

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek III-IV

21 Elul, 5782 – September 17, 2022

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

by
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos
Chapter III
Sefer Hasichos 5751, Volume 2, Pages 507 - 510

פרק ג', משנה א': עקביא בן מהללאל אומר: הסתכל בשלושה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עבירה. דע מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. מאין באת? מטפה סרוחה. ולאן אתה הולך? למקום עפר רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון? לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא.

Chapter 3, Mishnah 1: Akavia ben Mahalalel would say, "Reflect upon three things, and you will not come to the hands of transgression. Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting. From where you came - from a putrid drop; where you are going - to a place of dust, maggots, and worms; and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting - before the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

The Simple Explanation

In our Mishnah, Akavia ben Mahalalel teaches us how to avoid sin¹. His method is to reflect upon three specific things. Dwelling on the fact that he comes from a putrid drop can save one from vanity. Haughtiness, i.e., thinking he is the most important person in the world, can cause one to regard his own will as more important than G-d's. On one's humble source, Dwelling brings him to the realization that there is no real cause for vanity.

Thinking that he will ultimately end up in a place of dust, maggots and worms will save him from physical and material desires. These desires often bring a person to sin, and the realization of the end of the physical and material can curb these desires.

Finally, the realization that one will have to account for each of his actions, regardless of how silly they are, is a great deterrent to sin. This will certainly bring one to improve his conduct, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of "owning up" to them.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

We know that the Mishnah is very frugal with its wording; it says everything in the shortest possible way. Why does the Mishnah say that one must "reflect on *three* things" to avoid sin? Why specify the number three? The Mishnah immediately enumerates the three things!

1. This explanation of the Mishnah is based upon the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

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The Explanation

One explanation is that the statement "reflect upon three things" to stay far from sin is a separate clause in the Mishnah, and it stands alone and does not serve to introduce the three things which the Mishnah lists further on. Instead, it alludes to three fundamental thoughts that enable a Jew to fulfill his purpose in life.

What are these three things? The Talmud says, discussing the purpose of man's creation, that² "I was created to serve my Creator." Based on this, when one begins serving G-d, he sees only *two* things, 1.) himself, and 2.) Hashem. The Mishnah teaches that reflecting upon these two things does not suffice, and he must also dwell upon the world that Hashem created. Only by serving Hashem in and through this world can we fulfill His intention of creation; "Hashem desired to have a dwelling place below³."

Only by reflecting upon all three things can a Jew fulfill his purpose in life. It is not enough to make a dwelling place for Hashem within himself, his body, and his animal soul. Instead, each Jew must refine and transform their portion in this world into a dwelling place for G-d. Through this service, he will bring about the complete and ultimate redemption now!

Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim, 13 Iyar, 5742)

Chapter IV

Sefer Hasichos 5749, Volume 2, Pages 642 - 645

פרק ד', משנה ב': בן עזאי אומר: הוי רץ למצווה קלה כחמורה, ובורח מן העבירה. שמצווה גוררת מצווה, ועבירה גוררת עבירה. ששכר מצווה - מצווה. ושכר עבירה - עבירה.

Chapter 4, Mishnah 2: Ben Azzai would say, "One must run to pursue (even) a minor Mitzvah, and run away from sin. For a Mitzvah brings another Mitzvah, and sin brings another sin. For the reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah, and the reward of sin is sin."

The Simple Explanation

We can explain our Mishnah's statement that "the reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah" in the following two ways⁴.

1. When a person fulfills one Mitzvah, Divine providence assures that he will have the opportunity to perform other Mitzvos⁵. Hashem does this to increase the reward and pleasure he receives from the

2. Talmud Kiddushin 82, b.

3. See Tanya Chapter 36. The original source of this is the Midrash Tanchumah Naso 16.

4. This explanation is based on the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

5. This obviously does not detract from his free choice. He is granted the opportunity to fulfill other Mitzvos from Above. Whether or not he uses that opportunity is his choice.

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fulfillment of Mitzvos.

2. Whatever benefits a person receives from his Mitzvos and the pleasure he derives from them are considered Mitzvos in their own right.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The actual payment, or reward, must be proportionate to the services rendered. That being the case, how is it ever possible to reward a Jew for Mitzvah observance? Mitzvos accomplish something incredible; Hashem Himself "enjoys" them, so to speak! This is in keeping with Rashi's statement in the Torah⁶ that Hashem says (as so to speak) that "This sacrifice gives Me pleasure, for I spoke, and My will was fulfilled!" What reward can be enough for the observance of even one Mitzvah?

The Explanation

We can understand the answer to this question from our Mishnah. The meaning of the Hebrew word Mitzvah is a commandment; however, it is also related to the Aramaic word "Tzavso⁷," meaning attachment or connection. As a result of performing a Mitzvah, we become connected with the Almighty, Who commanded the fulfillment of the Mitzvah. This is the one reward, or consequence, of performing a Mitzvah, which is proportionate to the "services rendered" by a Jew.

This being the case, why do we find the promise of physical rewards for performing Mitzvos throughout the Torah? The Rambam answers this question⁸. "... What is the meaning of the statements made throughout the Torah that you will acquire such and such by observing the Torah? ... We are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill it with joy and good spirit and meditate on its wisdom at all times, Hashem will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, such as sickness, war, famine, and the like ..."

May we merit the ultimate reward of the complete and ultimate redemption now!

Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Eikev, 18 Menachem Av, 5749)

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

To dedicate a week, a month, or a year of

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6. Rashi's comments to Parshas Vayikroh, Vayikroh 1, 9.

7. See Likkutei Torah, Parshas Bechukosai, Page 45, c.

8. Rambam, Laws of Teshuvah, Chapter 9, 1.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**Dr. Mindel Rivka (Muriel) bas Reb Menachem Mendel Shlomo ע"ה
Stitt**

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Lech Lecha, 10 Mar-Cheshvan, 5782
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY שיהיו

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Yisroel Aryeh Leib שיהיו Mendelsohn

On the occasion of his bris, 11 Elul, 5782

AND IN HONOR OF HIS SISTERS AND BROTHERS שיהיו

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community.

AND IN HONOR OF THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Zalman and Raizy שיהיו Mendelsohn

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

Chaim and Aiden Oded שיהיו

Morris

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיהיו

Morris

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתהי Sharabani

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

מרת מינדל רבקה בת ר' מנחם מענדל שלמה ע"ה

סתית

נפטרה ש"ק פרשת לך לך, יו"ד מר-חשון תשפ"ב

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדבת בני משפחתה שיחיו

* * *

לזכות

החייל ב"צבאות השם" ישראל ארי' ליב שי' מענדלסאהן

לרגל היכנסו בבריתו של אאע"ה

ביום י"א אלול ה'תשפ"ב

ולזכות

אחיו ואחיותיו חיילי "צבאות השם" שיחיו

ולזכות

הוריהם הרה"ת ר' שניאור זלמן ורייזל שיחיו

מענדלסאהן

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו

מאריס

*

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

* * *

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק

ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

*

נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב