

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series

Portion of Noach

Sponsored by the Rodin Family

In Loving Memory of

Reb Feival ben Leibel, z'l

October 22, 2009

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 22, 2009

B"H

Noach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. Man's Initiative

The Torah tells us that G'd instructed Noach to build an Ark. G'd said to Noach, "**A 'tzohar' shall you make for the Ark...**" Rashi cites the Midrash, which offer two interpretations of the word 'tzohar.' One interpretation is that the tzohar was a window. Another interpretation is that 'tzohar' was a precious stone that cast a light that illuminate the Ark. The function of a window is to allow light to enter from the outside. The Gemara tells us that the luminaries in the heavens did not function for a year, during the period of the Great Flood. There was no light whatsoever over the face of the Earth. The world was engulfed in total darkness. If this was so, then what was the purpose and value of the window that existed in the Ark?

Sifsei Chachumim (a commentary on Rashi) points out that even if one were to interpret the word "tzohar" to mean "precious stone" we read later in the Portion, "**Noach opened the window of the Ark, which he had made. He sent out the raven...**" Noach had sent out the raven and later the dove, through the window, in order to investigate if the floodwaters had receded. Regardless of one's understanding of the word "tzohar," factually the Ark had a window.

The Torah tells us that Noach was not permitted to leave the Ark until G'd allowed him to do so. If this is so, then what is the value of Noach's initiative of sending out the birds to determine if the floodwaters had receded? The Torah tells us that forty days after Noach had seen the peaks of the mountain, he sent out the raven to determine if the world was inhabitable. The raven returned to the Ark, indicating that the water was still present on the face of the earth. Noach then chose to send out the dove and it also returned, indicating that the land was not yet dry. Subsequently, the dove was sent out again and it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, indicating that the world had been restored to an inhabitable state. Noach chose again to send out the dove and it did not return. At that

time, Noach realized that the world was fully inhabitable. If Noach was not permitted to leave the Ark without G'd's directive, what was the value of sending out the raven and the dove? Was Noach simply curious to know if the floodwaters had receded and the world was ready for reentry? The Midrash states, "For the twelve months that Noach was in the Ark, sleep did not meet his eyes." Noach was fully engaged, day and night, in feeding all of the various species in the Ark and thus was not able to sleep. Was his interest in leaving the Ark motivated by his personal predicament?

The Torah tells us that when the daughter of Pharaoh noticed a box floating in the Nile, in which Moshe had been placed, she sent "**her maidservant (*amasah*)**" to retrieve the box. Rashi cites the Gemara in Tractate Sotah, which interprets the word "***amasah***" not to mean "maidservant," but rather "her hand." The length of the arm is a cubit, which is an *amah*. Rather than her hand being limited to its own length, a miracle occurred and she was able to extend it many cubits in order to retrieve the box.

Maharal of Prague in his work Givuras Hashem explains that the human hand was created with the capacity to retrieve and extend itself. When one has an intense desire to retrieve something, and it is beyond his reach, he is able, through his desire, to extend its function beyond its limits. G'd created the world in a context in which man, through his initiative can cause G'd to alter nature on his behalf.

The Gemara in Tractate Makos states, "On the path that one chooses to walk in, he is led (by G'd)." If one takes an initiative, whether it is good or evil, G'd will present a setting to facilitate the interest of that person. Although Noach understood that he could not leave the Ark until G'd allowed him to do so, nevertheless, he was able to extrapolate from the fact that G'd had instructed him to build a window in the Ark that it was for a specific purpose. It could not be for the purpose of allowing light to

filter through because during the period of the Great Flood the luminaries did not function. If this is so, the window was meant to be used to determine, when the world would again be inhabitable. If Noah were to take the initiative and demonstrate his desire and interest to reestablish existence, in its own setting, G'd would accelerate the process of re-creation of existence to allow Noah to exit the Ark. It was within Noah's ability to bring about the reformation of the world.

G'd will respond to one's desire regarding whatever path one chooses. If this is so, then if one would choose to live a life in accordance with His Will and engage in His service, how much more so will he be the beneficiary of G'd's Assistance. Regardless of impediments and obstacles, if one is sincerely committed to take sufficient initiative to advance his spirituality, he will be assisted to overcome the most formidable challenges.

2. The Obvious is not Simple

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 Noah to embark upon the building of the Ark, which would require investing 120 years of his life. The Midrash explains that since Noah was a world-renowned figure, his involvement in this project would attract the attention of all mankind. This setting would allow him to enter into dialogue with the members of his generation in order to impress upon them the need to repent so that the world would not be destroyed. Over the course of this period of time, Noah was ridiculed and mocked for his position of belief. The members of the generation would say to him, "If the Flood will come, it will come upon you and your family and not us."

After Noah had completed building the Ark, the Torah states **"And Noah did according to everything that Hashem had commanded him."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that verse to mean that Noah entered into the Ark. The Torah continues, **"Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him, went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood."** Rashi again cites the Midrash that tells us this verse is telling us that Noah only entered into the Ark because of the floodwaters that were upon him. The Midrash states, "We see from this that Noah was one of small faith (*katnei amaanah*). He believed and simultaneously he did not believe. He had entered into the Ark only after the floodwaters were upon him, thus forcing him to enter. Until that moment he was not convinced that he needed to enter into the Ark." How do we reconcile these two verses? The first verse indicates

that Noah entered into the Ark as G'd had commanded him, seemingly without hesitation and being fully committed to His Word. However, the latter verse clearly states that he had only entered the Ark because he had no choice, because the floodwaters were upon him. In addition, if Noah had invested 120 years of his life in building the Ark and gathering all the food that was necessary, evidently he truly believed that the Great Flood would come. If so, what was the basis for his hesitation and resistance?

The fact that Noah had spent a 120 years of his life building the Ark was only to create a setting to be a focal point for the members of his generation to gather. He would thus be able to admonish them to repent. Noah's mission was to bring the world to repentance. If in fact he would succeed, there would be no Great Flood and the world would not be destroyed. However, if in fact they did not repent, the world would be destroyed, confirming that Noah had failed. The Prophet refers to the floodwaters as "the waters of Noah (*mei Noach*)."

When G'd had told Noah to enter into the Ark with his family, he had initially resisted because he could not admit to himself that he had failed in achieving his objective. He believed that until the floodwaters would come upon him, there was still a possibility that the generation would repent. Not responding immediately to G'd's command is the basis for him to be classified as a man who is deficient in belief. His conflict of interest was so great that he had entered into a state of denial. However, when he had seen the floodwaters rising, he had no choice but to accept that he truly had failed. The contradiction between the verses has not yet been resolved.

The Torah makes it a point to tell us that Noah and his family entered into the Ark in the midst of the day. Why is the time of day important for us to know? It was for the entire generation to be able to see that he was entering into the Ark. They had said to Noah, "If we see you entering into the Ark, we will destroy it and kill you." In order to protect Noah and the Ark, G'd surrounded the Ark with predator animals. If anyone were to attempt to approach it, they would be immediately mauled and killed. If the generation of Noah had witnessed every species in existence converging upon the Ark and entering into it, which was a miraculous event that was unequalled in the history of existence, why were they not motivated at that moment to repent? Why would they even consider destroying the Ark? It was only because they were so immersed in evil that they did not have the capacity to perceive truth even through the greatest miracle. Because they had chosen a path of evil, they were blinded to anything that did not conform to their warped perception of life. As King Solomon writes, "A hedonist walks in the

dark.” Meaning, one who is immersed in material and physicality does not have the capacity to perceive truth, thus making him the equivalent of a blind person.

It is true that Noah had a deficiency in his belief as demonstrated by his resistance to enter into the Ark, but he nevertheless did enter into it, because of his belief in G'd. Had he been truly evil, as the members of his generation, he would have perished as a result of not entering into the Ark.

3. One's Predicament; Opportunity or Detriment

The Midrash states, “Moshe was more beloved to G'd than Noah. Noah was initially identified by the Torah as a ‘righteous man (*ishe tzaddik*) however, when he emerged from the Ark and planted a vineyard, the Torah refers to him as the ‘man of the earth.’ The Torah states, **‘Noach....debased himself and planted a vineyard.’**(Rashi explains that by choosing to plant the vineyard, rather than some other species, Noah became mundane and forfeited his sanctified status.) We see that regarding Moshe, he was initially identified as ‘an Egyptian man (*ishe mizri*)’ by the daughters of Yisro who were rescued by him. However, later the Torah refers to him as ‘a man of G'd (*ishe Elokim*).’ He thus advanced himself spiritually, unlike Noah who had regressed in his spirituality. Therefore Moshe was more beloved by G'd.” It is interesting to note that the Midrash tells us that Moshe was more “beloved” by G'd than Noah, rather than stating that he was a greater *tzaddik* than Noah. It stands to reason that he was more beloved because he was a greater *tzaddik*.

The Torah tells us that Noah had difficulty entering into the Ark upon G'd's Command. He chose to delay entering until the floodwaters forced him to do so. Chazal tell us that it was because he was one of “deficient faith” that he did not enter the Ark immediately. He could not accept the fact that he had failed in persuading the generation to repent. He thus believed that G'd would have mercy on the generation and not destroy them. When he realized that the end had come by witnessing the floodwaters which were going to drown him, he understood that he had failed and humanity was going to be destroyed.

When Noah exited the Ark, he chose to plant a vineyard. He could have chosen any other species, yet he chose the vine that ultimately would produce wine. The Torah states, **“Noach drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself within his tent.”** It was because he chose to plant the vineyard that he debased

himself and forfeited his sanctified status. He had fallen from the classification of “righteous man” to the level of “man of the earth.” Noah's choice of planting the vineyard was an indication of what he had become.

In contrast, Moshe, who was initially identified as “an Egyptian man” advanced himself to become “the man of G'd.” Moshe needed to flee Egypt after killing the Egyptian who had raped a Jewish woman. One would think that after smiting the Egyptian, which was a proper response to destroy such evil, that G'd would have rewarded him for his action. Rather, Moshe needed to leave his family and people to become a fugitive. He fled to Midian, where he was a total stranger. Despite his circumstances, he utilized his plight to advance his spirituality. He did not lose sight for a moment that it was the Hand of G'd that was orchestrating his predicament. Unlike, Noah who was one of “small faith,” Moshe did not question or hesitate to act upon the dictate of G'd. Because of his dimension of being, he had no conflict of interest. He saw things with clarity, allowing his faith to be unscathed, which was not the case with Noah.

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra tells us that Reb Yochanon had lectured to his students, citing a verse, that at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple, the angels will cut diamonds the size of enormous stones to contribute to its building. One of Reb Yochanon's students was skeptical of what he had heard. Later when this student was traveling the high seas he witnessed in the midst of the ocean, angels cutting large blocks of diamonds. He asked them, “What are you doing?” The angels responded, “We are cutting these stones to be used for the rebuilding of the Temple/Jerusalem.” The student became ecstatic because this confirmed what his teacher had taught. Upon entering Jerusalem, he approached his teacher, “I witnessed with my own eyes that they will rebuild Jerusalem with large stones made of diamonds.’ Reb Yoachanon after hearing his student became enraged and said, “Until you had seen you did not believe what I had said? Reb Yochanon gazed upon him and the student became a pile of bones. This is an example of one who had “deficient faith.” Similarly, Noah did not believe, due to his own conflicts of interest, because the destruction of the world would reflect upon him as a person who had failed. He had convinced himself that this would not occur. His failing was only confirmed to him when the floodwaters forced him to enter the Ark. Moshe on the other hand, because his faith was firm, never questioned or doubted the word of G'd. Thus, he was able to advanced from the status of the “Egyptian man” to become the “man of G'd,” which was not the case with Noah.

4. Noah'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.

5. 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 *geheinom* (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.

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 – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

- 11:30 – 12:30pm **Talmud: Megilah**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street
- 1:00-2:00 pm **Ramchal: Derech Hashem**
Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45th FL.)

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

- 11:00 –12:00pm **Duties of The Heart**
Location: Yad Avraham
- 12:30 – 1:30 pm **Talmud: Megilah** Sunrise Capital 641
Lexington (25th FL)