

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek I - II

13 Elul, 5781 – August 21, 2021

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
Sefer Hasichos 5750, Volume 2, Page 635

פרק א', משנה ב': שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר: על שלושה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים.

Chapter 1, Mishnah 2: Shimon the Righteous was among the last surviving members of the Great Assembly¹. He would say, "The world stands on three things, Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness.

The Explanation

The Bartenura explains that Shimon Hatzaddik would often make the statement attributed to him in our Mishna. Hashem created the world for these three things; Torah, the service of Hashem, and deeds of kindness. These are the pillars upon which the world rests.

The Alter Rebbe offers a different explanation of this Mishna². Each of these pillars represents one of our three patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Performing acts of kindness personified Avrohom's being. The Orchos Tzaddikim writes³ that Avrohom was "generous with his soul, physical body, and possessions." Yitzchok, who was to be brought as an offering⁴, represents the sacrificial service of G-d (later replaced by prayer). Our forefather Yaakov represents Torah study. The verse⁵ "He established a testimony in Yaakov, and He set down a Torah in Yisroel" alludes to this.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

Based on the Alter Rebbe's explanation, the order in which the Mishna lists these three pillars is challenging to understand. It would seem that the Mishna should have first listed Avrohom's attribute (deeds of kindness), then Yitzchok's (the service of Hashem), and then Yaakov's (Torah study). This is the exact opposite of the order in which the Mishna lists the three.

Perhaps the Mishna may list them in their order in our daily schedule. This also requires explanation. The very first order of the day is prayer. However, even before praying, one should give Tzedokoh to the poor, thereby performing an act of kindness. We find in the Talmud that⁶ "Rabbi Eliezer would give a coin to a poor person before commencing to pray." This deed of compassion precedes prayer, i.e., Divine service. Prayer is to be followed by the Torah study. Our Sages

1. The Men of the Great Assembly – Anshei Knesses Hagedolah, were a court which consisted of 120 sages – including a number of prophets. They included Ezra, Nechemiah, Mordechai, Daniel, Shimon the Righteous and the prophets Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi. They were the religious authority at the beginning of the Second Bais Hamikdosh.

2. See Likkutei Torah for Parshas Matos, Chapters 3 and 4.

3. See Orchos Tzaddikim Gate 17.

4. See Bereishis, Chapter 22, Verses 1 – 19.

5. Tehillim 78:5.

6. See Talmud Bava Basra 10, a.

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taught us that one goes⁷ "from the House of Prayer to the House of Study." From this perspective as well, the Mishna seems to list the three out of order.

The Explanation

The explanation is as follows. Shimon Hatzaddik's teaching began by telling us that there are three things upon which *the world* rests. He, therefore, began his list with that which affects the globe most potently.

We find conflicting attributes of the Torah. The Torah is G-d's will and wisdom. Just as He is limitless, the same is true of Torah. Regarding the Torah, the verse says⁸, "Longer than the earth is its measure, and wider than the sea." Nevertheless, through Torah study, this infinite Divine will and wisdom become united with a physical, human mind⁹. Hence, Torah has the most potent effect upon this world, drawing boundless G-dliness within every one of us. G-d's purpose of creation was to have a "dwelling place below." Torah accomplishes this in a way which nothing else can. That is why the Mishna lists Torah before the other two pillars.

A Practical Lesson

"The essential thing is a deed." It is not enough for us to discuss the importance of Torah study; we must study Torah. However, that does not suffice. We must always look to add to our Torah study. Not only that, but we must influence those around us to learn Torah. This is indeed an excellent "deed of kindness." As a result, we will certainly transform this world into the dwelling place that Hashem desires. In this manner, we will bring Moshiach now.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, 4 Elul, 5750)

Chapter II

Likkutei Sichos Volume 13, Pages 114 - 121

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 the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you ...

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah teaches 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 Torah¹⁰. The Talmud teaches us that¹¹ "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

7. See Talmud Berachos 64, a.

8. Iyov 11:9.

9. See Tanya Chapter 5, where this is explained at length.

10. See the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

11. See Talmud Bava Metzia 85, a.

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his descendants." The Talmud goes on to say that "the Torah *seeks* its home." This would seem to imply that Torah is indeed an inheritance. However, the Mishnah is teaching that the only way to learn Torah is by toiling in it.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Tifferes Yisroel asks¹² that we find that¹³ "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 "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 each Jew, without exception. 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 that¹⁴ "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 something in exchange for the object which he buys. The same is true of Torah knowledge; the only way to achieve this is by exerting oneself with great effort¹⁵.

Regarding this aspect, the Mishnah says that "it is not an inheritance for you." We cannot expect to inherit Torah knowledge. 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 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

For the Rashi of the Week, [click here](#).

You can find us on the web at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

You can find our blog [here](#).

12. See his commentary to our Mishnah.

13. Parshas Berochoh, Devorim 33:4.

14. See Midrash, Shemos Rabbah 33, 1.

15. 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.

**IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

* * *

IN HONOR OF
The Soldiers of Tzivos Hashem **Chaim** and **Aiden Oded** שיקחי **Morris**

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem M.** and **Chaya Mushka** שיקחי **Morris**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Rivkah Aidel** ע"ה bas **Reb Avrohom** ש"י **Gottesfeld**
Passed away on 7 Elul, 5774
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER HUSBAND
Reb Yisroel ש"י **Gottesfeld**

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Mrs. **Chana Hinda** ע"ה bas **Reb Shmuel** ע"ה **Gottesfeld**
Passed away on 8 Elul, 5774
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON
Reb Yisroel ש"י **Gottesfeld**

* * *

IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther** שתתחי' **Sharabani**

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON
Mr. **Geri** ש"י **Bentov**

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לעילוי נשמת

מרת רבקה איידל ע"ה בת ר' אברהם שי' גאטעספעלד

נפטרה ביום ז' אלול, ה'תשע"ד

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בעלה

ר' ישראל שי' גאטעספעלד

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לעילוי נשמת

מרת חנה הינדל בת ר' שמואל ע"ה גאטעספעלד

נפטרה ביום ח' אלול, ה'תשע"ד

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' ישראל שי' גאטעספעלד

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לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

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נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב