

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek I-II

14 Elul, 5782 – September 10, 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 I

Likkutei Sichos Volume 27, Pages 164 - 166

Chapter I

פרק א', משנה ו': יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי קיבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר: עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות.

Chapter 1, Mishnah 6: Yehoshua ben Perachia and Nitai Ho'arbeili received from them. Yehoshua ben Perachia would say, "Assume a master for yourself, acquire a friend for yourself, and judge every man favorably."

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah quotes three teachings from Yehoshua ben Perachia. We will focus on the third teaching, to "judge every man favorably." Some commentaries explain this in the following manner¹. Suppose that one performed an action that can be explained in two ways. It is possible to assume that he did something improper. However, one can also interpret his actions as having been good. The Mishnah is teaching us that in this instance, a "Chossid," one who goes beyond the letter of the law, must assume that his fellow's act was good.

This teaching is also explained as going a step further². Suppose one's fellow committed an act that was a sin. In that case, we must assume that he committed it unintentionally or accidentally. In that manner, we are also judging him favorably.

The Alter Rebbe offers a similar explanation³ to a Mishnah, taught further in Pirkei Avos⁴. "Do not judge your fellow until you have stood in his place." He writes that "it is literally 'his place' (meaning his physical environment) that causes him to sin. (What does this mean; why should *his place* cause him to sin?) To sustain himself, he must go about the market all day. He is among those who spend their time sitting on street corners. His eyes see all sorts of temptations, and 'what the eyes see, the heart desires⁵.'"

Tanya is teaching us that even if one misbehaves, we must look for a way to justify and explain his actions. We must try to find an explanation for his conduct.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

Based on the above explanation, we must understand our Mishnah's language. Why are we told to judge our fellow favorably? The idea of the Mishnah seems to be *not* to judge him *unfavorably*. Had the Mishnah taught

1. See the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

2. See the commentary of the Rambam to this Mishnah.

3. See Tanya, Chapter 30.

4. Chapter 2, Mishnah 4.

5. The Alter Rebbe makes it clear that he cannot excuse himself based on this logic. It is incumbent upon each of us to refrain from sinning despite the difficulties involved.

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us that, it would have sufficed.

The Explanation

Hashem only demands of each of us that which we are capable of fulfilling⁶. Hence, the fact that an individual is entangled in a difficult test proves he can overcome these obstacles. Despite being in the market all day, he can refrain from sinning.

Judging one's fellow favorably reveals this additional strength he was given. Seeing him in a good light helps him to pass all tests without succumbing to sin. Therefore, the Mishnah cannot merely tell us not to judge him unfavorably. We must go beyond that and judge him favorably, enabling him to succeed in his mission, bringing Moshiach now.

Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Emor, 5742)

Chapter II

Likkutei Sichos Volume 13, Pages 114 - 121

Chapter II

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 to prepare for studying Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you ...

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah is teaching that even if Torah study is a part of one's family legacy, he should not expect it to come to him easily. Instead, he must exert himself to acquire Torah⁷. The Talmud teaches us that⁸ "if one is himself a scholar, and his son is a scholar, and his son's son is a scholar as well, the Torah will never cease from his descendants." Furthermore, the Talmud says that "the Torah *seeks* its home." This would seem to imply that Torah is indeed an inheritance. However, the Mishnah teaches that the only way to gain knowledge of the Torah is by toiling in it.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Tifferes Yisroel asks⁹ that we find that¹⁰ "the Torah which Moshe commanded us is an inheritance of the house of Yaakov." We see clearly in the Torah itself that it is an inheritance. How can the Mishnah write that

6. See the Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah, 12, 3; "I only demand according to their ability.

7. See the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

8. See Talmud Bava Metzia 85, a.

9. See his commentary to our Mishnah.

10. Parshas Berochoh, Devorim 33:4.

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"it is not an inheritance for you?"

The Explanation

There are various aspects of the bond between Jews and the Torah. Torah is indeed an inheritance, as quoted above. As such, it is the property of every Jew, without exception. An inheritance does not depend on the circumstances or the age of the one who receives it. Even a newborn baby can acquire property through inheritance. That is why each Jew, without exception, is obligated to study Torah.

There is another aspect, which is called a sale, as we find that¹¹ "the Holy One blessed be He said to the Jews, 'I have *sold* you My Torah.'" This refers to the acquisition of the knowledge of the Torah. To make a purchase, one must pay for the object he buys. The same is true of Torah knowledge; the only way to achieve this is by exerting oneself with great effort¹².

Regarding this aspect, the Mishnah says that "it is not an inheritance for you." We cannot expect to inherit Torah knowledge, and we must use our minds to delve into the Torah and understand it, each of us to the best of our ability.

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

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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11. See Midrash, Shemos Rabbah 33, 1.

12. See Likkutei Sichos there at length, where a third aspect of acquiring Torah is discussed, that of a present. There are parts of Torah which transcend our understanding. These we cannot *purchase*. We can only attain them as a present from Hashem.

**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

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 שתהיל 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

חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו

מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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