

**Yad Avraham Institute**  
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES

*Parshas Noach*

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5<sup>th</sup> of Mar Cheshvan

**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**

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**B"H**

## Parshas Noach

*Presented by*

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**

**Dean**

### ***1. A True Indication of Greatness***

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 asks, “Why is the name of Noach mentioned three times in the opening verse of the Portion? He is one of the three individuals who saw three different worlds – Noach, Daniel, and Eyov (Job). Noach had seen the world in its settled state (before the Great Flood), in its destroyed state, and again in its settled state (after the Great 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 returned to see 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 degree.” The meaning of the Midrash seems to be difficult. One could have easily understood that Noach had existed in three different settings simply by reading the narrative. What is the profound lesson to be learned by the Torah’s repetition of the name “Noach” three times?

Noach’s name is repeated in order to teach us that although the Torah is speaking about the same individual he is the equivalent of three different people. Prior to the destruction of the world Noach’s function and purpose was a specific mission and objective. His responsibility to mankind was to impact upon them through dialogue and personal behavior. Through the building of the Ark, Noach would seek the attention of his generation in order to share with them the impending destruction of existence if they do not change their evil ways. Ultimately Noach failed. Consequently, the world was destroyed. During the period of destruction, his responsibility and function was to maintain the remnant of existence that was contained within the Ark by attending to all of their needs. His objective was to take the initiative to bring the period of

the Great Flood to a conclusion so that the new existence can begin. Even before the Floodwaters had totally subsided, he first sent out the raven and then the dove to determine if the world was inhabitable. This was part of his initiative. After he was told by G’d to leave the Ark with all that was contained within it, his responsibility was to deal with all of the issues of the new existence. The longevity of the human being was greatly reduced, seasons that did not previously exist had been established, and the dimension of spirituality of the world was at a lesser level. Thus, Noach functioning within this context was the equivalent of another person.

Daniel had seen the First Temple in its built state, its destruction, and the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The Gemara tells us in Tractate Yomah that although the Second Temple was rebuilt, it was lacking five things that were significant to its dimension of spirituality. The most significant deficiency was the absence of the Shechina (Divine Presence) on an ongoing basis. Although the Second Temple may have been magnificent in its physicality, it did not possess its initial value. During the First Temple period, because of the dimension of spirituality that was available to the Jewish people, Daniel was meant to be effective within that plane of existence. However, after the destruction of the Temple, Daniel was exiled to Babylon where he assumed another function vis-à-vis the Jewish people. Daniel’s relationship and interaction with Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian Emperor was crucial to the Jewish people in exile. After the rebuilding of the Second Temple with the return of the Jewish people, Daniel’s mission in his capacity as a leader was the equivalent of another dimension of person.

Life is fraught with unlimited challenges and difficulties. In order to be effective in many situations, one must adapt to the needs of the moment. Very often one must expand his level of influence and interaction with his community and society. In other times, one must withdraw and act behind the scenes. Greatness is

determined by one being able to function in different guises and capacities based on the needs of the moment. The Torah and Chazal are communicating this precept to us through the examples of Noach, Daniel, and Eyov – who despite their outstanding and impactful effect in one context they were able to be equally as effective in another although it was dissimilar to the first. One's belief and commitment to G'd can under no circumstance be compromised. However the approach and area of involvement is determined by G'd's Calling.

## 2. Man Being Limited by His Own Limitation

The Torah states, **“The end of all flesh has come before Me...I am about to destroy them from the earth. Make for yourself an Ark...”** G'd commanded Noach to embark upon the building of the Ark, which would entail investing 120 years of his life. The Midrash explains that since Noach was a world-renowned figure, by engaging in this project it would attract the attention of his generation. Thus, allowing him to engage in dialogue in order to convince them to change their evil ways.

Over the course of the 120-year period the members of Noach's generation would approach him every year on the anniversary of the commencement of the project and ask, “Why are you engaged in building of the Ark?” He would respond, “Unless you change your evil ways and reconcile yourselves with G'd, G'd will destroy all humanity with a great Flood.” The members of his generation responded with derision and cynicism, “If the Flood will come, it will come upon you and your family and not us.” On the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary when the flood was meant to come, the members of his generation approached Noach and asked, “Where is the flood that you have been forecasting for the past 120 years?” Noach was not able to respond. Rashi cites Chazal who explain that Mesushelach, who was the tzaddik of that era, had passed away on the day that the Flood was meant to be. Out of respect for this great individual, G'd delayed the Flood for seven days.

The Torah states seven days later, **“Noach, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him, went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood.”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “The verse is communicating to us that Noach was a ‘small believer (*katnei amaanah*)’/deficient in his faith. Although he had believed that G'd can bring a great flood to destroy all existence as G'd had said; however, he questioned whether G'd would actually act on His Word. It was because of this mindset that he did not enter into the Ark until he was forced to do so by

the Floodwaters.” If Noach had invested 120 years of his life building the Ark, evidently he believed that the Flood was going to be if humanity did not correct its ways. If so, why was he resistant and did not enter into the Ark until he was forced to do so?

The Torah tells us that the Red Sea, that had split for the Jewish people, closed upon Pharaoh and his armies who were pursuing them after they had left Egypt. Although the Jewish people had witnessed the miracle of the splitting and closing of the Sea, they voiced their concern and fear to Moshe that perhaps the Egyptian army was not destroyed in the Sea, but rather they would come around the others side and pursue them further. To alleviate their fears, G'd caused the Sea to spit out the remains of the Egyptian army onto the seashore so that they could see that their pursuers were in fact destroyed. Chazal tell us that because of their concern and fear the Jewish people were “*katnei amaanah – small believers.*”

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

Reb Itzel Peterburger z'tl, who was one of the premier disciples of Reb Yirsoel Salanter z'tl, explains the term “*katnei amaanah – small believers.*” If one utilizes his own mode of evaluation to determine an event or G'd's involvement in existence, when the Torah's interpretation is contrary to the individual's understanding, the person is classified as “*katnei amaanah.*” Although the individual definitely believes without question that it is within G'd's power to bring about anything that He chooses; however because it is in conflict with his own sense of reality, he has difficulty accepting the fact. The Jewish people at the splitting of the Sea, believed that since they were idolaters in Egypt, they were not more worthy than the Egyptians. Just as they were saved from destruction despite their failing, so too would the Egyptian armies be spared from destruction by the Sea. Thus, they were concerned that the Egyptians were going to come from the other side of the Sea to pursue them further. Because they had processed their circumstance solely on their own perception of fairness they could not accept the fact that G'd had

destroyed the Egyptians. Thus they were quantified as “*katnei amaanah – small believers.*” If one is not able to go beyond his own limited ability and thus reject what is stated in the Torah or communicated by G’d, then he is considered a small believer. The Jewish people, despite Yichezkel’s assurances from G’d that they would be fully reinstated/rehabilitated after doing teshuvah, because of their own understanding of their failings, they could not believe and accept that they had relevance to reinstatement. They were thus “*katnei amaanah – small believers.*”

Since the Floodwaters in fact did not come on the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the Ark, as G’d had told Noach, Noach was in a quandary. Maybe the decree of G’d was annulled because of His unlimited Mercy? In addition, if in fact Noach must go into the Ark because the Flood was imminent, it would be a confirmation that he had failed in his mission – he did not bring the world to teshuvah. Noach could not accept the overwhelming responsibility for the destruction of the world. He thus went into a state of denial and could not bring himself to enter into the Ark. It was only because of the Floodwaters that he was forced to enter. It was because Noach’s own interpretation and evaluation of events that surrounded him that he could not accept the word of G’d he is therefore classified as “*katnei amaanah.*”

Very often we experience or witness events that we cannot readily explain within the context of our rational understanding. However, we try to evaluate and perceive them within our own limitation. Rather than appreciating that G’d is bringing about events that are beyond the capacity of a human being’s ability to fathom, we resist this and remain locked into our own limitation.

### 3. Deciphering the Events Of One’s Life

The Torah states, “*Vayeitze Yitzchak lasuach basadeh- Yitzchak went out to supplicate in the field...*” The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah explains that the term “*lasuach*” refers to tefillah (prayer). From here, it is derived that Yitzchak our Patriarch established the mincha service (afternoon service). Ritva (one of the earlier commentators) writes that it is known that leading Torah sages do not pray on their own behalf, but rather, they supplicate G’d for the needs of their generation. When Yitzchak, our Patriarch, went out into the field to pray, it was on behalf of his generation.

The Torah quantifies Noach by stating, “**...Noach was a righteous man (tzaddik), perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G’d.**” The Torah tells us that Noach was devout in his behavior and outstanding in all of his characteristics. He found special favor in the Eyes of G’d. Noach devoted 120 years of his life building the Ark as he was commanded by G’d. The objective of this project was to influence his generation to repent from their evil ways. Despite Noach’s advanced level of spirituality and relationship with G’d, as a prophet, there is no mention of Noach beseeching G’d not to destroy mankind. Seemingly, as a leading world-renowned personality, he should have prayed on their behalf.

The Torah tells us that when G’d had informed Avraham, our Patriarch, that He was going to obliterate Sodom, he immediately engaged G’d in a dialogue on their behalf. After the sin of the Golden Calf, G’d told Moshe that He was going to destroy the Jewish people and establish a new nation from him. Moshe, prayed to G’d that they should be forgiven. In contrast, when G’d informed Noach that He was going to bring an end to all existence because the world had become corrupt, Noach remained silent and did not respond.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, “How could Noach, being of such dimension of righteousness, not seek mercy on behalf of his generation? When G’d had told Noach of the impending destruction of existence, it was clear the He had already reached the verdict that the world would be destroyed. There was no possibility that G’d would retract His decision. As it states, ‘**The end of all flesh has come before Me...**’ Noach understood from G’d’s terminology that it was a closed subject. It would be an affront to G’d if Noach would plead on behalf of his generation. However, when G’d communicated to Avraham and Moshe, He did so in a manner that indicated that His decision was not necessarily final. Thus, Avraham and Moshe were given the opportunity to plead for G’d’s Mercy.”

The difficulty with Ohr Hachaim’s explanation is that the Torah tells us that when the initial rain of the Great Flood began to fall it is referred to as “*geshem – rain.*” The Torah later refers to the water that was coming upon the world as “*mabul – deluge.*” Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the reason the Torah initially refers to the rain as “*geshem*” is to indicate that had the generation repented, this rain would have been “*rains of blessing (gishmei beracha).*” However, since they did not repent the rain became a destructive deluge/Flood (*mabul*). It is evident from the terminology that is used by the Torah that it was not concluded that the world would be destroyed. Had the

generation repented the Flood would not have come upon the world. If this is so, then why was G'd's communication to Noah expressed in such an absolute and unforgiving manner?

When G'd informed Noah of the impending destruction of the world, He was communicating to him that in fact the generation would not repent. Since G'd was aware, because He is All-Knowing, that the generation would ultimately not repent and change their evil ways, His decision was to destroy the world. There was no basis for Mercy because there was no hope of change. It was not that the generation of Noah did not have the ability to repent, as it is indicated through the terminology of the Torah regarding the initial rainfall, but rather, G'd revealed to Noah that mankind's choice would be ultimately not to repent.

Rabbeinu Bachya offers another understanding of why Noah, despite his dimension of person, did not pray on behalf of his generation. We find that when Avraham had petitioned G'd on behalf of Sodom and Amorah that they should not be destroyed, he had said that in the merit of ten devoutly righteous people located in their community, G'd should spare them. G'd responded to Avraham by saying, "If there are ten devoutly righteous people, I will not destroy Sodom." It is clear that although there may have been less than ten righteous people in their midst, there was no basis for Avraham to evoke G'd's Mercy on their behalf. Avraham drew his understanding that if there is less than ten righteous people there is no basis to supplicate G'd from Noah's behavior. Noah did not pray on behalf of his generation to be saved because there were not ten tzaddikim within existence.

We are able to differentiate between the response of Avraham and Moshe towards imminent destruction and the non-response of Noah. G'd informed Noah that the world would be destroyed in order for him to build an Ark to save a remnant of existence, which would establish and perpetuate the rebirth of the future world. Because the communication of this information to Noah was necessary only for this reason, Noah understood that G'd's decision was final. However, regarding Avraham, G'd's informing him of the obliteration of Sodom was something that seemingly had no relevance to him or his personal existence. If this was the case, then why did G'd share the imminent destruction with him? It was obvious and evident to Avraham that it was only for the sole purpose for him to pray and seek G'd's Mercy on their behalf.

Regarding Moshe, the Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that G'd had said to Moshe, "**Allow Me**

**to destroy them...."** Moshe understood, as a result of that statement, that his intervention would make a difference regarding the future of the Jewish people. If he would supplicate G'd on their behalf, his prayers would definitely overturn the decree of their destruction. Otherwise there was no need for G'd to ask Moshe's permission.

There are times when one comes upon a realization or understanding that gives him a sense of responsibility to act on behalf of the community or the Jewish people as a whole. Because if in fact there was no imperative for him to take initiative, why then would G'd allow him to come upon this realization? It is because G'd wants him to act and make the difference.

#### ***4. The Key to Succeed in Spirituality***

The Midrash states, "The Blessed King of kings may He be Blessed, chose the Jewish people from among the seventy nations of the world and gave us the Written Law and revealed to us the Oral Law. The Oral Law is vast compared to the Written Law, which is minute and concise. As it states in Job, 'The Oral Law is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.' Regarding the Oral Law it states in Job, 'You will not find it within the land of life.' What is the meaning of this? Will it be found in the land of death? Rather, it means, the one who pursues pleasure, lusts for the physical, and seeks his own glory will not come upon the Oral Law. The Oral Law is only available to the one who is willing to sacrifice himself for It. As it states, 'This is the Torah, the man who will die in the tent...' How does one acquire the Oral Law? (As the Mishna states) Bread and salt you shall eat. Water in small measures you shall drink. On the ground you shall sleep. A life of pain you shall live. One must be totally engaged in Torah and be willing to forgo his physical comforts."

The Torah states regarding the building of the Mishkan, "**The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated (*nidiv leiv*)...**" Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh points out that regarding those who participated in the building of the Mishkan, there were types of people who participated. One person is categorized by the Torah as "nidiv leiv"- the one with the motivated heart. The other type of individual is referred to as "nisaoh leebo" – the one with the inspired heart. The one who is a "nidiv leiv" is a person who gives generously and willingly but will not give beyond his own means to impinge upon his own needs. In contrast, the one who is "nisaoh leebo" who is inspired, enthused, and enthralled by the cause will give even beyond his means. All that is important in his eyes is

the cause. The one who gave to the Mishkan with an inspired heart did so without limit. His self-negation and love for G'd was such that the only thing that mattered was the building of the Mishkan.

Rambam in the Laws of the Study of Torah writes, "The one who is nisaoh leebo (inspired heart) to acquire the Crown of Torah must follow a very specific prescription of life to succeed." He cites the Mishna, "Bread and salt you shall eat..." and adds a number of other areas in which one is not permitted to indulge. Rambam's choice of terminology is very specific and definite. He chose the term "nisaoh leebo" rather than "nadvah leebo" in order to communicate that one only has relevance to the Crown of Torah (which is the ultimate) when he is inspired and consumed by its value. For this individual nothing matters or exists outside of his acquisition of Torah. The only one who could live a life of deprivation and sacrifice for the sake of Torah, as described by the Mishna, is the one who does not regard it as a deprivation. This is only possible for the individual who is inspired to achieve and pursue the Crown of Torah.

The Torah states in the portion of the Tochacha (curses) in the Book of Devarim, that the Jewish people will be subject to the curses because they did not serve G'd with "joy and goodness of heart." This is addressing the individual who observes all of the mitzvos; however, he does not do so with joy and goodness of heart. Why should an individual who fulfills the Torah in its entirety be subject to the Wrath of G'd- even to the point of annihilation? It is because if one is lacking in joy and good heartedness in his service of G'd, it is a clear indication that he does not truly appreciate and value G'd and His Torah sufficiently. If he did in fact appreciate G'd, he would be overwhelmed with joy for the privilege of being able to serve Him through His Torah. As we explained, based on the terminology used by Rambam, one cannot excel in and acquire the Oral law sufficiently, without being inspired. It is only the one who is inspired that can dedicate himself to the degree that one will not be distracted from the acquisition of Torah. One cannot be motivated and inspired sufficiently unless he serves G'd with joy and wholeheartedness. Therefore, if one is lacking in these two areas one will not have the necessary level of inspiration to dedicate himself sufficiently to the Oral Law. Consequently, he will not have sufficient clarity to appreciate the Word of G'd- thus being deserving of extreme punishment.

## **YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Monday Through Friday**

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
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: Taanis**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street

12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**  
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue  
Between E.51<sup>st</sup> and E.52<sup>st</sup>

#### **Tuesday**

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**  
Location: Yad Avraham

#### **Wednesday**

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Taanis**  
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street

1:00—2:00 pm **Derech Hashem**  
Location: Yad Avraham

#### **Thursday**

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**  
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis** Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL)