

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Chapters Five & Six

25 Elul, 5784 – September 28, 2024

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos Chapter V

Likkutei Sichos Volume 15, Pages 70 - 74

פרק ה', משנה ב': עשרה דורות מאדם ועד נח. להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו, שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין, עד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול. עשרה דורות מנח ועד אברהם. להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו, שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין, עד שבא אברהם וקיבל שכר כולם.

Chapter 5, Mishnah 2: There were ten generations from Adam until Noach. This is to teach us the extent of Hashem's tolerance. All those generations angered Him until (ultimately) He brought upon them the waters of the Flood. There were ten generations from Noach to Avrohom. This is to teach us the extent of G-d's tolerance, for all these generations angered Him until Abraham came and reaped the reward for them all.

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah teaches us several important lessons¹. The first generations after creation were very close to Hashem's creation of Adam. The people certainly had great insight into the power of Hashem. Nevertheless, they chose not to follow Him. The fact that G-d tolerated this behavior demonstrates His incredible mercy. Therefore, we should not wonder how the Almighty has allowed the nations to subjugate His chosen people for a long time.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Mishnah speaks of two sets of ten generations: from creation until Noach and from Noach until Avrohom. We must understand the different expressions used to describe these two sets of eras. Regarding the generations from Noach until Avrohom, the Mishnah tells us that Avrohom received the reward of all previous generations. However, regarding Noach, we find no such thing. Why did Noach not receive the reward of all of the earlier generations?

The Explanation

The Zohar tells us,² "Noach did not beseech G-d for mercy on behalf of the world." In other words, he did not attempt to express the merits of his generation. He did not pray on their behalf despite knowing

1. See the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura on our Mishnah.

2. See Zohar Section 1, 67, b; 106, a; 254, b; Zohar Section 3, 15, a.

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their fate. Contrast this with the behavior of Avrohom Avinu; he prayed fervently on behalf of the people of Sodom. He tried with all of his might to save them.

In this respect, Avrohom's behavior was comparable to Moshe Rabbeinu's. After the sin of the golden calf, he prayed valiantly on behalf of the Jews. He even carried this a step further, telling the Almighty that if you do not forgive them³, "erase me now from Your book, which You have written."

We see that Avrohom helped bring about the merit of his generation. He deserved to receive their reward because of his part in their merit. May we learn from our father Avrohom and teacher Moshe how to relate to those around us. We must always give them the benefit of the doubt. We must seek their welfare, both spiritually and physically. In this way, we will all merit to be inscribed for a good, sweet year.

Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Re'eh, 5735)

Chapter VI

Likkutei Sichos Volume 36, Pages 184 - 186

פרק ו', משנה ו': גדולה תורה יותר מן הכהונה ומן המלכות, שהמלכות נקנית בשלשים מעלות, והכהונה בעשרים וארבע, והתורה נקנית בארבעים ושמונה דברים, ואלו הן ... והאומר דבר בשם אומרו. הא למדת כל האומר דבר בשם אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם, שנאמר ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי.

Chapter 6, Mishnah 6: Torah is greater than the priesthood or kingship, for kingship is acquired with thirty virtues, the priesthood with twenty-four, and Torah with forty-eight qualities ...one who says something in the name of its speaker. As we have learned, one who says something in the name of its speaker brings redemption to the world, as stated⁴, "And Esther told the king in the name of Mordechai⁵."

The Simple Explanation

The sixth and concluding chapter of Pirkei Avos is called Kinyan Torah, the Acquisition of Torah. Its teachings focus on how we can make Torah a part of ourselves. The teaching we focus on spells out all forty-eight qualities one needs to acquire the Torah.

3. Parshas Tiso, Shemos 32:32.

4. Esther 2:22.

5. This verse tells of an event which brought about the miracles which culminated in the redemption of Purim.

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The last of these virtues is that of saying something in the name of the original speaker, i.e., giving credit to the source of the teaching. It goes a step further and tells us that we bring redemption to the world due to this.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

We must understand the connection between repeating a teaching in the name of the one who said it and acquiring the Torah. The other forty-seven attributes are necessary to internalize the Torah; "study, listening, verbalizing, etc." However, the forty-eighth item would seem to require an explanation. How does it facilitate the acquisition of the Torah? Additionally, what relevance is that one brings redemption to the world through this virtue?

The Explanation

As mentioned above, this is the concluding chapter of Pirkei Avos. This work began by teaching that⁶ "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and gave it to Yehoshua. Yehoshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly, etc." In other words, the Torah study is based on a tradition. I received the knowledge of the Torah from my teacher. He received the Torah from his teacher, etc., going back to Moshe Rabbeinu, who received the Torah directly from G-d. Remembering this is a fundamental principle of Torah study and must constantly be engraved in everything we learn. This is one of the forty-eight virtues needed to acquire the Torah.

That is also why doing so brings redemption to the world. Mentioning the one who first made the statement redeems the Torah. It reveals that all Torah is a tradition that began with the Almighty transmitting the Torah to Moshe. The Torah is the basis and foundation of the entire world. As a result of redeeming the Torah, we bring redemption to the world. May we experience complete and true redemption through our righteous Moshiach now!

Adapted from the Sichos of Shabbos Parshas Tisa, 5740 and Shabbos Parshas Balak, 5743)

I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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6. Pirkei Avos, Chapter 1, Mishnah 1.

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים, עזן עודד, וזכרי' מתן שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

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נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב