: 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.

Midrash in Ki Seitzei: *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.

Maharsha: “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, “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: 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.

The Ark as a Refuge

Torah: "When *Noach* was five hundred years old, *Noach* begot *Shem*, *Cham*, and *Yefes*."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "*Reb Yehudah* asks, 'What is the reason that all the generations prior to *Noach* fathered children after one hundred years and *Noach* fathered his children only after he was five hundred years old?' G-d said, 'If his children should become evil then they will perish in the Great Flood. This will bring great pain and anguish to the *tzaddik* (*Noach*). If they should become devoutly righteous then I will burden *Noach* to build multiple arks. (Just as *Noach* needed to build an ark for himself, he would need to build one for each of his children).

"Therefore, G-d suppressed his ability to have children until the age of five hundred. This was so that his children should be less than one hundred years old before the coming of the Great Flood. As it is written, (before the Flood) one who is less than one hundred year was not held accountable for his deeds (he is considered a minor)."

If *Noach's* children would become devoutly righteous, one would think that they would build their own arks, as their father had done. Why would *Noach* need to build their arks in addition to his own? If in fact *Noach's* children were *tzaddikim*, why could they have not been included in his ark?

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: When the Attribute of Justice is meted out, it does not differentiate between the devoutly righteous and the evil. There is no individual who is perfect enough to survive the prosecution of the Attribute of Justice.

King Solomon in *Ecclesiastes*: "There is no righteous person who does good in the land who does not sin." If this is so, the *Gemara* asks, "Why did *Noach* survive the Great Flood?" The *Gemara* answers that the reason *Noach* was spared was he found special favor in G-d's eyes. Being a *tzaddik* alone would not have been sufficient to spare *Noach* from the Flood.

Gemara: Although *Noach's* children would have been devoutly righteous, building their own arks would not have been sufficient to spare them from destruction. This is because being righteous alone was not sufficient from being protected from the

Attribute of Justice. The ark needed to be formed by their father *Noach* because he was seen by G-d as special. Thus, they would be protected as a result of what he had created. Since his children were under the age of accountability, which was one hundred year, they were able to be spared because of their father's merit and favor, regardless of their classification of devoutly righteous or evil. This is the reason G-d suppressed *Noach's* ability to father children until the age of five hundred.

If *Noach's* sons had been of the age of accountability and were classified as "tzaddikim," why could they not have been spared simply by being in their father's ark? Why would *Noach* need to build for them individual arks? *Noach* would need to build an ark for each child to acknowledge each of them as a *tzaddik*, who deserved to be spared in his own right; however, it would not have been considered adequate and sufficient without the merit of their father finding special favor in G-d's Eyes. Although it is the ark itself that would provided protection for *Noach's* children from destruction, it needed to be built by *Noach* who had another dimension of worthiness. It is not the entity alone that provides protection but rather it is the one who is associated with the creation of that entity.

Chazal: We find a similar concept regarding *Moshe*. Anything with which *Moshe* was associated assumed a permanent status. Since *Moshe* was associated with the building of the *Mishkan*, it assumed an eternal status. Unlike the First and Second Temple, it was never destroyed nor did it fall into the hands of the enemy.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Although the *Torah* tells us that after *Moshe* had been instructed by G-d to build the *Mishkan* he delegated the actual building to the Jewish people, based on the principle that an agent is the equivalent of the one who established the agency, the participation of the Jewish people in the construction and development of the *Mishkan* were considered to be the equivalent of *Moshe* himself building it.

Gemara: *Hillel* the Elder had eighty students. The greatest of them all was *Reb Yonason Ben Uziel* and the least of them was *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai*. Regarding *Torah* knowledge, there was no difference between *Hillel's* greatest student and his smallest student. If this is so, what is the difference between

them? When birds would fly over the head of *Reb Yonason Ben Uziel* when he studied *Torah*, they would be consumed by fire; this was not the case with *Reb Yochanon Ben Zakai*, although he possessed no less *Torah* knowledge than *Reb Yonason Ben Uziel*.

Ramchal: The determining factor that differentiates is one's dimension of spirituality. Two individuals may possess the same degree of knowledge, yet the affect and impact upon existence is determined by one's spiritual dimension.

The Necessity of Blind Faith

Torah: "The end of all flesh has come before Me...I am about to destroy them from the earth. Make for yourself an Ark..."

Rashi based on the *Midrash*: "Why did G-d command *Noach* to build an Ark of such a dimension? If the purpose of the Ark was to perpetuate existence into the future, G-d has the ability to avail a setting that could have brought that about without an ark. Why was it necessary for *Noach* to build the Ark?"

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "(*Noach* was a world-renowned figure.) His involvement in this project that would take 120 years to complete would attract the attention of all mankind. This would allow *Noach* to enter into dialogue with the members of his generation, in order to impress upon them the need for them to repent so that the world would not be destroyed." The initial objective of the Ark was not to create a refuge but rather it was to be a focal point for *Noach* to persuade his generation to repent.

Torah: After *Noach* had completed the building of the Ark, "*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 the *Midrash*: This verse is telling us that *Noach* only entered into the Ark because of the floodwaters that were upon him.

Midrash: "We see from this that *Noach* was one of small faith (*katnei amaanah*). He believed and at the time he did not believe. He had entered into the Ark only after the floodwaters were upon him, thus forcing him to enter. Until that moment he was not convinced that he needed to enter into the Ark."

If *Noach* had invested 120 years of his life in building the Ark and gathering all the food that was necessary, it is evident that he truly believed that the Great Flood would surely come. If so, what was the cause of his hesitation and resistance? The fact that *Noach* had spent 120 years of his life building the Ark was only to create a setting to be a focal point for the members of his generation to admonish him to repent. If he would succeed, there would be no Great Flood and the world would continue. However, if in fact they did not repent, the world would be destroyed, which would be a confirmation that *Noach* had failed in his mission.

The Prophet refers to the floodwaters as “the waters of *Noach (mei Noach)*.” When G-d had told *Noach* to enter into the Ark with his family, he had initially resisted because he could not admit to himself that he had failed in achieving his objective. This would indicate that *Noach* was responsible for the destruction of existence. He thus convinced himself that until the floodwaters would come upon him, there was still a possibility that the generation would repent.

Regardless of his justification for hesitation, *Noach*’s not responding to G-d’s command is the basis for being classified as “one of small faith.” G-d’s dictate to enter in to the Ark should have confirmed that repentance was no longer a possibility. His conflict of interest was so overwhelming that he could not recognize truth. However, when he had seen the floodwaters rising, he had no choice but to accept that he had truly failed.

Midrash: Every year of the 120 years of the building of Ark on the anniversary of its commencement, the members of *Noach*’s generation would come to him and ask, “Why are you building an Ark?” He would respond to them, “You must repent your evil ways because if not G-d will destroy you and your families with the Great Flood.”

Hearing this, they would ridiculed and mock him saying, “If G-d will bring a Flood it will come upon you and your family and not upon us.” On the anniversary of the 120th year of the building of the Ark, which was the time designated for the coming of the Great Flood, the members of *Noach*’s generation once again gathered and asked, “The time has come of the destruction of the world. Where is the Great Flood that you told us would come if we did not repent?” *Noach* had no answer.

Chazal: The reason the flood was delayed seven days was because *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. *Noach* did not know this. He believed that since the Flood did not come about as G-d had initially stated, it was surely the Mercy of G-d that intervened on behalf of the generation.

Although G-d had told him to enter into the Ark, it was seen by *Noach* as a contradiction. On one hand he believed that G-d was going to be merciful, yet he was told to enter into the Ark indicating that the Flood was imminent. He thus hesitated. This is the reason *Chazal* refer to *Noach* as one who had “small faith.” He should have understood and responded immediately to G-d’s command without hesitation, despite his lack of understanding of the events.

Noach’s Role as Caretaker of Existence

Torah: “*Noach*, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard.” How did *Noach* debase himself?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “*Noach* debased himself because he should have chosen to plant something other than a vineyard.”

Midrash Tanchumah, not cited by *Rashi*: A man of *Noach*’s dimension, whose classification was devoutly righteous, should have not chosen to become a “man of the earth” by devoting his time to agricultural pursuits and not spiritual matters, thus debasing himself.

Sforno: “How did *Noach* become debased? He began with an inappropriate initiative (choosing to become an agriculturist) and from there he continued to regress. Initially when one decides to take an inappropriate initiative, it will ultimately lead one to greater levels of spiritual failure. As it is known in the teachings of philosophy, if one begins with a false premise, it will lead to a conclusion that is further away from truth.”

Noach initially chose to become an agriculturalist, not necessarily interested in planting a vineyard; however his final choice was to plant the vineyard. This lead him to drink from its wine, which further lead him to the ultimate level of disgrace. If existence had been

destroyed by G-d because of its lack of spirituality and extreme level of depravity, why did *Noach* choose to pursue agriculture (a mundane pursuit), and not spirituality? One would think that he should have assumed the role of being the spiritual leader of the new existence after personally witnessing the destruction of the world and being the beneficiary of revealed miracles that saved him and his family.

Torah: When *Adam* was initially created he was placed in the Garden of Eden “to work it and care for it.” When *Noach* emerged from the ark after the Great Flood he had entered into a new existence. Since *Adam*, who was the handiwork of G-d, had been the caretaker of the Garden at the beginning of Creation, *Noach* believed that he too should assume an identical role to be responsible for the physicality of existence. This decision was incorrect because it was based on a false premise.

When *Adam* was created, he entered into a world in which physicality was indiscernible from the spiritual. It was a physical existence that possessed a spiritual dimension. Thus, *Adam*’s role as the care taker of the *Garden of Eden* was not that of a farmer tilling the earth. After *Adam* sinned by eating of the Tree of Knowledge he putrefied himself and existence, thus separating it from the spiritual. As a consequence of his sin, existence became physical and mundane and was no longer infused with spirituality. Therefore, when *Noach* came into the new existence after the Great Flood, it assumed the same level of physicality that it had after the sin of *Adam*. By pursuing the role of caretaker of the earth, he became quantified as “man of the earth,” thus leading him to disgrace and debasement.



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