

# Shabbat Shalom Fax

Parshat Pinchas

Tel: 815-301-1928

Fax: 815-301-1928

Email: shabbatshalomfax@gmail.com

ShabbatShalom.org

Insights into life, personal growth & Torah

19 Tammuz, 5780

Over **300,000** Readers Worldwide!

**The Fax of Life**

ת"וב

July 11, 2020

**GOOD MORNING!** In case you missed it, last week I made a request for anyone who has personal stories of interaction with our beloved teacher and mentor, Rabbi Kalman Packouz of blessed memory, to please share them with me. The goal is to produce a book on his life that would begin to encapsulate who he was and his remarkable outlook on life. We would like to have this book out by year-end, so we need your entries as soon as possible. Please send your submission to [rabbipackouzstories@shabbatshalom.org](mailto:rabbipackouzstories@shabbatshalom.org).

**One** of the more remarkable aspects of the good rabbi was his incredible compassion for his fellow man. His devotion to the good and welfare of others was legendary. He was particularly joyful when he had the opportunity to welcome guests into his home. These visitors were often beset with serious life troubles and they didn't make for the easiest or most enjoyable sort of company (e.g. his family hosted a blind paraplegic with serious health issues for shabbats and holidays for over 10 years). Nevertheless, he and his amazing wife happily welcomed all into their very busy home – keep in mind that they had nine children of their own!

**In this week's** Torah reading, our sages find an allusion to the proper way to treat guests in one's home. The Torah discusses the different sacrifices that were brought to the Temple on each one of the holidays. On the holiday of Sukkot there is a curious procedure relating to the amount of sacrifices that are brought; every succeeding day one less bull is brought as a sacrifice. So on the first day of the holiday thirteen bulls are brought, on the second day twelve bulls are brought, on the third day eleven bulls are brought, and so on for the entire seven day holiday period.

**The great** medieval commentator known as Rashi quotes a rather unusual teaching sourced from the Midrash; "The Torah is teaching us how to properly conduct ourselves. On the first day one has a guest in his home he should prepare for him stuffed fowl. On the next day, he should feed him fish. The following day, he should serve him meat. The day after that he should give him a bean dish. On the next day, he gives him vegetables... He progressively decreases (every day) just like the bulls of the holiday of Sukkot."

**This is** difficult to understand; surely the Midrash isn't telling us that the proper way to treat guests is to make them feel less welcome each succeeding day that we are hosting them! This would be somewhat reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin's famous aphorism in his Poor Richard's Almanack; "Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days." While there is an undeniable truth to that observation, this is difficult to accept as the proper Jewish way to treat guests.

**Additionally**, as Tosfos (a compendium of commentary on the Talmud organized primarily by the grandchildren and students of Rashi) points out – meat, which is supposed to be served on day 3 is more expensive than fish (day 2) or fowl (day 1). In other words, if you follow this menu, some of the succeeding days are more expensive than the prior days. So in what manner exactly is the host progressively decreasing?

**The difficulty** for most people who are guests in someone else's home is the uncomfortable feeling of imposing on their personal space. As the Talmud (*Brachos* 58b) explains, "The proper guest says, 'Everything that the host has toiled for he has toiled for me.'" In other words, a thoughtful guest is very sensitive to the efforts expended by the host.

**There are** two ways for a host to compensate for this and try to put his guests at ease. The first is to make the guest feel as though the host is honored to host them, the second is to make them feel as if it is no imposition at all. Our sages are teaching us that we must do both. The proposed menu for a guest isn't listed in a declining order of expense; it is listed in a declining order of difficulty of preparation.

**On the first day**, the host goes out of his way to prepare a very fancy meal of stuffed fowl – as anyone who has ever prepared a Thanksgiving dinner can tell you, this requires a very high degree of preparation. The second day is fish, which is very delicate and needs to be seasoned and cooked very carefully but isn't as much preparation time as the first day. The third day is meat, which requires an even lower level of expertise and cooking technique (after all, every man is a BBQ grill master – it's in their DNA). The next day is a bean soup, which is simple fare and even easier to prepare, etc.

**On the first day**, the host prepares an elaborate meal to express his delight at hosting the guest. A host should want to make his guests feel special and like their presence is a special occasion. Preparing an elevated meal marks the occasion.

**As the days** go on, guests begin to grapple with the feeling that they are encroaching into their host's space. Let's face it, when we have guests in our home we interact with family members differently and are generally on our best behavior as well. This is not always easy – after all, not yelling at our kids can take a toll. Thus, a sensitive host makes every effort to have guests feel at ease and welcome.

**Therefore**, as the days progress the host slowly begins to decrease his efforts in order to make the guest feel less catered to and more at home. The host's goal at this point is to show the guest that his presence is really no imposition at all and that the guest is welcome to stay as long as he wants as part of the family. That is the highest level of welcoming guests into one's home.

**This is** what the sages were trying to teach us by telling us to progressively diminish our efforts as the days pass. The proper way of making guests that are in our home feel comfortable is to make an effort to have them feel less as a guest and more as part of the family.

**On a related note**, I once heard my father instructing his students on another aspect of how to properly welcome guests into one's home.

**Most guests**, whether coming for a meal or coming to stay with you for the weekend, bring some kind of gift. The natural reaction that most of us have is to tell our guests some version of "I am so happy you are here, but you shouldn't have" or "You didn't have to." "This" continued my father, "is a terrible mistake."

**It is** a well-known life maxim that givers are much happier than takers. The reason for this isn't only the self-satisfaction in helping others; it's that in the dynamics of a relationship a giver is in control and the taker is constantly in wait of the other's largesse. This is why people who focus on always taking from others are always miserable – there is a natural frustration in not being in control of the relationship.

**My father** went on to explain to his students that when a guest brings you a gift this is a unique opportunity to make them feel like a giver. "Being in someone else's home puts a guest on the receiving end of kindness. When a guest brings a gift you have the opportunity to make them feel like a giver. The proper thing to say is, 'This bottle of wine is perfect. I am so happy that you brought it!' or 'I have been looking for another tablecloth. Thank you so much!'"

**Thus**, the greatest kindness we can give our guests is to make them feel not like takers, but rather like givers.


**TORAH PORTION:** Pinchas, Numbers 25:10 - 30:1

**In last week's** Torah portion, Pinchas acted to stop a public display of immorality. He thus stemmed the plague of retribution, which was killing the multitudes. He is rewarded by being made a Cohen by Divine decree.

**The Almighty** commands Moses to attack the Midianites in retribution for the licentious plot the Midianites perpetrated upon the Israelites. A new census is taken of the Jewish people revealing that there are 601,730 men available for army duty. God directs the division of the Land of Israel amongst the tribes. The Levites are tallied. The daughters of Tzelafchad come forward to petition Moses regarding their right of inheritance. Moses inquires of the Almighty, Who answers in their favor.

**Moses asks** the Almighty to appoint a successor and the Almighty directs Moses to designate Yehoshua (Joshua). The Torah portion concludes with the various offerings — daily, Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and holidays.

**SHABBAT LIGHTING:** *Jerusalem* 7:12 Miami 7:57 Guatemala 6:17 Hong Kong 6:54 Honolulu 6:59 Jo'Burg 5:13

 LA 7:48 London 9:00 Melbourne 4:48 Mex. City 8:00 New York 8:10 Singapore 6:57 Toronto 8:41 Moscow 8:51

**"QUOTE OF THE WEEK":** Every houseguest brings you happiness. Some when they arrive and some when they leave. — Confucius

Dedicated with Deep Appreciation to  
**The Falic Family**



Shabbat Shalom,

*Yitzchak Zweig*

Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

**Honor a Loved One!** Dedicate an edition of the Shabbat Shalom Fax **ShabbatShalom.org** (IRS# 65-0389241)

☐ Friend of the Fax \$54   ☐ Benefactor \$118   ☐ Patron \$252   ☐ Fax Dedication \$360   ☐ Partner \$1,000

Shabbat Shalom Fax   ●   PO Box 402666   ●   Miami Beach, FL 33140

**To be removed:** Send the name & fax number to: [rabbizweig@shabbatshalom.org](mailto:rabbizweig@shabbatshalom.org) — or ... fax/call: 815-301-1928