



G-D'S UNFATHOMABLE GENIUS SAVES THE DAY

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Noach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Noach: The Father of Mankind

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Acknowledging a Tzaddik in Context of Bracha

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Noach's Task to Save the World

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Noach Plateaued

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The World Reached a Point of No Return

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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



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Understanding Noach's Challenge

Torah: Hashem commanded Noach to build a *Tevah* (Ark) according to specific dimensions. It took Noach 120 years to build the *Tevah* and to gather the food necessary to sustain all of the species that it was meant to hold. "Noach did according to everything G-d commanded him, so he did."

Rashi: This verse is referring to the fact that Noach followed Hashem's building instructions exactly. Why does the *Torah* need to tell us that Noach did precisely as Hashem commanded him? Why would we think otherwise since it says that Noach was devoted and perfect in all of his generations. When the *Torah* refers to the *Chok* (Statute) of the *Par Adumah* (Red Heifer) it expresses itself as, "Zos chukkas ha'Torah (This is the Statute of the *Torah*)."

Midrash: The Statute of the *Par Adumah* was not comprehensible even to Shlomo HaMelech (King

Solomon – the wisest man to ever live). As he states in *Ecclesiastes*, "It is beyond me." Meaning that although we, as human beings, may have difficulty understanding this Statute, we must follow it without question because it is the Decree of Hashem.

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: "It is My decree and you have no right to question it." The Statute of the Red Heifer is beyond human comprehension because the service of the *Par Adumah*, which is the process of removing the spiritual impurity of the contamination of the dead, purifies the person who was contaminated and conversely, contaminates the person who is in a pure state. If the *Par Adumah* inherently has the ability to purify, then why does it contaminate the person who is pure? This contradiction exists only in the human realm; however, in the Divine realm there is no contradiction. Therefore the *Torah* states, "This is THE decree" – meaning that we must adhere to it regardless of our lack of understanding.

The specifications of *Noach's* Ark were approximately six hundred feet in length, one hundred feet in width and sixty feet in height. In addition to *Noach* and his family, it was meant to contain two of every non-*Kosher* species (including all reptiles, insects birds, domesticated and undomesticated animals) and seven of every *Kosher* species. It seems that the building of the Ark would be an exercise in futility since something of a limited dimension cannot hold contents beyond its capacity.

It would seem impossible for this limited structure to accommodate an endless number of creatures. If *Noach* had difficulty in assuming this endeavor, it would have been understandable. However, with unswerving faith in *Hashem*, he immediately began building the Ark. This is the meaning of the verse, “*Noach* did according to everything G-d commanded him, so he did.”

Midrash: One of the reasons *Noach* built the Ark over 120 years was so that the people of the generation should see him and ask him about its purpose. By engaging in dialogue *Noach* would have the opportunity to alert the people that the world would be destroyed if they did not make corrections in their lives and do *teshuvah* (repent). He built the Ark despite the ridicule that he received when he said that the purpose of the Ark was to accommodate an endless number of living species – which seemed physically impossible. Nevertheless, *Noach* did not waiver and was undeterred.

On a human level one is able to understand the Splitting of the Sea because it is simply a question of parting the waters (which is not beyond *Hashem's* ability); however, putting thousands of gallons of water into a three ounce cup is beyond the human capacity to comprehend. One of the miracles that took place in the *Bais HaMikdash* (The Temple) was that although on *Yom Kippur* all those who were present in the Sanctuary stood pressed together – when they heard the pronouncement of the Name of *Hashem* by the High Priest, they prostrated themselves to their full length without any difficulty. The *Bais HaMikdash* had a specific dimension in the physical context; however, vis-à-vis its functionality it had an unlimited capacity.

We are limited to the physical realm and cannot comprehend anything beyond that. *Noach* was able to negate his understanding to such a degree that he was able to follow the Dictate of *Hashem* regardless of his

inability to comprehend the impossible. This aspect of *Noach's* greatness is being communicated to us by the verse, “*Noach* did according to everything G-d commanded him so he did.” In life, we face situations that are not comprehensible; however, if *Hashem* says that events will unfold in a certain manner then we accept them as fact.

For example, at the end of the world, at the time of the Armageddon, the Jewish people will be confronted by all the nations of the world and ultimately defeat them. How is it possible that, relatively speaking, a handful of people are able to defeat an unlimited enemy? The answer is that if this is what *Hashem* has communicated to us through the Prophets then it will take place in its proper time. This goes unquestioned and is the perspective that a Jew must have. *Noach's* building of the Ark, according to the specifications prescribed by *Hashem* to accommodate an unlimited number of animals, is the equivalent of following the *Chok* (Statute) of the Red Heifer.

The Importance of Identifying the Tzaddik

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

Rashi: If the *Torah* intended to discuss the offspring of *Noach*, then why interject a description of *Noach* as a righteous man?

Rashi citing *Chazal* based on a verse in *Mishlei* (*Proverbs*): “A *tzaddik* must be remembered in a context of blessing.” Meaning, once a *tzaddik* is mentioned one must describe his praiseworthiness. Therefore, when the *Torah* mentions *Noach* it must state, “*Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations...” How do we understand this principle stated by *Shlomo HaMelech* in *Proverbs*? The verse from *Mishlei* concludes, “The names of the Evil should rot” – in other words should be blotted out.

Rabbeinu Chananel (one of the early commentators): “Since *Hashem* knows the future then why did He bring *tzaddikim* into existence when He already knows that the *tzaddik* will succeed?” Why must the *tzaddik* experience all of the difficulties of life if *Hashem* knows that he will succeed despite them? The evil person must come into existence because he can

only be culpable for his sins if he actually chooses to transgress. The *tzaddik* does not exist for his own sake. Rather, he exists to be the role model for all humanity so that a true model of goodness can be observed.

Therefore, the *tzaddik* needs to exist in order to exemplify righteousness in the world. However, if he is an unknown entity, humanity will not understand true goodness nor have the ability to choose between good and evil. Therefore *Shlomo HaMelech* states in *Mishlei* that when we speak of a *tzaddik* he should be identified as such and his praiseworthiness and specialness should be made known.

It is not enough to mention *Noach* and then describe his offspring. The *Torah* must identify *Noach* as the *tzaddik* so that the world can appreciate him as the role model of devoutness since that is his purpose in existence. The *Torah* mentioned the righteousness of *Noach* in the context of fathering his children so that we can understand why they merited surviving the Great Flood. The offspring survived only in the merit of their father.

Rashi in *Bereishis* (*Genesis*): The offspring of *Noach* were considered “minors” because they were less than one hundred years old at the time of the Great Flood (before the Flood anyone less than one hundred years old was considered a minor).

The Relevance of Noach’s Righteousness to Mankind

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: When one mentions a *tzaddik* one should acknowledge his praiseworthiness. If the *Torah* wanted to highlight this special dimension of *Noach*, then why not simply start the Portion with, “*Noach* was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; *Noach* walked with G-d” and then discuss the offspring of *Noach*? Why interrupt one statement with the other?

Evidently, there must be a connection between the importance of the “offspring” of *Noach* and his classification as a *tzaddik*. All of the families that descended from Adam perished in the Great Flood except for *Noach* and his family. Therefore, in essence *Noach* is the father of all mankind and is the antecedent of all humanity; all the characteristics that he possessed were inherited by his descendents. Every human being, both Jew and non-Jew have relevance to

the potential of *Noach*. At this point, it is important to acknowledge *Noach* as the *tzaddik* because it informs us about the characteristics which mankind inherited from him and therefore we all have the chance to be the *tzaddik*.

The potential of every non-Jew is demonstrated by the righteousness of *Noach*. The potential of every Jew is even greater because he also has relevance to the spiritual characteristics and accomplishments of the Patriarchs – *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov* from whom every Jew descends.

Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (*The Laws of Teshuvah*): “Every human being has the ability to choose the good path to be the *tzaddik*. Additionally, every person also has the ability to choose the evil path and become a *rasha*. Let it not pass into your mind, like the fools of the nations of the world say, that *Hashem* has predetermined who will be the *tzaddik* or who will be the *rasha*. There is no basis to this. Every person can become a *tzaddik* like *Moshe Rabbeinu* or a *rasha* like *Yiravam Ben Nevot*.”

Torah: “These are the offspring of *Noach*...” This informs us that all mankind descends from *Noach*. Then the *Torah* describes *Noach*’s spiritual status as perfect and as the *tzaddik* in order to inform us that this is within the potential of Man vis-à-vis free choice. Every person has relevance to achieve a level of righteousness as *Noach* did and every Jew has relevance to the spirituality of the Patriarchs.

Tanah D’Eei Eliyahu: Every Jew should ask himself, “When will my accomplishments be as great as my Forefathers – *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov*?” These are the standards that we should aim to achieve.

Noach’s Level of Faith

Torah: After the 120-year project of building the Ark was complete, “*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*: *Noach* was deficient in his faith because he questioned if the Great Flood would actually take place. In fact, *Noach* did not enter the *Tevah* until he was forced to because of the Floodwaters. The *Torah* clearly states the fact that *Noach* only entered the *Tevah* under duress.

Torah: “And *Noach* did according to everything that *Hashem* had commanded him.”

Rashi: This verse is telling us that *Noach* entered the *Tevah* as *Hashem* commanded him. The question is how do we reconcile these two verses? One indicates that *Noach* had complete faith in *Hashem* because he entered the Ark as *Hashem* commanded him; the latter tells us that he only entered the Ark under duress because of the Floodwaters.

Over the course of the 120-year period when *Noach* was building the *Tevah*, the members of his generation would approach him every year and ask him, “Why are you building this Ark?” *Noach* would respond by telling them, “*Hashem* will bring a Flood upon existence in 120 years if mankind does not do *teshuvah*.” On the 120th anniversary of the building of the Ark, the members of his generation approached *Noach* and asked him, “Where is the Flood that you have been telling us about?” *Noach* did not know what to respond. He was in a quandary not knowing if it would actually happen.

Prior to the Flood all of the species of animals, and all living creatures, began to flock to the *Tevah* from all four corners of the earth. Every species of creature in existence entered the Ark, which was a sight never seen before. One would think that upon witnessing such a miracle that the people of *Noach*’s generation would understand that the end was approaching as *Noach* predicted. However, they did not respond. After all of the creatures were in the *Tevah* it began to rain and the people still did not take this as an indication that the end of existence was at hand nor did they do *teshuvah*. Because they did not make the necessary corrections, they were destroyed by the Floodwaters together with existence.

On the other hand, although *Noach* initially questioned whether the Flood would occur or not, nevertheless he understood that the end was near when the Floodwaters began to rise. It was his choice to process that final experience in its proper context and enter into the *Tevah*. Unlike the members of his generation, who were obstinate and refused to acknowledge the Hand of *Hashem*.

We may experience difficult times in our lives, which could in fact be the basis for a turning point to do *teshuvah*. Often when a person is subjected to hardship, he turns to *Hashem* and mends his ways. However, this is not necessarily the case. Many people

do not recognize their shortcomings nor do *teshuvah* even if they have suffering in their lives. However, even if a person is forced into doing *teshuvah* because of his hardships, that *teshuvah* still has value. The reason for this is that although it is done under duress, nevertheless it is attributed to his acknowledgement and understanding that difficulties emanate from his spiritual failings.

This is why the *Torah* goes out of its way to tell us, “*Noach*, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives with him, went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood” to indicate that *Hashem* values when we do the right thing despite the fact that it is done under duress. The Kindness of *Hashem* is like a parent to a child. The moment the child makes a move to correct his ways, (despite the parent’s involvement behind the scenes), the parent will value the child’s *teshuvah* and accept him immediately.

Noach’s Inability to Acknowledge his Failure

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Noach* was a small believer because he doubted if the Great Flood would actually occur. Therefore, the *Torah* tells us that *Noach* needed to be forced into the Ark by the Floodwaters. *Noach* devoted 120 years of his life to building the Ark and gathering all of the food that was necessary for the animals. On the 120th anniversary of *Noach*’s project, an endless species of animals began to enter the Ark indicating that the end of existence was near, just as *Hashem* had told *Noach*. Nevertheless, *Noach* resisted until he was forced to enter by the rising Floodwaters. Evidently, *Noach* believed that the Flood was not going to occur. How do we understand this?

Perhaps *Noach* believed that because *Hashem* is All Merciful he would not destroy the world despite the failings of his generation. The only reason *Noach* initially built the Ark was to engage them in dialogue so he could convince them to do *teshuvah* – under the threat of destruction. Before the Floodwaters actually began to rise, *Noach* had difficulty believing that the destruction of the world was going to occur.

Another understanding is that since *Hashem* had told *Noach* that the Flood was only going to occur if the people of his generation did not repent and correct their ways, his mission and responsibility

was to influence them to do *teshuvah* and avert the destruction of existence.

The Prophet refers to the waters of the Flood as “*Mai Noach* – the waters of *Noach*” indicating that since *Noach* failed in his mission, the world was being destroyed by the Great Flood. Because *Noach* was a *tzaddik* who was perfect in his generations and intimate with G-d, he had the potential to succeed at his mission of influencing the world positively. However, he did not succeed despite all of his efforts.

After 120 years, *Hashem* told *Noach* to enter into the Ark indicating that he had failed in his mission. The destruction of the world was due to his failing. *Noach* had difficulty accepting that he failed in his mission because he knew that he had been capable of turning his generation around. Therefore, *Hashem* had to force *Noach* to understand that he had failed through the rising of the Floodwaters.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: When *Moshe Rabbeinu* became frustrated with leading the Jewish people by himself, *Hashem* told him to appoint seventy elders to assist him. *Moshe* used a lottery method to determine who would be the seventy elders to assist him. Given the number of eligible people, *Moshe* wrote the word “elder” on seventy pieces of parchment and wrote nothing on two of them.

Moshe chose seven elders from each of the twelve tribes and had them draw lots. The seventy who had drawn lots with the word “elder” were chosen while the two who drew the blank lots were told by *Moshe*,

“*Hashem* has no interest in you.” Although every one of the seventy-two individuals seemed to have met the grade as an elder, nevertheless the two that were rejected were blatantly told that they were not qualified and had no choice but to accept that reality.

Korach, a Levite by birth, was a wise elder and the wealthiest Jew, believed that after *Moshe* and *Aaron*, he was the most qualified for the appointment. When *Korach* was not chosen to be the leader of the Levites and was passed over by a younger cousin, he was incensed. He could not accept the fact that it was due to his own spiritual deficiency. Rather, he attributed it to nepotism and thought that *Moshe* deliberately passed him over. Because of his unwillingness to accept the fact that *Hashem* rejected him, he attempted to usurp *Moshe*’s authority, which in fact would have destroyed the Jewish people.

Noach could not accept that he, the *tzaddik* of the generation, had not succeeded in influencing the people of his generation to do *teshuvah*. *Noach*’s ego prevented him from willingly admitting failure and from entering the Ark upon the command of *Hashem*. He had to be forced by the Floodwaters to accept failure.



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