

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek V

30 Menachem Av, 5779 – August 31, 2019

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2019©

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 3, Pages 753 - 757

Chapter V

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 to Noach. This is to teach us the extent of G-d's tolerance; for all these generations angered Him, until 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 Avrohom came and reaped the reward for them all.

The Simple Explanation

The Bartenura explains this Mishnah as follows. The Sages are teaching us of two epochs, each of which spanned ten generations. It first tells us of the ten generations beginning with Adam; this was the very first generation in history. The tenth generation was that of Noach. The reason for telling us of these generations is to demonstrate how great Hashem's patience is. Even though each of these generations angered G-d, He allowed ten such generations to pass until acting. It was only after many hundreds of years that Hashem brought upon them the waters of the flood¹.

This teaches us an important lesson. Throughout history, G-d has allowed many nations to thrive. This is so even though they mistreated His children, the Jews. From this Mishnah, we can understand that it is due to His great patience.

The second group was the ten generations from Noach until Avrohom. Regarding those generations, we say that Avrohom reaped the reward for all of them. Avrohom single-handedly performed all the goodness and kindness which was demanded of the nine generations preceding him. Hence, he received all the reward to which they would have been entitled had they behaved in accordance with Hashem's wishes. This is in keeping with the teaching of the Talmud that² "each person is born with two

1. See Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis Chapter 5. In the early generations, people's lifespans were longer, and they also bore children at a more advanced age than now. We therefore understand that their generations lasted far longer than ours.

2. See Talmud Chagigah 15, b.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

portions; one in Gan Eden and the other in Gehinnom – Purgatory. If one merits, he receives his portion and that of his fellow's in Gan Eden. Otherwise, he receives his portion and that of his friends in Gehinnom.”

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Mishnah tells us that “Avrohom came and received the reward of them all.” The obvious question is *what* reward? The Mishnah says that all the previous nine generations angered Hashem. The simple explanation which was cited above does not seem to answer this question. Avrohom did not receive *their* reward. He received his *own* reward for all the Mitzvos and acts of goodness and kindness which he performed.

This may be the reason that at the beginning of the Mishnah it does not say that “Noach came and received the reward of them all.” All of those first nine generations leading up to Noach angered Hashem; therefore, there was no reward for him to receive. Why was there reward from the earlier nine generations waiting for Avrohom?

The Explanation

To understand this, we must first understand the difference between the generation of the flood³ and the generation of the dispersal⁴.

The generation of the flood was primarily guilty of inter-personal sins. There was a great deal of robbery and disaccord between them⁵. Contrast that to the generation of dispersal. Their sins, for the most part, were directed against Hashem. The population “stretched out their hands against Hashem, to wage war against Him⁶.”

This is the difference between the two groups listed in the Mishnah. Teshuvah, usually translated as repentance⁷, can atone for all sins. However, this only refers to sins which are between man and G-d. If one hurts or causes damage to his fellow, Teshuvah alone cannot atone; he must make restitution and request his fellow's forgiveness. Even Yom Kippur cannot atone for inter-personal sins⁸. These were the sins of the ten generations from Adam until Noach. Their sins could not be atoned for, therefore there was no reward for Noach to reap.

The generations from Noach until Avrohom angered G-d. Nevertheless, they deserved rewards

3. The ten generations from Adam until Noach.

4. The ten generations from Noach until Avrohom. This was the time during which the population was dispersed throughout the world. See Parshas Noach, Bereishis 11:1-9.

5. See Talmud Sanhedrin 108, a. Also, see Rashi's comments to Parshas Noach, Bereishis 11:9.

6. See Talmud Sanhedrin 109, a. See also Rashi, *ibid*.

7. In fact, it means returning (to one's true self).

8. See Talmud Yoma 85, b. See also the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Chapter 606, Paragraph 1.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

since they⁹ “behaved with love and friendship between themselves.” However, because they rebelled against Hashem, they could not receive their reward. Their reward for extending kindness to each other remained in abeyance. Due to their rebellion it could not physically reach them ... “until Avrohom came and reaped the reward of all of them.”

Avrohom was constantly working at reaching out to those around him. He was totally dedicated to drawing people close to the Shechinah, Hashem’s presence. Due to his Divine service, he was able to rectify and refine the impurity of the nine generations which preceded him. He was therefore entitled to the great rewards which were waiting for the nine generations which lead up to him. He was not merely entitled to their reward. It was natural for their reward to manifest itself in Avrohom because of his G-dly service.

A Practical Lesson

The Talmud teaches¹⁰ us that “even Jews who are sinners are filled with Mitzvos as a pomegranate is filled with seeds.” Each one of us is different. Therefore each of us focuses on a different type of Mitzvah¹¹. There are those whose focus is on Torah study, meaning service which is between themselves and Hashem. On the other hand, there are those who focus on Mitzvos which govern our relationship with each other. We should all learn from this Mishnah, and from the actions of our forefather Avrohom. Our job is to spread G-dliness to all of those with whom we come into contact. Step number one is to make sure that we are all a living example of how one must live according to the Torah.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai, 5722)

To dedicate a week, a month or a year of

The Rashi of the Week, visit

<http://rebbeteachesrashi.org/contact-us-dedicate-an-issue>

You can find us on the web at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

You can find our blog at <https://rebbeteachesrashi.wordpress.com/blog/>.

9. See Rashi’s comments *ibid*.

10. See Talmud Chagigah 27, a.

11. We are all obligated to perform all Mitzvos. The only difference is upon which Mitzvos we focus.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of Tzivos Hashem **Chaim** and **Aiden Oded** שיקיו **Morris**

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M.** and **Chaya Mushka** שיקיו **Morris**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER

Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoheן ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY שיקיו

מוקדש לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום משה בן ר' שלמה מאיר הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטר ש"ק פ' בשלח, י"ג שבט, ה'תשע"ט

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו