

## **TorahFax**

*Rabbi Zalmen Marozov*

Monday, Nissan 26, 5783 (Hakhel Year) 11th Sefirah / April 17, 2023

Shalom. I hope you had a wonderful and meaningful Pesach Holiday. Ours was indeed a special one, thank G-d. We spent the holiday with some of our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We had a very special merit that, thank G-d, my mother, may she live and be well, was also with us for the Pesach holiday. It was an amazing Pesach, Thank G-d. May we all celebrate our next year's Seder in Jerusalem. Amen.

This past Shabbat, the first Shabbat after Pesach, we began studying the Pirkei Avot - Chapters of our Fathers and will continue throughout the summer months.

Pirkei Avot is a compilation of the teachings of our Talmudic sages and is part of the Mishna, written by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi - Rabbi Yehuda the Prince, close to 2,000 years ago. They guide us in proper and moral behavior to lead a good, moral, happy and decent lifestyle, for our own benefit, our families benefit, and the benefit of the community.

Q. Why do we study these teachings after Pesach?

A. After Pesach, as we go into the summer months when the weather gets nicer and people are more interactive, it is important to remember how to interact and respect each other. It is also a time when we have to become more aware of our duties and responsibilities toward our fellow human being.

One of the famous sayings of Hillel the Elder in the first chapter is: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, love G-d's created beings (people) and bring them closer to the Torah."

In this short message, Hillel tells us that the true measure to loving peace is through pursuing peace. It is not enough just to love peace. It has to be brought into action, by pursuing peace. One must also care for another person's spiritual welfare, by bringing them closer to G-d, through bringing them closer to the Torah.

The Midrash tells us that when Aaron heard about two people who had a quarrel, he would go out of his way to make peace amongst them. He would come to one of them and say, "Your friend regrets having a dispute with you and would love to make up." He then went to the other person and told him the same thing. The next time the two people met, they made up with each other. Aaron also went out of his way and got involved in restoring peace between husband and wife. When Aaron heard that someone committed a sin, he went out of his way to greet and be nice to that person. Aaron's friendliness would invoke in that person regret for his bad behavior, and he would better his ways.

By using Aaron as an example, Hillel teaches us that the best way to bring someone closer to Torah is not through harsh reprimand and resentment, but by "bringing them closer" - being positive, friendly and accommodating.

Tuesday, Nissan 27 5783 (Hakhel Year) 12th Sefirah / April 17, 2023

Today has been designated as, Yom HaShoa, Holocaust Remembrance Day. Jews all over the world, especially in Israel, remember our 6,000,000 brothers and sisters who were brutally murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, eighty years ago.

Just like the Exodus from Egypt, which is celebrated on Passover, yet, it is a mitzvah (commandment) to remember it every day, so too, the Holocaust in which six million of our brothers and sisters were murdered, should be remembered each day of the year.

For over three thousand years, at the Pesach Seder, we recited the "Vehi She'amda," in which we are reminded that, "In every generation there are those who want to annihilate us, but G-d saves us from their hands." That message is still as powerful today as it ever was.

The anti-Israel and anti-Semitism on social media, on university campuses; in the U.N. and by governments all over the world, remind us of how true this message is even today.

"Yom HaShoah" carries even greater significance today as our brethren in Israel have to be on guard constantly from neighbors who want to annihilate them, G-d forbid. Yet, it is Israel who is always blamed as the aggressor when in truth they are practicing self-defense.

The most effective answer to the Anti Semites who want to annihilate us, is to assure Jewish survival and continuity - physically and spiritually.

We pray that G-d watch over and protect the soldiers of the I.D.F. (The Israeli Defense Forces) who risk their lives on the front lines daily. May G-d protect all who live in Israel and Jews everywhere.

Q. We remember our departure with the Kaddish prayer. What is the significance of Kaddish?

A. "Kaddish" is a prayer in which we praise, glorify, and sanctify G-d's name.

Kaddish serves two functions: It benefits the soul of the deceased to rest in peace in Gan Eden. It also shows that we accept G-d's judgment and proclaim His justice. This, too, benefits the soul of the deceased.

Q. Why is the Kaddish recited in Aramaic, not in Hebrew?

A. At the time the Kaddish was introduced the majority of the people spoke Aramaic and didn't understand Hebrew. In order that everyone in the congregation would understand the meaning of these words, it was established in Aramaic.

Q. What is the significance of observing "Yartzeit," the day of passing, each year?

A. Each year on the day which the soul departed from this world it ascends to a higher spiritual level. The Kaddish which we recite and all the mitzvot we perform, in the merit of the soul, on that day helps it attain a higher spiritual level. May we merit the revelation of Moshiach NOW. Amen.

Thursday, Nissan 29 5783 (Hakel Year) 14th Sefirah / April 20, 2023

Each night, between Passover and Shavuot, we perform the mitzvah of counting the Omer. We recite a special blessing and mention the number of the Omer of that day.

The purpose of this mitzvah is to prepare for receiving The Torah, which took place on Shavuot. The purpose of the Exodus was to give us the Torah at Mount Sinai. Our sages tell us that true freedom is not when one is free from responsibilities, but rather when one knows their responsibilities and does them. To achieve this goal, G-d gave the Jewish people The Torah and mitzvot.

To help us incorporate the true meaning of freedom, we study Pirkei Avot (Chapters of our Fathers), beginning the Shabbat after Passover. Pirkei Avot is a compilation of the teachings of the Talmudic sages dealing with proper behavior toward G-d and toward each other.

In Russia, there lived a peasant farmer who never experienced riding aboard a train. One day, he had to travel to Moscow. He went to the city to catch the train going to Moscow. When he arrived at the train station, he was told that he must purchase a ticket. Being a wealthy peasant, he bought a first-class ticket and waited for the train to pull into the station. More people gathered near the tracks waiting for the train. Not knowing exactly what to do, he decided to watch the other people and do the same.

When the train finally arrived, he noticed that some of them ran to the back of the train, dashed up the steps and hid under the seats of the train. Thinking that this was the procedure, he did the same.

When the conductor passed through, he noticed a man under the seat. "Where do you think you are traveling without a ticket," the conductor barked as he pulled the farmer out from under the seat. "You will have to pay for a seat, or you will be out of the train at the next station!"

"But I did pay for a seat on the train," pleaded the farmer, showing the conductor his first-class ticket. The conductor checked the ticket and realized that it was indeed a valid first-class ticket.

"This is a first-class ticket, where in addition to a comfortable and luxury ride, you also get served three meals a day! Why are you in third class and under the seat?!"

"I had no idea what to do, so I followed whatever the other people did," replied the farmer.

The conductor laughed; "The others have no tickets, so they hide to avoid being caught. But you, with your first-class ticket, you should be traveling in luxury and comfort!"

The same applies to The Torah and mitzvot. G-d liberated us from Egyptian slavery and gave us The Torah to imbue our life with purpose, meaning and value. Trading G-d's way of life as prescribed by The Torah, for man-made values, is like the farmer who has a first-class ticket but rides under a third class seat! The lessons of Pirkei Avot guide us not to make that mistake

Friday, Nissan 30, 5783 (Hakhel Year) 15th Sefirah / April 21, 2023

Today (Friday) is the first day Rosh Chodesh of the new Hebrew month, Iyar. Shabbat will be the second day Rosh Chodesh. As a result, on Shabbat two Torahs are taken out of the ark. In the first Torah the weekly Parsha is read. In the second one the Maftir, which is about Rosh Chodesh, is read.

This Shabbat the two Parshiot Tazria and Metzora, are read. They both deal with the laws of "Tzara'at" which results in spiritual impurity when it afflicts a person.

"Tzara'at" is an ailment with physical symptoms similar to leprosy. During the time of the Bet HaMikdash (Holy Temple) the Kohen (priest) would have to investigate the condition of the one afflicted with Tzara'at and declare the person spiritually "clean" or "unclean." The laws of "Tzara'at" applied only during the time of the Holy Temple.

Our sages explain that "Tzara'at" was inflicted upon a person as a punishment for speaking "Lashon Hara" – talking badly and slandering others. Speaking ill about others is an extremely grave sin.

According to our sages, slander hurts three people; the one who speaks, the person who listens and the person spoken about! Since we do not have the Bet HaMikdash (Holy Temple) today, the laws of Tzara'at do not apply, yet the prohibition to speak evil about people is nevertheless the same.

Our sages have often emphasized the need for a person to be very careful when speaking about others. In fact, we are advised in some cases to refrain from speaking about others even when our intention is to say nice things, for in the course of the conversation one may come to say something negative.

The importance of refraining from speaking about others can also be seen from the commandment of the Torah, "Remember what the L-rd your G-d did unto Miriam on the way, as you came out of Egypt." Miriam spoke negatively about her brother Moshe and she became leprous (Tzara'at). The Torah commands us to remember this episode so that we, too, should refrain from speaking bad about others.

Our sages compare the damage inflicted through Lashon Hara to a person shooting an arrow at somebody else. As soon as the arrow leaves the person who shot it, they have no control over it anymore. Similarly, as soon as a person utters negative words about others, he loses control over them and there is no telling how far they may travel and how much damage they may inflict.

The Midrash tells that Rabbi Shimon sent his servant to the market, "Bring me the best thing you can find in the market." He brought back a tongue. Sometime later

Rabbi Shimon said to him, "Go to the market and bring me back the worst thing you can find." Again, he brought back a tongue.

Rabbi Shimon said to him, "How is it that when I asked you to bring the best thing from the market you brought a tongue and when I asked for the worst thing you also brought a tongue?" The servant replied, "There is nothing better than a tongue when it says good things and there is nothing worse than the tongue when it speaks evil!"