

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek II

4 Menachem Av, 5780 – July 25, 2020

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2020©

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

Adapted from Likkutei Sichos Volume 13, Page 114 - 121

Chapter II, Mishnah 12

פרק ב', משנה י"ב: רבי יוסי אומר: "...והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה, שאינה ירושה לך..."

Chapter 2, Mishnah 12: Rabbi Yossi would say, "...Perfect yourself for the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you ..."

The Simple Explanation

The Bartenura explains this Mishnah as follows. "*Perfect yourself in the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you.*" One should not say that because both his father and his grandfather are Torah scholars, he does not need to toil in Torah study. Success in learning Torah will come to him naturally.

Indeed, we find a basis for this thought in the Talmud¹. "Rabbi Parnak said in Rabbi Yochanan's name, 'The Torah will never cease from the progeny of one who is a scholar, and his son and his grandson are scholars. This is as the Prophet declares², 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, says Hashem. My spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have placed in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, your son's mouth, or your grandson's mouth from now and forever.' What is meant by the words 'says Hashem'? — The Holy One, blessed be He said, I am a guarantor for you in this matter. What is the meaning of 'from now and forever'? — Rabbi Yirmiyahu said, 'From this point (after three generations) the Torah seeks its home.'"

Based on this, one who is a descendant of Torah scholars is liable to assume that the Torah belongs to him, and he does not need to apply any effort. After all, the Torah is part of his spiritual DNA. Rabbi Yossi is teaching us, that despite the Torah's assurance of success, one must also put forth the necessary effort. It is not an inheritance, for we all have free choice. A person with a Torah background does have an advantage, a "head-start" in acquiring Torah. Nevertheless, each of us must exert himself to succeed in Torah study.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Tifferes Yisroel points out a difficulty in understanding this Mishnah. The Torah clearly says

1. Bava Metzia 85, a.

2. Yeshaya 59:21.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

that³ "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is an inheritance of the Jewish Nation." In other words, the Torah *is* our inheritance⁴. How can Rabbi Yossi say that Torah is *not* an inheritance?

The Explanation

We can explain this as follows. There are two different ways in which a Jew relates to Torah, two different manners in which we connect to the Torah. As stated above, each Jew inherits the Torah. Additionally, every Jew connects to the Torah as a purchase, as the Sages say⁵, "The Holy One blessed be He says to the Jews, I have sold you My Torah."

What is the significance of an inheritance? Inheritance is the only manner in which absolutely anyone can make an acquisition. It has absolutely nothing to do with the circumstance or age of the heir. The only condition is that he be alive at the moment of the passing of the deceased. This applies even if the heir was born one moment before the death of the one who passed away. In terms of this sort of relationship between the Jew and the Torah, every Jew is connected to Torah. It is because of this that each Jew is equally obligated to study Torah. This is as we find in the Rambam⁶, that "Every Jew is obligated to study Torah, whether he is rich or poor, etc." From this perspective, the level of one's comprehension makes no difference^{7 8}.

The meaning of *purchasing* the Torah is that one has a solid understanding of that which he is learning. When one buys a material object, he does not receive it for free; instead, he must pay for it. Our *payment* for Torah is investing effort to understand what we learn. The more energy one applies, the higher the understanding.

Regarding this second aspect of the Torah, the Mishnah says to "Perfect yourself in the study of Torah, *for it is not an inheritance to you.*" We each have abilities and intelligence which Hashem granted us. To understand the Torah to the greatest extent possible, it does not suffice to inherit it. We must pay

3. Parshas V'zos Haberochoh, Devorim 33:4.

4. It is *our* inheritance, to the extent that the Sages derive from this verse (Sanhedrin 59, a), that "it (meaning Torah) is ours, and does not belong to gentiles."

5. Shemos Rabbah, 33, a.

6. Laws of Torah Study, Chapter 1, Paragraphs 5 – 6.

7. In this matter there is a difference between the Written Law and the Oral Law. Merely reciting the words of the Written Law is considered Torah study. Regarding the Oral Law, there must be at least a certain amount of comprehension.

8. The Sichah from which this is adapted actually tells us of a third connection to Torah; a level of Torah which is given to us as a gift. This refers to ideas in Torah which are beyond human comprehension. As a result of our toil, Hashem gives this to us as a present. However, this level did not seem (to the translator) to be relevant to our discussion.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

for what we receive through our struggle and toil. This is as we are told further in Pirkei Avos⁹, that "the Torah is acquired, i.e., purchased, through forty-eight ways (which are listed there).

(Adapted from the Sichah of the Second Day of Shavuos, 5724)

I hope that 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

The Rashi of the Week or Pirkei Avos 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://rebbetr.org>.

9. Chapter 6, Mishnah 6.

**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**

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 וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס