

Chapter 6

(19) From every living thing and from all flesh, bring two from each [kind] into the Ark to keep alive with you; they will be [one] male and [one] female.

(20) From the birds according to their species, from the animals according to their species and from all creatures that creep on the ground according to their species — two from each [kind] will come to you to keep alive.

Chapter 7

(1) God [י-ו-ה-י] said to Noah, “You and all your household come into the Ark since I have identified you as being righteous before me in this generation.

(2) From each kosher animal take for yourself by sevens, a male and its mate, and from the non-kosher animals two, a male and its mate.

(3) Also from the birds of the heavens, by sevens, a male and female, to keep alive offspring over the whole surface of the earth.

(4) Because in another seven days, I will cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe out from the surface of the earth all that I have made.

(7) Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him, into the Ark because of the waters of the flood.

THE ANIMALS AND THE START OF THE FLOOD

Consider the following questions:

1. (a) In verse 19, God tells Noah, “*Bring two from each [kind] into the Ark,*” which suggests that Noah should bring the animals himself. But if so, why does it say

(יט) ומכל־החַי מכל־בֶּשֶׂר שְׁנַיִם מִכָּל תְּבִיא אֶל־הַתְּבָה לְהַחִיֵּת אֹתָךְ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה יְהִיּוּ:

(כ) מִהָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ מִכָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ שְׁנַיִם מִכָּל יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ לְהַחִיּוֹת:



(א) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לְנֹחַ בְּאֶ־אֶתָּה וּכְל־בֵּיתְךָ אֶל־הַתְּבָה כִּי־אֹתְךָ רְאִיתִי צְדִיק לִפְנֵי בְדוֹר הַזֶּה:

(ב) מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה תִּקַּח־לְךָ שְׁבָעָה שְׁבָעָה אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הוּא שְׁנַיִם אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ:

(ג) גַּם מִעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם שְׁבָעָה שְׁבָעָה זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה לְחַיּוֹת זָרַע עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ:

(ד) כִּי לִימִים עוֹד שְׁבָעָה אָנֹכִי מִמַּטֵּיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה וּמַחִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַיְקוּם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:



(ז) וַיָּבֹא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי־בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל־הַתְּבָה מִפְּנֵי מֵי הַמַּבּוּל:

in the next verse, “two from each [kind] will come to you,” which suggests that the animals would come by themselves? (b) Furthermore, why does verse 7:2 then say, “take for yourself,” which again sounds like Noah would need to bring them?

2. In verse 19, the words “with you” in the phrase, “to keep alive with you,” seem redundant. What are these extra words coming to tell us? And why does verse 20 conclude by repeating the words “to keep alive,” but without the added words “with you”? In addition, why does the Torah use the word לְהַחִיּוֹת (to keep alive) in these two verses instead of the simpler verb, לַחִיּוֹת (to live)?

3. Initially (6:18–19), God commanded Noah to bring two from *every living thing*, i.e., both kosher and non-kosher animals. But then, in 7:2–3, He commanded him to bring seven pairs of each kind of kosher animal. Aren't these two commands contradictory?
4. Noah was commanded to save seven pairs of each kosher animal and bird in order to bring them as offerings after the Flood. If so, why does the Torah say that Noah was commanded to take *by sevens, a male and female "to keep alive offspring"* (verse 7:3)?³⁸ To have live offspring, Noah needed to bring only one pair of kosher animals and birds, as with the non-kosher animals.
5. The Torah states, *"Come into the Ark... because in another seven days I will cause it to rain"* (see verses 7:1,4). This suggests that Noah should immediately enter the Ark because the Flood would begin in seven days. Surely the Torah should have said something like, *"In another seven days I will cause it to rain, and then you should come into the Ark."* What is the explanation of this?
6. Why does God repeat in verse 7:4, *"I will wipe out... all that I have made"*? He had already stated, *"I am going to destroy the earth"* (6:13), as well as, *"And I am bringing the flood... to destroy all flesh"* (6:17). And what is the significance of the numbers seven and forty in this verse?

In verse 20 God tells Noah that *two from each [kind] will come to you*. This means that God would arrange that the

38. Verse 7:3 is speaking of the birds, but the Alshich says that the words *"to keep alive offspring"* can be understood as referring to the kosher animals (verse 7:2) as well.

animals would come to Noah. This does not contradict His statement in verse 19 that Noah was to *bring two from each [kind] into the Ark*. That statement means that after the animals arrive at his door, it would be his job to actually bring them inside the Ark. [This answers Question 1a.]

Answer to
Question 1a

If God brought the animals to Noah's door, why did He not finish the job, as it were, and also bring them into the Ark? We wrote earlier³⁹ that based on God's Attribute of Strict Justice, Noah did not deserve to be saved from the decree of destruction upon the world. However, Hashem wanted to save him and thereby grant continuity to mankind. He therefore gave him an opportunity to earn merit through the suffering he would endure in the Ark for twelve months. We may now add that God wanted to create an additional source of merit for Noah. He therefore commanded him to bring the animals into the Ark himself; God would not do that for him. By Noah's showing compassion to the animals in this way, God's Attribute of Mercy would be further stirred towards him and he would be saved.⁴⁰

Verse 19 states that Noah was to bring the animals into the Ark *to keep alive with you*. Man is the purpose of Creation, and the animals would be saved only due to Noah. That is the meaning of the seemingly redundant words, "*with you*." But the reverse is also true. Thus, verse 20 states that *two from each will come to you "to keep alive,"* hinting at the fact that Noah's personal efforts to bring the animals into the Ark would create merit that would keep him alive — which is why the Torah used the verb *להחיות* instead of *לחיות*. [This answers Question 2.]

Answer to
Question 2

39. See Alshich above, 6:9–14 ("How Righteous Was Noah?").

40. This is similar, the Alshich notes, to the story in *Bava Metzia* 85a about Rebbe being relieved by God of his sufferings when he showed compassion to some baby weasels that were being swept out of his house.

If that is the case, however, why did God bring the animals to Noah rather than have Noah do the entire job of collecting them himself? Verse 20 states, *From the birds according to their species, from the animals according to their species, and from all creatures that creep on the ground according to their species.* Each pair of animals had to come from their own individual and pure species.

Our Sages⁴¹ tell us that the sexual and moral corruption of man had spread to the animal world, with the result being that different species mated with each other. But the Sages also tell us that the only animals to enter the Ark were those that had kept to their own species. Now, Noah could not know which animals had maintained their integrity; God therefore selected those animals and made them come to Noah. Noah's task of bringing them into the Ark would begin only after that.

All that we have written so far addresses only how the world was saved in Noah's time. But what would happen in the future, when man would once again turn away from God and corrupt his ways? Would God once more bring a flood to destroy the world?

In God's great compassion, He already prepared a way to prevent this from happening again, arranging that His grace would be aroused through the "pleasant fragrance" (רִיחַ נְיָחוּן) that comes from sacrificial offerings. As the Torah states after the Flood (8:21), *God smelled the pleasant fragrance and He said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of man."* But in order for Noah to bring sacrifices after the Flood, he would need more than two animals from the kosher species. He would need some for the sacrifices, and to leave at least two more, a male and a female, for propagation of the species. So great is God's compassion that even now, at the time

41. *Bereishis Rabbah* 28:8.

of Divine anger and destruction, He commanded Noah (verse 7:2), “From each kosher animal take for yourself by sevens, a male and its mate, in order to offer some of them up and appease Me through their pleasant fragrance so that I will never again bring a flood.” This was a pure expression of God’s Attribute of Mercy.

Thus, when the Torah first tells us of God’s intent to destroy the world, it uses the Divine Name אֱלֹהִים (verse 13), which represents God’s Attribute of Strict Justice. Then, God added His Attribute of Mercy and commanded Noah to save two animals, male and female from every species (including the kosher ones), for the purpose of saving the species (verses 19–20).⁴²

However, when the Torah tells us in verse 7:1 that God spoke to Noah to tell him to save seven pairs of the kosher animals and birds, it uses only the Name that represents God’s Attribute of Mercy, as it says, *Hashem* (י-ה-ו-ה) said to Noah ... “From each kosher animal take for yourself by sevens, a male and its mate — and thereby prepare the means of ensuring that the world is never again destroyed by a flood. Take with you into the Ark enough kosher animals and birds to bring sacrifices of appeasement after the Flood. Their pleasant fragrance before Me will prevent flood waters from ever again inundating the world.” [This answers Question 3.] Since the saving of these extra animals that would be used as sacrifices was an unearned gift stemming from the Attribute of Mercy, Noah would have to “take

Answer to
Question 3

42. The introduction of the Attribute of Mercy is indicated by the word וָאֲנִי, and I, in verse 6:17. To explain: The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 51:2) tells us that when the letter *vav* (meaning “and”) is added to God’s Name (י-ה-ו-ה) it signifies that God is acting with His Attributes of Mercy and Justice together. (This represents a lower level of mercy than the Name י-ה-ו-ה by itself, which represents pure Mercy.) Similarly, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 3:4 teaches that when a *vav* is added to the word “I” (אֲנִי) when referring to God, it means that God is now acting with both Attributes (see Alshich at the end of his comments to verse 6:14).

them for himself.”⁴³ God would not bring them to him, as He did with the first two of each animal (kosher and non-kosher alike) that were spared for the sake of maintaining the species. [This answers Question 1b.]

Now, when God commanded Noah in verse 7:3 to take seven pairs of animals from the kosher species, the reason He gave was “to keep alive offspring **over the whole surface of the earth.**” In contrast, when He commanded him to bring only two animals from each species (verse 6:19) the reason was “to keep alive **with you.**” This is because the bringing of two animals was to save only that generation of animals, those who were “with Noah.” But the bringing of seven pairs of animals was to guarantee the survival of all future generations of animals *over the whole surface of the earth* — even those who were not “with Noah” — by bringing the sacrifices that would prevent the world from ever experiencing such a Flood again. [This answers Question 4.]

God told Noah to enter the Ark “because in another seven days, I will cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights” — in other words, to enter the Ark before the Flood begins. He did so because He wanted to test Noah’s faith in Him (i.e., to test his belief that the Flood was indeed coming) and enable him to earn the reward for passing the test. [This answers Question 5.]

But Noah did not pass the test. The Torah tells us that Noah and his household *came into the Ark because of the waters of the flood* (verse 7). Our Sages⁴⁴ commented on this verse, “Noah was lacking in faith; if the flood waters had not reached his knees, he would not have entered the Ark.”

43. It appears that these animals, that were not to become progenitors of their species, were not required to be those that kept to their own species. Thus, Noah could select them on his own, without help from Hashem.

44. *Bereishis Rabbah* 32:6.

We asked (Question 6) why God repeated in verse 7:4 that He was going to destroy his Creation when He had already said this twice before, and what was the significance of the numbers 7 and 40 in the verse. The verse states, “*Because in another seven days, I will cause it to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe out from the surface of the earth all that I have made.*”

According to the Midrash,⁴⁵ the top three handbreadths of earth disintegrated in the Flood. Since God had created the earth in seven days, now that He was about to destroy a good portion of that earth He offered a grace period of that same number of days, in the hope that the human race would do *teshuvah*.⁴⁶

In addition, because man takes forty days to become a properly formed embryo in the mother’s womb, when it came time to destroy man in the Flood, God caused it to rain for forty days. Since He wished to tell Noah now about these seven- and forty-day durations,⁴⁷ the decree of destruction is mentioned here again, even though it had already been mentioned to Noah twice before. [This answers Question 6.]

Answer to
Question 6

45. Ibid., 31:7, expounding on verse 6:13 (see Rashi ad loc.).

46. The Alshich notes: The Sages (end of *Bereishis Rabbah* 27:4) comment about these seven days that God was sitting *shivah* (seven days of mourning) for the world in anticipation of the upcoming destruction. The Midrash thus supports the idea that there is a thematic connection between the seven days and the upcoming destruction.

47. Because the Flood was finally about to start — 120 years after God had first mentioned the decree of destruction and ordered Noah to build the Ark (see Rashi to verse 6:14).