

# "SPECIAL MITZVOS" EARN DIVINE FAVOR

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 476, Melacha of Planting. Good Shabbos!

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## "Special Mitzvos" Earn Divine Favor

The pasuk [verse] at the end of the parsha says: "And Hashem [G-d] reconsidered having made Man on earth, and He was pained in His heart. And Hashem said, 'I will dissolve Man whom I created, from upon the face of the earth - from man to animal, to creeping things, and to birds of the sky; for I have reconsidered My having made them.'" [Bereishis 6:6-7]

Man had descended to a level of corruption to the extent that G-d, as it were, 'regretted' having created him. This brought the Almighty to the decision that He must wipe out the world and start over - so to speak. Parshas Bereishis ends with the words "And Noach found favor in the Eyes of Hashem" [Bereishis 6:8].

The Or HaChaim notes that Hashem did not decide to save Noach as a result of his righteousness. It is true that Noach was a tzadik [righteous person], as we learn at the beginning of next week's parsha [Bereishis 6:9]. However, that fact alone would not have saved Noach, because the Almighty had full 'regret' on the entire institution of the creation of the world. When G-d decides to destroy, He destroys the wicked and the righteous alike. The salvation of Noach was an act of Divine Kindness that did not emanate from the realm of justice or "the merits of his case". Noach was saved as a manifestation of special "Divine favor," as the last pasuk in Parshas Bereishis testifies.

The Or HaChaim explains that certain mitzvos endear a person to the Almighty in a way that might qualify the doer for special "Divine favors." All the positive and negative commandments are important. But there are a few commands that have this special endearing quality, of allowing a person to find special favor in the Eyes of the Master of the Universe. In spite of the fact that the person may not be worthy, the Almighty grants the person that which he does not really deserve.

Sometimes our children do things for which they deserve to be punished, but they know how to "press the right buttons" with their parents, such that we tend to look the other way. The Or HaChaim says this same concept, l'havdil, comes into play in our relationship with the Ribono shel Olam.

Sometimes we see a person who is very successful and has been blessed with all type of Divine favor. We look at this person and wonder to ourselves: "He doesn't appear to be a particularly righteous person who we would expect to be deserving of all this Divine Beneficence." Sometimes a person merits such blessing because "he has found favor in the Eyes of the L-rd." Perhaps he performs these one or two mitzvos that have this magical power to inspire "free gifts" (mantas chinam) from the Almighty.

Of course, we would all like to know which mitzvos are those two or three mitzvos that have this magical power. The Or HaChaim states that although it is clear that there are three or four such mitzvos, the Ribono shel Olam has never revealed to us their identities - for obvious reasons! But whatever those mitzvos are, Noach intuitively was aware of them and Noach did something that ingratiated him to the Ribono shel Olam. Despite the fact that the Almighty was intent on wiping out the entire planet, Noach found favor in His eyes.

The Or HaChaim then points out an observation that I never stopped to ponder: The letters of the name Noach are exactly the letters (in reverse order) of the word Chen (favor). As we find many times, Noach's name alludes to the essence of his personality. He was a person who found Favor.

As in the time of Noach, today there are also two or three mitzvos that merit the performer with special Divine Favor. Since we don't know which mitzvos those are, the safest bet is to do all of them, thereby assuring ourselves we have included the "special mitzvos" in the list of commandments for which we are given credit.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bereishis are provided below:

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