

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES

Parshas Noach

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Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Parshas Noach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. G'd Favors the Pursued

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that Noach, despite the fact that he was a righteous and devout person, should have perished along with his generation in the Great Flood. Rashi explains that when the Attribute of Justice is unleashed, It does not differentiate between the righteous (tzaddik) and the evil (rasha). The reason for this is the Attribute of Justice demands perfection – even the tzaddik is not perfect. If this is so, then why was Noach spared?

The Gemara explains that Noach was spared from the Great Flood because “**He found favor (chein) in the Eyes of G'd.**” It was not because of his exceptional level of righteousness that he and his family were spared, but rather it was only because he found “favor” in the Eyes of G'd. What did Noach possess or do that gained him this special status?

The Midrash in the Portion of Emor cites a verse from Koheles (Ecclesiastes), “*Elokim yevakeish ha nirdaf* - G'd desires (seeks out) the pursued.” There are two approaches to understanding the meaning of this verse. Simply, one can say that G'd seeks out and favors those who are in a precarious and helpless position. Another understanding of this verse is that G'd places an individual in a pursued states because He knows that the individual's spiritual potential can only be actualized within the context of being the pursued.

The Midrash offers examples of G'd seeking out the pursued, “A tzaddik pursues another tzaddik, a rasha pursues another rasha, a rasha pursues a tzaddik, and a tzaddik pursues a rasha. In all of these examples G'd will favor the pursued – even if a righteous person pursues an evil person.” When one is in a state of being pursued, it is a predicament that is unceasing and unrelenting. One comes to the realization that he has exhausted all of his alternatives to extricate him from the situation. This predicament causes the pursued to attain a special level of clarity that there is no one to rely upon other than G'd Himself. When one internalizes to the core of his being

the basis of his existence, he is seen by G'd as someone very special. Thus, G'd seeks out the pursued. With this understanding, we are able to explain why G'd will favor the evil person when he is pursued - even by the tzaddik. One who is evil chooses to be so because of a lack of clarity. However when he is put in the position of being the pursued, he has the opportunity to gain a new level of clarity, which causes him to repent.

The Midrash continues, “As we see, Hevel was pursued by Cain. G'd therefore turned towards (favored) the offering of Hevel and He did not turn to Cain's offering. Noach was pursued by the members of his generation. As it is written, ‘**Noach found favor in the Eyes of G'd.**’ Avraham was pursued by Nimrod. It was because of this he was chosen to survive the fiery kiln of Kasdim...Moshe was pursued by Pharaoh (after he had killed the Egyptian). He thus merited being the chosen of G'd, which qualified him to be the Redeemer of Israel and receive the Torah at Sinai.”

According to the Midrash, it was only because of the pursued state of each of these individuals that they were able to achieve their potential. Noach was singled out to be spared because he was pursued by the members of his generation. He thus gained favor (chein) in the Eyes of G'd. G'd had placed him in the role of being the pursued by giving him the task of building the Ark. The objective of building the Ark over a 120-year period was to attract the attention of the members of his generation. He would thus enter into dialogue and reproach them. He had said to them that unless they repent within a 120-year period, the world would be destroyed by a Great Flood. Since Noach had the potential to attain a special spiritual level, G'd placed him in the position of being the pursued.

It is interesting to note that Moshe, the greatest Jew who ever walked the face of the Earth, was only chosen by G'd to be the conduit of Torah to the Jewish people and the Redeemer of Israel because he was pursued by Pharaoh. G'd placed him in the situation of being pursued by Pharaoh so that he could ultimately actualize his potential.

G'd brings untenable situations upon people in order to give them the opportunity to gain clarity and advance their spirituality. When one comes to the realization that regardless of one's own abilities and achievements, the only one that can be relied upon is G'd Himself, he will advance spiritually and thus attain his potential. It is only because G'd loves that individual that he is placed in the position of being the pursued.

2. *Meriting Special Divine Assistance*

The Torah states, **"Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G'd..."** There is a Positive Commandment for a Jew to emulate the ways of G'd. As it states, "Just as He is merciful you must be merciful. Just as He is gracious you must be gracious." Each one of the Patriarchs chose to emulate G'd in their own way. Avraham our Patriarch had chosen the characteristic of chesed (kindness). Yitzchak emulated the characteristic of din (exactness/justice) and Yaakov emulated the characteristic of rachamim (mercy).

Regarding Noach, Sforno explains, "Noach walked in the way of G'd by doing good for others and admonishing the members of his generation." Noach attempted to impress upon his generation the importance of repentance in order to change their ways – thus averting the destruction of existence. It was in this manner that he emulated G'd – by showing concern for his fellow human being.

After extolling Noach in this manner, the Torah continues, **"Noach had begotten three sons: Shem, Cham, and Yefes."** The Torah had previously stated at the end of the Portion of Bereishis, **"Noach begot Shem, Cham, and Yefes."** Why does the Torah need to repeat a fact that was previously stated? Sforno explains that the juxtaposition of Noach fathering three sons to **"Noach walked in the way of G'd"** communicates to us that Noach only merited having children because he admonished the members of his generation. Since he was concerned for the well-being of others, G'd rewarded him with children.

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that Noach began having children at the age of 500. Since people lived unusually long lives in that era. One was not considered an adult, liable for his spiritual failings, until he was a 100 years old. Prior to that age he was considered a youth and under the jurisdiction of the father. Since G'd did not want to cause Noach any anguish if his children should fail, He did not allow him to father children until he was 500 years

old. Thus, his children would be less than 100 years old at the time of the Great Flood – without any culpability.

Although Avraham and Sarah initially did not have children (because they were barren), the Torah tells us that they had **"made people (souls) in (the community of) Charan."** It was considered that they had brought lives into existence by impressing upon them to accept monotheism. As the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states, "When one teaches Torah to a fellow's child, it is as if he had fathered him." The essence of a person is his spirituality. Thus, if one develops the spirituality of another, it is as if he fathered that individual.

Noach merited (as Sforno explains) to have children because he did good to others and he had admonished the members of his generation. This is similar to teaching Torah to one's fellow's child because it touches upon his spirituality. This is the reason the Torah repeats the fact that Noach had three sons and juxtaposes this statement to **"...Noach walked with G'd..."**

Life has many pitfalls and difficult situations. In order for one to be protected from tragedy and harm, one needs to have special Divine Protection. The way one merits having that special protection is by doing good for others and being concerned about their spirituality. This is brought about by encouraging them to engage in the study of Torah, which touches upon the essence of their spirituality.

3. *Life is Not Necessarily a Continuum*

The Torah states, **"These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G'd."** The Midrash states, "Why is the name of Noach mentioned three times in the verse? He is one of the three individuals who saw three different worlds – Noach, Daniel, and Eyov (Job). Noach had seen the world in its settled state (before the Flood), in its destroyed state, and again in its settled state (after the Flood). Noach had lived in the era prior to the Great Flood and in the era when the world was reestablished. Daniel saw the First Temple, its destruction, (was exiled to Babylon), and then saw the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Eyov initially was a man of renown with great wealth and a very large family. He saw all of his possessions and family destroyed. Ultimately his life was restored –even to a greater extent."

The Midrash is telling us that the significance of mentioning "Noach" three times is teach us that he experienced three different situations. One could easily

understand that Noah lived before, during and after the Great Flood simply by reading the narrative. What is the value and lesson to be learned by repeating “Noah” three times?

The value of repeating Noah’s name three times is to reveal to us that although the Torah is referring to the same individual, he functioned as a different person in each one of his predicaments. Prior to the destruction of existence Noah had a specific mission and function. His role in existence was to utilize his ability and potential within the context of a more physically developed world. In addition, his mission was to build the Ark and enter into dialogue with the members of his generation to cause them to repent. During the period of destruction, his function only existed within the confines of the Ark – to attend to the needs of the remnant that was spared. After the Great Flood when the world was re-established, it was a different dimension of existence. For example, the longevity of man was greatly reduced. Noah functioned differently in this new dimension of existence. Thus, he was a different man.

Daniel had seen the First Temple, its destruction, and the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The Gemara tells us that there were five things that were lacking in the Second Temple – the most significant of them all was the absence of the Shechina (Divine Presence). Physically, the Second Temple was magnificent; however, without the Divine Presence it was a deficient entity. During the First Temple period, Daniel had a different level of opportunity because of G’d’s Presence in existence. He had access to another level of Divine Assistance. At the time of the destruction, this ended. In the state of exile, Daniel assumed another role. There are many things that are attributed to Daniel’s relationship with the Babylonian Emperor that impacted upon the Jewish people. After the rebuilding of the Second Temple, the Land of Israel assumed another dimension of sanctity due to G’d concealing Himself, thus causing Daniel to assume another role. He was the equivalent of another person.

Equating Eyov to Noah and Daniel seems to be slightly problematic. Eyov’s change of predicament was only on a personal level. However, regarding Noah and Daniel, the entire world assumed another dimension of existence. Eyov was a devout and righteous (tzaddik) gentile who was endowed by G’d with great wealth and a very large family. Satan had asked G’d, “Would Eyov be such a righteous individual if all that he possessed would be taken with him and untold suffering brought upon him?” Subsequently Eyov lost everything and suffered to the degree that satan had requested. Nevertheless, he

maintained his level of righteousness. After withstanding the test, everything was restored to him (wealth and family) – even to a greater degree. Eyov in each of his predicaments functioned and affected the world differently as a tzaddik. He adapted, developed and advanced himself spiritually within each of his own contexts of existence.

Life is fraught with unlimited difficulties and challenges. Chazal are communicating to us through the examples of Noah, Daniel, and Eyov that one is given opportunities despite the difficult predicament in which one finds himself. One must adapt to the changes and function within them according to the Torah. One must remain firm in his commitment to G’d and advance his spiritually in every situation that he may encounter.

4. Torah – The Blueprint for Creation (from Berseishis)

Until the creation of Man/Adam, the Torah continuously refers to G’d in His process of Creation with the appellation of “Elokim.” Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that the appellation of “Elokim” refers to G’d in the context of Justice. G’d’s initial intent was to bring about creation through the Attribute of Justice, which is exacting and precise. However, since man is prone to fail, He coalesced the Attribute of Justice with the Attribute of Mercy so that the world would continue to exist despite the shortcomings of man.

Man is the only creation endowed with the ability to choose between good and evil/ right and wrong. Rambam writes in The Laws of Teshuvah (Repentance) that man is liable for punishment/culpable for his actions and worthy of reward for his meritorious acts because his actions are determined through his power of choice. Man is therefore the only creature that truly has relevance to the Attribute of Justice. If this is so then how do we understand the relevance of “Elokim”/Attribute of Justice being applied to the creation of Heaven and Earth, which have no ability to choose?

The Midrash tells us that the blueprint of creation was the Torah itself. Chazal state, “He (G’d) peered into the Torah and created the world.” The purpose and value of all that exists is only to be the setting for the fulfillment of the Torah. Since the Torah itself is perfect with nothing superfluous, every detail of creation itself is necessary because it is needed for the fulfillment of the Torah.

The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that one should not pray the Mussaf Service as an individual (outside of the context of a minyan -quorum of ten men)

during the first three hours of the day because it is a time when the Attribute of Justice is the most severe. The Gemara explains that because G'd studies Torah during this period, which is unadulterated Truth, it is a time of intense judgment. As King Solomon writes in Mishlei (Proverbs), "Acquire truth and do not sell it." Torah itself is absolute truth (emes) - without compromise or deficiency. Similarly, the Attribute of Justice is without compromise or deficiency.

Throughout the Creation process, the Torah refers to G'd with the appellation of "Elokim"/Attribute of Justice. This is because existence must be perfect and exact in order to accommodate the Torah, which is perfect and exact. It is because of the perfection and exactness of the Torah that creation came about through the Attribute of Justice.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that when two defendants come before a judge he should encourage mediation/compromise. In fact, the Gemara states that it is a mitzvah to bring about mediation. The Gemara explains that if mediation is accepted by both parties, each defendant will feel that he received a favorable ruling. However, the Gemara tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu never encouraged mediation. His position was always "Let the law pierce the mountain." Meaning, Moshe's approach was always to determine who was innocent or guilty (without compromise). His verdict was always precise and exact. If mediation is in fact a mitzvah, then why did Moshe choose the path of exact judgment? Moshe Rabbeinu was the embodiment/pillar of Torah. Because he was a man of uncompromising truth, "ishe emes", he was chosen by G'd to be the conduit through which the Torah was transmitted. Therefore, Moshe, being the individual who personified absolute truth, had no relevance to mediation/compromise.

5. *Existence- the Setting for Torah* (from Bereishis)

The Midrash states, "Reb Shimon Ben Lakish asks, 'Regarding the order of creation, as the sixth day is identified - yom *ha'shishi* (with the letter hey) why does the Torah refer to every day prior to the sixth day as 'yom echad (first day), yom sheini (second day) etc...without the day being preceded with the letter "hey?" It is because G'd had created the world with a precondition - 'If the Jewish people will accept the Torah, which is comprised of five books, then it will be good; however, if they do not I will allow existence to revert back to pre-creation.'"

The Torah begins with the words, "***Bereishis bara Elokim ais ha'Shemayim v'ais ha'aretz-*** In the beginning G'd created the heaven and the earth..." Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the word "Bereishis" is interpreted to mean that creation was brought about for the sake of "Reishis – the choicest" – which is the Torah and the Jewish people. The only purpose/value of existence is to be the setting within which to the Torah will be fulfilled. If the Jewish people were to reject the Torah, then existence would have no value, thus causing it to revert to a state of pre-existence.

It is interesting to note that the Torah, which is comprised of five books, is identified by the letter "hey", which has the numerical value of five. King David writes in Psalms, "*Ki be Ka Hashem tzur olamim* – With the two letter Name of G'd the worlds were formed." The Gemara in Tractate Menachos explains the verse to mean that G'd formed the worlds (spiritual and physical) with the letters "yud" and "hey" which together comprise one of the Names of G'd. The physical world was created with the spirituality that is contained within the letter "hey." The spiritual world was created with the spirituality contained within the letter "yud."

Maharal of Prague explains that the manifestation of physical existence came about through the letter "hey." Just as the word, "the" is used in the English language, in the Hebrew language the letter "hey" is also used to identify. The letter "hey" was chosen to bring about existence only because it signifies/symbolizes the Torah (which is comprised of five books). The letter "hey" signifies the purpose and value of existence. Its sole purpose is to be the setting for the fulfillment of the Torah. As the Prophet Yirmiyahu states, "If not for My Covenant (Torah) which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not have been put into place." The Prophet is telling us that not only was creation contingent on the Jewish people accepting the Torah at Sinai, but it is also contingent on the unceasing study of Torah, which must be in effect day and night.

6. *The Transformation of Adam After Eating the Fruit* (from Bereishis)

The Torah tells us that after Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge, "**Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked; and they sewed together a fig leaf and made themselves aprons...**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "**...they realized that they were naked...**" to mean that Adam and Eve realized that they were stripped of the one mitzvah

that they were given by G'd – namely not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

The Torah continues, **“G'd called out to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, so I hid.”** This verse is referring to Adam's shame due to his physical nakedness and not to the “nakedness” referred to in the previous verse. The cause of Adam's sense of shame and his awareness of his naked state came about after he had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. Before that he was not ashamed of his unclothed state.

Chazal tell us that prior to Adam's partaking of the fruit, his dimension of spirituality was at a level that radiated a holiness that had a semblance to G'd's own radiance. Adam's radiance was so intense that the heavenly angels had confused it with G'd's radiance and began singing praises. His level of clarity and perception of Truth was so acute that he was able to see from one end of the world to the other. There was nothing that was obscured from his view.

After Adam had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, Chazal tell us that he was spiritually diminished. He no longer radiated holiness as before. He immediately understood and sensed that his own spirituality was no longer at the level that it had been prior to the sin. He thus experienced and internalized the reality of his own diminishment to the core of his being. He understood that his physicality had been reduced to that of an animal and that he no longer had a semblance of his original state. This was the basis for Adam's shame. He thus wished to cover his deficient and minimized state of being.

Shame/conscience is rooted in the spirituality of the human being. One who has lost his sense of shame is an indication that he is devoid of spirituality. It is because he has totally embraced physicality as an end unto itself that he assumes the posture of an animal without any conscience. Thus, this individual is not ashamed of his nakedness.

Sforno explains **“...Then the eyes of both of them were opened...”** to mean “After Adam and Eve ate from the Tree they developed an interest in all that was pleasurable despite their understanding of its consequences. One who has a particular interest and applies himself in that area is referred to as ‘one whose eyes are opened.’ After eating from the Tree, Adam and Eve understood that their genitals needed to be covered

because they were capable of utilizing them in a manner that could be spiritually destructive.” Prior to eating from the Tree, because they were pure and holy, they were not drawn to anything but that which was good. However, after eating the fruit Adam and Eve understood that they were inclined and driven by their desires – and thus could utilize their sexuality in a negative manner. Thus, they were ashamed and wished to cover that area of the body. They had taken something that was pure and transformed it into something that was detestable that could bring about their destruction.

If one has a sensitivity to spirituality and understands the potential to be drawn into inappropriate behavior that is contradictory to spirituality, he will take every precaution to prevent and avoid that predicament. Jewish law states that one is not permitted to endanger his life. Similarly from a spiritual perspective, one is not permitted to put himself in a situation of temptation or weakness that could harm him spiritually. One will only remove himself from such situations if he has a sensitivity to his own spirituality. King Solomon writes, “The hedonist walks in the dark.”

One who is immersed in physicality is the equivalent of a blind person who exposes himself, because of his handicap, to situations that are detrimental to his well being. Similarly, one who is not sensitive to spirituality is unaware of the precariousness of his situation and thus is prone to be spirituality diminished. Adam and Eve understood, because of their mistake of engaging in what was detrimental to their spirituality and clarity, that they were vulnerable to many pitfalls which initially they were not. Thus, they wanted to cover the genitals which represent that vulnerability.

Since we all possess serious spiritual handicaps, which are translated and expressed by physical desire, one must take the necessary precautions and establish fences to avoid spiritual harm. One needs to understand the nature of his inclinations and appreciate the precariousness of his predicament in order to initiate the proper safeguards.

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5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30- 7:25 am	Halacha
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi

2:00pm Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
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12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
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Tuesday

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
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Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
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1:00—2:00 pm Derech **Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
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