

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
The Portion of Noach

*Dedicated by the Rodin Family
In Honor of their son Eliyahu's
Bar Mitzvah*

October 11, 2007

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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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
October 8, 2007

B"H

Portion of Noach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Noach's Special Relationship with G'd

The Midrash tells us that we find that G'd provides for the latter generations in the merit of the earlier generations. (As it states in the verse, "G'd says to the Jewish people, 'And I will remember the covenant of Yaakov, and 'He does Kindness (chesed) for two thousand generations...') The Midrash continues, "From where do we see that G'd provides for the earlier generations in the merit of the latter? The Torah states, 'And Noach found favor in the Eyes of G'd.' In what merit did he find favor? In the merit of his progeny. As it states, 'These are the progeny of Noach. Noach was a righteous man.'"

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that at the time of the Great Flood there were other righteous and devout individuals besides Noach. However, when G'd unleashes the Attribute of Justice, He does not differentiate between the righteous (tzaddik) and the evil (rasha). The Attribute of Justice demands perfection that even the tzaddik does not possess. As King Solomon states in Ecclesiastes, "There is no righteous person who does good in the land who does not sin." If this is so, then why was Noach spared?

The Gemara explains that Noach was spared from the Great Flood/Attribute of Justice because **"He found favor in the Eyes of G'd."** What was the basis for Noach to be seen as more special than the other righteous and devout members of his generation? With the Midrash we can understand that his special status was not attributed to his own level of accomplishment, but rather, to something that was meant to take place in the future. The progeny that he would father and mentor were the basis for his special status. It is interesting to note that at the time of the Great Flood the three sons of Noach were mature adults who had wives. As it states in the verse, **"The sons' wives ..."** If Noach's progeny already were in existence/mature adults then, in what merit was he spared? Noach was necessary to mentor his children in order to develop their potential. Shem, the most special son of Noach, was the

progenitor of Avraham, who was the founding patriarch of the Jewish people. Had it not been for Noach's mentoring, Shem would not have developed into the special tzaddik that he was. Although the other children of Noach were not special, nevertheless their existence was needed to maintain a counterbalance to Shem. There always needs to be a representation of evil as there is a representation of good. Within this context choice can be made.

Another example of the principle of the merit of the latter generations provides for the earlier generations is that of Avraham, our Patriarch, who miraculously survived the fiery kiln of Kasdim. He was given a choice by King Nimrod to either bow to the idol or be cast into the kiln. Avraham chose to die and not to do an act of idolatry. The Midrash tells us that the reason Avraham survived the fire was not because he gave his life for G'd, but rather it was because Yaakov, our Patriarch needed to be born into existence. This would not have taken place had Avraham perished. The Midrash cites the verse, **"Yaakov redeemed Avraham."** It was because Yitzchak, the father of Yaakov, had not yet been born at the time that Avraham was cast into the kiln. Thus, Avraham did not perish in the kiln not because of his own righteousness but rather he needed to father Yitzchak who subsequently would father Yaakov.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that there is a situation where even the tzaddik experiences continuous difficulties and travails in his life (tzaddik v'ra lo) and the evil one experiences good fortune despite his culpability (rasha v'tov lo). The predicament of the tzaddik who suffers is not difficult to understand because G'd wants the righteous person to pay his spiritual debt in this existence and be atoned before he passes on to spiritual eternity where he will receive his just reward. In a similar vein, since the evil person has no interest in spirituality, G'd must pay him for his (minimal) good deeds in this physical existence. Thus, he will receive good fortune despite his evil.

We can understand the predicament of the evil person experiencing good fortune in another manner. Although the evil person in his own right is undeserving of any reward he may experience good fortune in the merit of the special child who will descend from him.

2. Seeing Truth for What it Is

At beginning of the Portion of Bereishis Rashi cites the Midrash, "Rebbe Yitzchak says, 'The Torah should have begun with the commandment of the sanctification of the new moon, which was the first mitzvah that was communicated to the Jewish people. Why does the Torah begin with the story of Creation?' As it states in Psalms, 'He expresses the power of His actions to His people to give them the portion of the nations...' If the nations of the world should claim that the Jewish people were thieves/plunderers because they had conquered the land of the seven nations (of Canaan), the Jewish people will respond by saying, 'All existence belongs to G'd. He chose to give it and He chose to take it from them and give it to us.'"

Although the Torah is a compendium of laws for the Jewish people, it nevertheless begins with the story of Creation so that the Jewish people should not be accused by the nations of the world of acting unlawfully by possessing something that is not rightfully theirs. If in fact the Jewish people understand and believe that G'd is the Omnipotent and Master of all existence, why is it necessary for them to respond to the baseless accusations of humanity?

The Jewish people are G'd's Chosen Nation. As it is stated in the Book of Shemos, "**You shall be My kingly, priestly nation, and holy people...**" When the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai, they assumed the responsibility to be G'd's representation in existence. Thus, they must continuously maintain a level of conduct and standard that is exemplary- to be considered a sanctification of G'd's Name. If their initiatives are morally/ethically in question, it would be considered a desecration of G'd's Name (Chilul Hashem). Therefore, it must be stated clearly that G'd, the Omnipotent Being and Creator of all existence endowed the Land of Canaan to the Jewish people to be theirs for all eternity. Possessing the Land of Israel is the sovereign right of every Jew. The Jewish people must have a cogent platform to respond to the nations so that they will reflect their true integrity.

While the Jewish people may have an appropriate response to the claim of the world at large, factually we

see that the nations of the world do not give any credence to the sovereign right of the Jewish people to the Land. If this is so, then why does the Torah begin with the story of Creation?

The Torah states at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, "**G'd said to Moshe, 'In you (the people) they will believe forever (as My Prophet).'**" Regardless of all the revealed miracles that had transpired prior to Sinai (and following Sinai), which were performed by Moshe, the basis to substantiate his prophecy (that his word was the word of G'd) was the Sinai event. The entire Jewish people had witnessed G'd telling Moshe, "Tell the Jewish people such and such." Moshe was openly chosen by G'd to be His spokesman. However, we find that after Sinai, Korach and his assembly had attempted to usurp Moshe's authority by contesting the authenticity of his prophecy. How do we reconcile G'd's statement that the Jewish people would believe in Moshe forever with the affront of Korach against Moshe? Especially since Korach and his assembly witnessed the Sinai event.

Although G'd had incontestably established Moshe as His Prophet/spokesman at Sinai, it is not in contradiction with one's ability to exercise free choice. If one chooses to deny truth, that is his prerogative. However, if in fact the cogency of Sinai was at such an absolute level of truth, how could one perceive Moshe as Korach had? One's conflict of interest can distort and pervert the most obvious truth into something that has no basis whatsoever. This was the basis for the failing of Korach and his community. His ego would not allow him to see Moshe as being qualified to be the king and Aaron, his brother, as the High Priest.

The Torah presents factually that G'd Created all existence- thus giving Him the right to choose to give and to take what He wishes. G'd established Himself as the uncontested Master of all existence. If the nations of the world choose to reject this reality because of their own self interest, then it is considered their failing. Although consequently they will see the Jewish people as plunderers and thieves, since their perception is based on their own self-deception it is not considered a desecration of G'd's Name. Thus, the moral/ethical status of the Jewish people remains untarnished and pristine.

Very often when one hears a position in Judaism which is rooted in our tradition, based on the Talmud, one questions its cogency. Regardless of one's intellectual capacity and sense of self, this conflict is unjustified. If one would sufficiently understand the Talmud as it is stated, one would have no difficulty embracing every facet

of Judaism. It is only because of our own shortcomings and conflicts that we do not allow ourselves to perceive the truth that is contained within the text of the Talmud.

3. Love of G'd, The Pivotal Point of Judaism

The Torah tells us that at Sinai the Jewish people unequivocally accepted the Torah by declaring, “**Naaseh V’Nishmah – we will do and we will listen.**” They had accepted the Torah without knowing the extent of their obligation. Despite their submission to G’d’s Will, the Torah tells us that He had put the mountain over them and stated, “If you accept it (the Torah) it will be good, and if not, there will be your burial place.” Tosfos in Tractate Shabbos asks, if the Jewish people had already accepted the Torah wholeheartedly, why then was it necessary for G’d to present them with this ultimatum? Tosfos answers that at the time of the Sinai event G’d had revealed to them the fires of *geheimom* (spiritual purgatory), which frightened them, thus causing them to want to retract their initial commitment. G’d therefore needed to coerce them to retain their commitment.

The Midrash explains that when the Jewish people had initially accepted the Torah by declaring “**Naaseh V’Nishmah**” it was only regarding the Written Law. The Written Law is limited and defined regarding the tenets and obligations that are set forth by the Torah. However, when they were asked to accept the Oral Law, which is, as the verse in Job states, “longer than the earth and wider than the sea...,” they understood that they had to commit themselves to something that was all encompassing and limitless. In order for one to comprehend and process the Oral Law, one must be willing to forgo one’s material aspirations and glory because it is only through complete sacrifice that its wisdom can be attained. This was something that the Jewish people were not willing to do. Therefore, G’d needed to give them an ultimatum in order to compel them to accept the Oral Law.

The first portion of the Shema states, “**You must love Hashem, your G’d with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your might...**” Chazal explain that the expression “all of your might” means that one must be willing to utilize and forgo all of his possessions for the sake of the service of G’d. One’s degree of love manifests itself through one’s level of sacrifice. The ultimate sacrifice is with all of one’s heart, soul (giving up of one’s life), and all of one’s possessions (one’s material and physical desires/aspirations for glory).

The Shema continues, “**You shall teach them (words of Torah) diligently to your children and you shall speak of them ...**” Meaning one is obligated to immerse himself in Torah in order to comprehend it and disseminate it to others. However, this is predicated on the selfless dedication and sacrifice that one must make in order to acquire Torah. The only one who could truly come upon the truth of the Oral Law is the one whose love of G’d surpasses all other desires or interests.

The second portion of the Shema does not mention the sacrifice of one’s material assets for the sake of the performance of mitzvos. In order for one to perform mitzvos properly, one does not need to forgo his material possessions and aspirations for glory.

The Midrash explains that the first portion of the Shema is addressing the level of one’s involvement to acquire Torah knowledge and disseminate it. The second portion of the Shema is limited to the performance of mitzvos and not specifically the study of Torah. In the first paragraph, the Torah does not discuss one’s reward for the study of Torah. However, in the second paragraph when it discusses the performance of mitzvos, it does mention the extent of the material reward that one merits for adhering to the mitzvos. As it states, “**I will provide rain for your land in its proper time... you may gather in your grain... and you will eat and be satisfied...**”

The reason the first portion of the Shema does not mention the reward for one’s selfless dedication to Torah is because the individual that is being addressed is one who had chosen to sacrifice the physical for the sake of the spiritual, which is the Torah. Thus, the result of this process does not manifest itself in material reward. Its magnitude is beyond the scope of physical existence.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos cites an argument between Reb Shimon Bar Yochai and Reb Yishmael regarding the Torah perspective on how one should invest his life. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai is of the opinion that one must be fully committed and invested in his spirituality (Torah and mitzvos) because if one would engage in the mundane, it would not allow the Torah to be processed and engaged in, at a sufficient level. Thus, it would be an impediment to one’s spiritual potential. He states, “If one would plow in the plowing season and sow in the sowing season and harvest in the harvesting season..., then what will happen to Torah?” According to Reb Shimon Bar Yochai, one should continuously be engaged in Torah study without interruption. It is within this context that G’d will provide for all of his needs through the labor of others. Reb Yishmael disagrees and is

of the opinion that one must live according to the ways of the world. It is understood that the Jew must be engaged in Torah study; however, in order to provide for oneself, one must be involved in the material to the extent that it is necessary. Reb Yishmael substantiates his position based on the second paragraph of the Shema. As it states, **“And you shall harvest your grain...”** This indicates that the Jew who is fully committed to mitzvos must take the initiative to provide for his own needs.

Reb Shimon Bar Yochai responds that the second paragraph of the Shema is referring to individuals who are not fully doing the Will of G'd. Although the paragraph states, **“and if you shall heed My Commandments with all of you hearts and all of your souls...”**; nevertheless, it is addressing a person who is not willing to sacrifice the material for the sake of G'd, as it is indicated by the absence of the words, “with all of your might (possessions).” Thus, classifying these individuals as those who are not doing the Will of G'd. Thus, they must bring in their own bounty.

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos states, “If there is a conflict between a Positive and a Negative Commandment, which cannot be reconciled, the Positive Commandment supersedes the Negative Commandment.” Ramban explains that Positive Commandments are an expression of *“ahavas Hashem – the love of G'd.”* In order to perform a Positive Commandment, one must be proactive and motivated, which is initiated through love. However, regarding the Negative Commandments, which represent *“yiras Hashem – the fear/reverence of G'd,”* one is in a passive state by refraining from sinning because of his fear of G'd. Therefore, when there is a conflict between performing the Positive and not violating the Negative, the Positive Commandment supersedes the Negative. The love of G'd has greater value than the fear of G'd. In order to succeed in the acquisition of Torah, one's love of G'd must be all consuming, even to the point where one is willing to forgo all of his material aspirations.

4. The Ability to be Who G'd Wants You to be

The Torah states, **“These are the offspring of Noah – Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with G'd.”** The Midrash asks, “Why is the name of Noah mentioned three times in the opening verse of the Portion? He is one of the three individuals who saw three different worlds – Noah, Daniel, and Eyov (Job). Noah had seen the world in its settled state prior to the Great Flood, in its destroyed state, and again in its settled state (after the Great Flood). Noah

had lived in the era prior to the Great Flood, during the time that the world was in a state of destruction, and in the era when the world was reestablished.” The Midrash seems to be difficult. One could have easily understood that Noah 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 “Noah” three times?

It is often the case that an individual may experience many different circumstances in his life; however, because of his educational background, pedigree, or perspective he will not alter his approach in dealing with the various issues presented to him. Rather, the individual will be limited by his perspective and prior experience regardless of the change of circumstance. This was not the case with Noah.

Noah's name is repeated three times in order to teach us that although the Torah is speaking about the same individual in each circumstance, he is the equivalent of three different people. Prior to the destruction of the world Noah'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 120-year project of building of the Ark, Noah 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 Noah 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 could 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, Noah functioning and being productive within this context was the equivalent of another person. This indicates the greatness of Noah

We find something similar that manifested itself in the life of Reb Yisroel Salanter z'tl (founder of the mussar movement). He was considered by all of his peers to be the leading Torah sage of his generation. During the course of his lifetime he existed and adapted to many

different circumstances, and within each he had a specific mission that he sought to accomplish. At one point in his life he lived in Germany and studied to be a pharmacist. In this capacity he would be involved in influencing the Jewish community with Torah perspective to combat the rampant assimilation that had existed in Germany at that time. Towards the end of his life he lived in Paris, which at the time was considered a spiritual wasteland. He sought to disseminate Torah there in order to impact upon that community. It is almost unheard of that an individual at Reb Yisroel Salanter's caliber and level of accomplishment in Torah to be involved in these various contexts. Nevertheless, his dimension of person allowed him to adapt and spiritually excel in each of these contexts, regardless of their difference. This speaks volumes of his unique greatness.

5. 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 personality, through engaging in this project it would attract the attention of all humanity. Thus, allowing him to engage in the dialogue that was necessary to convince them to repent.

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 the 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 120th 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 Great 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 come. If so, why was he resistant and did not enter into the Ark until he was forced to do so by the Floodwaters?

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 would come around the other 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 for themselves 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 Yechezkel was told by G'd to admonish the Jewish people and convince them to do teshuvah to avoid the destruction of the Temple. The people responded by saying that repenting was not a possibility. Since they had sinned and failed so extremely, it was futile and pointless to repent. They were beyond spiritual rehabilitation. G'd said to Yechezkel that he should tell them that despite their degree of failing, they are still eligible for teshuvah. Despite Yechezkel urging, the people rejected his plea. Chazal refer to Yechezkel's generation as "*katnei amaanah – small believers.*"

Reb Itzel Peterburger z'tl, who was one of the premier disciples of Reb Yisroel Salanter z'tl, explains the term "*katnei amaanah – small believers.*" If one utilizes his own mode of evaluation to understand an event or G'd's degree of involvement in existence, if the Torah's interpretation is contrary to his understanding, he is classified as "*katnei amaanah.*" Although this individual definitely believes without question that it is within G'd's power to bring about anything that He chooses; however because of his own conflict of interest, 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 miraculously from destruction despite their failing, so too would the Egyptian armies may 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 continue pursuing them. Because they had processed their circumstance solely based on their own perception of reality they could not accept the fact that G'd would destroy the Egyptians. Thus, they were quantified as "*katnei amaanah – small believers.*" If one is not able to go beyond his own limitation and thus rejects what is stated in the Torah, then he is considered a small believer. The Jewish people, despite Yechezkel's assurances from G'd that they would be fully reinstated/rehabilitated after doing teshuvah, because of their own perception of their reality, they could accept that they could ever come back. They were thus "*katnei amaanah – small believers.*"

Since the Floodwaters in fact did not come on the 120th anniversary of the building of the Ark, as G'd had told Noah, Noah was in a quandary. Maybe the decree of G'd was annulled because of His unlimited Mercy? In addition, if in fact Noah must go into the Ark because the destruction of the world was imminent, it would be a confirmation that he had failed in his mission. He did not succeed to bring the world to teshuvah. Noah 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. This was a result of Noah's own interpretation and evaluation of events that he could not accept the reality of what was about to take place He is therefore classified as "*katnei amaanah.*"

Thursday

10:30 – 11:30am **Duties of the Heart**

Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis** Sunrise Capital 641

Lexington (25th FL)

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 -6:45 am	Mussar – Derech Hashem
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Chulin
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Taanis
	Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.)
	Enter on 54 th Street
12:30 – 1:30pm	Talmud: Pesachim
	Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
	Between E.51 st and E.52 st

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm	Torah Insight Based on the Parsha
	Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Taanis
	Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.)
	Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos
	Location: Yad Avraham