

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְעַמְּךָ כָּלָם צְדִיקִים,  
לְעוֹלָם יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ, גִּצְרֵךְ מִטְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ לְהִתְפָּאֵר:

**A**LL ISRAEL HAVE A SHARE IN THE WORLD TO COME, AS IT IS STATED:<sup>1</sup> “AND YOUR PEOPLE ARE ALL RIGHTEOUS; THEY SHALL INHERIT THE LAND FOREVER. [THEY ARE] THE BRANCH OF MY PLANTING, THE WORK OF MY HANDS IN WHICH TO TAKE PRIDE.”<sup>2</sup>

**ALL ISRAEL HAVE A SHARE IN THE WORLD TO COME** — Within the Talmudic writings, there are two interpretations of the phrase “the World to Come”:

- a) *Gan Eden* — the spiritual realm of souls, the afterlife;
- b) The Era of the Resurrection.

In this *mishnah*, the term obviously refers to the Era of the Resurrection,<sup>3</sup> for in its source,<sup>2</sup> the *mishnah* continues: “And these individuals do not have a portion in the World to Come. He who denies that the concept of the resurrection has a source in the Torah....”

Our Sages explain:<sup>4</sup> “He denied the resurrection of the dead; he therefore will not have a share in this resurrection — measure for measure.”<sup>5</sup>

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1. *Yeshayahu* 60:21.

2. *Sanhedrin* 10:1.

3. R. Ovadiah of Bartenura (and others) on *Sanhedrin, ibid., Midrash Shmuel*, beginning of *Pirkei Avos*.

4. *Sanhedrin, ibid.*, (90a).

5. See *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe *Shlita*, Vol. I, p. 148ff, which explains that the *mishnah's* statement that these individuals will not receive a portion in the World to Come refers only to their bodies; they will not be resurrected. Their souls, however, will be resurrected and live in another body, for every soul is “an actual

Moreover, our Rabbis explain<sup>6</sup> that, with regard to this *mishnah*, no other interpretation is appropriate. Entry to *Gan Eden* — the spiritual world of the souls — is restricted, as it is written:<sup>7</sup> “Who may ascend the mount of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.”

For a person’s position in the afterlife is a direct result of his conduct in this world; one who has not refined himself will not be found worthy of a portion in the afterlife.

Although the revelations of the Era of the Resurrection will be vastly superior to those of the afterlife, every Jew will receive a portion.

Why? Because the Jews are...

**THE BRANCH OF MY PLANTING, THE WORK OF MY HANDS** — Every Jew’s soul is an actual part of G-d.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in the Era of the Resurrection when the essential G-dliness that pervades every dimension of our existence will be revealed, this holiness — the fundamental vitality present in every Jew — will emerge.

The prooftext uses material entities — “the branch,” “the work” — as analogies to highlight the fact that the Resurrection — the return of the body to this material plane — represents the ultimate reward.<sup>9</sup> For our material world will then be G-d’s dwelling.<sup>10</sup> Just as a person reveals the innermost dimensions of his personality only in his own home, so too the essence of G-dliness — those dimensions of His Being that transcend

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part of G-d” (*Tanya*, ch. 2), or to refer to the wording of this *mishnah*, “the branch of My planting, the work of My hands.”

6. See the discourse *Ki Yishalcha* (*Sefer HaMaamarim* 5700 end of p. 44ff). See also *Chagigah* 15b which states that were it not for the prayers of R. Meir, Achar would not have entered *Gan Eden* (i.e., even the lower level of *Gan Eden*).
7. *Tehillim* 24:3-4.
8. *Tanya*, ch. 2.
9. See *Ramban*, conclusion of *Shaar HaGemul*, *Likkutei Torah*, *Tzav* 15c.
10. *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Bechukosai*, sec. 3; see *Tanya*, chs. 33 and 36.

even spiritual existence — will be revealed in our material world.

(*Maamar, Kol Yisrael Yesh La'hem Cheilek L'olam Habah*, 5733;  
*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XVII, p. 343ff.)

**IN WHICH TO TAKE PRIDE** — Since every Jew's soul is an actual part of G-d, each and every Jew — man, woman, and child — praises G-d by virtue of his very existence.<sup>11</sup> “Even the sinners of Israel are filled with *mitzvos* as a pomegranate is filled with seeds.”<sup>12</sup>

This teaching serves as an introduction to each chapter of *Pirkei Avos* because *Pirkei Avos* focuses on ethical development and personal refinement. When one becomes aware of the essential G-dly core of every individual, one appreciates: a) the necessity to refine oneself so that this essential quality can be expressed, and b) that every individual, regardless of his present level of development, has the potential to achieve such refinement.<sup>13</sup>

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Vayikra*, 5750)



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11. See *Sichos Shabbos Mevorchim Nissan*, 5750.
  12. The conclusion of the Tractate of *Chagigah*.
  13. One of the reasons *Pirkei Avos* is studied is to prepare us to relive the experience of the giving of the Torah on the holiday of Shavuos. *Ahavas Yisrael* was a necessary prerequisite for the giving of the Torah, as *Rashi* comments on the verse (*Shmos* 19:2): “And Israel camped before the mountain,” “as one man, with one heart.” Similarly, every year, we must prepare for the giving of the Torah with an emphasis on *Ahavas Yisrael*. (See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. I, p. 262.)



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**CHAPTER ONE**

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## CHAPTER ONE

א משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע, ויהושע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים: הווי מתונים בדין, והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סג לתורה.

**1.** MOSHE RECEIVED THE TORAH FROM SINAI AND PASSED IT ON TO YEHOSHUA; YEHOSHUA [PASSED IT ON] TO THE ELDERS; THE ELDERS TO THE PROPHETS; THE PROPHETS PASSED IT ON TO THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY.

THEY [THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY] MADE THREE STATEMENTS: “BE DELIBERATE IN JUDGMENT; RAISE UP MANY STUDENTS; AND MAKE A FENCE AROUND THE TORAH.”

### **MOSHE RECEIVED THE TORAH FROM SINAI —**

Why does the *Mishnah* describe the chain of tradition only in *Pirkei Avos*? Would it not have been proper to do so earlier, at the very beginning of the *Mishnah*?

It can be explained that in the previous tractates there was no need to mention the chain of tradition. Those tractates deal with ritual obligations, which are obviously Divine in origin. *Pirkei Avos*, on the other hand, deals with ethics. It is extremely important to emphasize that the source of these teachings is also Divine revelation, and not mere human wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See the commentary of R. Ovadiah of Bartenura.

**RECEIVED** — In regard to many matters, e.g., the holiday of Shavuos, emphasis is placed on the *giving* of the Torah. In regard to ethics, it is the *receiving* of the Torah — how the Torah is internalized in one's being — which is highlighted. For in this realm it is not abstract knowledge which is important, but rather how the Torah is applied in life.

(*Sichos Yud Shevat, 5739*)

**FROM SINAI** — Why does the *mishnah* state “from Sinai,” instead of “from G-d”? Saying “Sinai” underscores two important character traits. On the one hand, Sinai is a mountain, reminding us to stand tall in the face of any and all challenges. Nevertheless, Mount Sinai is “lower than all the mountains,”<sup>2</sup> emphasizing that this pride must be tempered by humility.<sup>3</sup>

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5731*)

**AND PASSED IT ON** — Moshe realized that he was merely a steward of the knowledge he had been given, and therefore endeavored to share it with Yehoshua and, through him, with the entire Jewish people. Each of us must emulate Moshe's example and share the wisdom we have learned with others.

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Naso, 5738*)

**MOSHE... YEHOSHUA... THE ELDERS... THE PROPHETS... THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY** — If the *mishnah's* purpose was merely to describe the chain of tradition, a more detailed list would have been appropriate.<sup>4</sup> By mentioning only these five individuals or groups, the *mishnah* alludes to five traits that are essential in developing a relationship with the Torah.

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2. *Midrash Tehillim* 68:17.

3. See the explanation of this concept in the essay entitled “The Revelation at Mt. Sinai,” *Timeless Patterns in Time*, Vol. II, p. 109 (Kehot, N.Y., 5754).

4. See the *Rambam's* Introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*, where he indeed provides a more detailed index.



“Moshe” represents a unique fusion of humility and pride. Although he was “more humble than any man on the face of the earth,”<sup>5</sup> he served as a firm leader of the people, confidently telling them: “It is I who stood between you and G-d.”<sup>6</sup>

“Yehoshua” represents the epitome of dedicated devotion — “a youth who never left the tent.”<sup>7</sup> Such dedication is also necessary if one is to make the Torah a part of one’s thinking processes.

“The elders” represent the virtues of maturity and cultivated wisdom. The commitment of Yehoshua must be nurtured through disciplined study.

“The prophets” represent a drive to make one’s thinking processes reflect one’s spiritual values. This is necessary to ensure that the knowledge of the elders remains more than human wisdom, and reflects the G-dly source of the Torah.

In regard to “the Men of the Great Assembly,” our Sages explain the name was given because they “restored the original glory.”<sup>8</sup>

Moshe referred to the Almighty as “the great, mighty and awesome G-d.”<sup>9</sup>

Yirmeyahu said: “Gentiles are celebrating in His palace; where is His awesomeness?” And when he referred to G-d,<sup>10</sup> he did not use the term “awesome.”

Daniel said: “Gentiles are subjugating His children; where is His might?” And he did not use the term “mighty.”<sup>11</sup>

They [the Men of the Great Assembly] arose and said: “On the contrary, this is His might; that He overcomes

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5. *Bamidbar* 12:2.

6. *Devarim* 5:5.

7. *Shmos* 33:11.

8. *Yoma* 69b.

9. *Devarim* 10:17.

10. *Yirmeyahu* 32:18.

11. *Daniel* 9:4.

His natural tendency, and shows patience to the wicked. And this is His awesomeness; for were it not for His awesomeness, one nation could not endure among the many.”<sup>12</sup>

The Men of the Great Assembly were able to see G-dliness even in the darkness of exile. This is the last quality which the *mishnah* chose to emphasize as a prerequisite for our study of the Torah; regardless of the situation in which we find ourselves, we must appreciate G-d’s intent.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1175ff)*

**RAISE UP MANY STUDENTS** — Implied in the Hebrew term העמידו is the notion that one must instruct one’s students until they are able to stand independently. A teacher’s responsibility is not merely to impart knowledge, but rather to give his students a strong base of values and principles which will continue to give them strength.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Naso, 5740)*

**MANY STUDENTS** — The word “many” does not imply a limit. No matter how many students a teacher has, he must always seek to add more.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Kedoshim, 5744)*

ב שְׁמֵעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה, הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר עַל  
שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד: עַל הַתּוֹרָה, וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה, וְעַל גְּמִילוּת  
הַטָּרִים.

## 2. SHIMON THE RIGHTEOUS WAS ONE OF THE LAST OF THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY.

12. Hence, in the daily prayers which they instituted we say “the great, mighty, and awesome G-d,” as Moshe did.

HE USED TO SAY: “THE WORLD STANDS ON THREE QUALITIES: ON [THE STUDY OF] TORAH, THE SERVICE [OF G-D], AND DEEDS OF KINDNESS.”

**SHIMON THE RIGHTEOUS WAS ONE OF THE LAST OF THE MEN OF THE GREAT ASSEMBLY** — The Men of the Great Assembly were a gathering of great Sages, each possessing different tendencies. Each Sage’s influence balanced and moderated the input of the others. With an emphasis on harmony, this auspicious body charted the course of Jewish observance.

As long as this body functioned, it was able to bring balance to the different character traits possessed by people at large. When, however, this assemblage ceased to exist, there was a need to highlight the importance of equilibrium. Shimon the Righteous, one of the last participants in this body, showed how the three modes of divine service mentioned enable both the individual’s private world and the world outside to stand with strength and stability.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5740)*

**THE WORLD STANDS ON THREE QUALITIES** — This expression implies that the world is above the Torah, divine service, and deeds of kindness, for a support is always inferior to the entity it is supporting. This is problematic, for the Torah “preceded the world,”<sup>13</sup> and represents a higher plane than material existence.

In resolution, it can be explained that this *mishnah* is concerned with the ultimate purpose of the world — that it serve as a dwelling for G-d.<sup>14</sup> It focuses on the Torah, divine service, and deeds of kindness as the means which will enable the world to realize this purpose. Thus in this context, these three

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13. *Bereishis Rabbah* 8:2 *et al.*

14. *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Bechukosai*, sec. 3; *Tanya*, chs. 33 and 36.

modes of religious expression are seen, not as goals in their own right, but as ways of bringing the world to fulfillment.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Chukas, 5744)*

**[THE STUDY OF] TORAH, THE SERVICE [OF G-D], AND DEEDS OF KINDNESS** — The Torah shows a person how to conduct his life. Service (prayer) enables one to internalize the Torah's teachings, and deeds of kindness express these teachings in the world at large.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5740)*

ג אַנטִיגֶנוֹס אײש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק, הוא היה אומר: אל תהיו פֻּעֲבָדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָסָה, אֲלֵא הָיוּ פֻּעֲבָדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב שְׁלֵא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָסָה, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם.

**3.** ANTIGONUS OF SOCHO RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM SHIMON THE RIGHTEOUS. HE USED TO SAY: “DO NOT BE LIKE SERVANTS WHO SERVE THEIR MASTER FOR THE SAKE OF RECEIVING A REWARD, BUT RATHER BE LIKE SERVANTS WHO SERVE THEIR MASTER WITHOUT THE INTENT OF RECEIVING A REWARD; AND LET THE FEAR OF HEAVEN BE UPON YOU.”

**DO NOT BE LIKE SERVANTS WHO SERVE THEIR MASTER FOR THE SAKE OF RECEIVING A REWARD** — We find many verses in the Torah which promise rewards for observance of the *mitzvos*. For example, the Ten Command-

ments instruct us<sup>15</sup> to “Honor your father and your mother so that your days will be prolonged.”

This *mishnah*, like so many of the teachings of *Pirkei Avos*, is an expression of *mili dechassidusa*,<sup>16</sup> pious conduct beyond the measure of the Law. In that vein, it teaches that although every *mitzvah* generates a reward, a person’s focus should not be on the reward, but on the very fact that he has been found worthy to serve G-d.

The reward which the *mishnah* mentions can also be understood as referring to spiritual attainments such as the love and fear of G-d. Just as a person should not focus on the material rewards he will receive for observance, so too he should not have in mind the spiritual benefits it will bring him.

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Pinchas*, 5737)

**RATHER BE LIKE SERVANTS WHO SERVE THEIR MASTER WITHOUT THE INTENT OF RECEIVING A REWARD** — There are other versions of this *mishnah*<sup>17</sup> which read “be like servants who serve their master without receiving a reward.”

What is the difference between these two versions? The version included by the Alter Rebbe in his *siddur* emphasizes that people will receive rewards for divine service, but that the reward should not be the focus of one’s attention. The other version, by contrast, negates the very concept of reward. As the Alter Rebbe would say:<sup>18</sup> “I do not want Your *Gan Eden*, nor do I want Your World to Come. I want only You.”

Although the Alter Rebbe himself was able to reach this rung, he realized that it was beyond the reach of most people. Therefore, when choosing the text of *Pirkei Avos* to be included

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15. *Shmos* 20:12.

16. *Bava Kama* 30a.

17. *Machzor Vitri*, *Rashi’s* commentary to the Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 19a); see *Hemshech VeKocha* 5637, ch. 15.

18. Cited by the *Tzemach Tzedek* in *Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 138a.

in the *siddur* — a text to be used by all people — he chose the former version.

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Pinchas, 5737*)

**LET THE FEAR OF HEAVEN BE UPON YOU** — Our Sages relate<sup>19</sup> that Antigonus of Socho had two talented students, Tzadok and Beitus. When Antigonus taught: “Do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward,” they turned away in disgust, commenting: “Is it proper for a worker to toil the entire day without receiving any recompense?”

They began splinter groups which coveted material wealth and rejected the core of Jewish practice.

On finding that they could not convince the majority of the people to reject the Torah, they claimed they were true to Torah, but that the only Torah that was G-dly in origin was the Written Law. The Oral Law, they maintained, was merely a human invention.<sup>20</sup>

Antigonus appreciated that his students’ error stemmed from a dearth of *yiras shomayim*, fear of heaven. Therefore he felt it necessary to emphasize the importance of this quality.

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Naso, 5742*)

ד יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה, ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מהם,  
יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה אומר: יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים, והגוי  
מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, והגוי שותה בצמא את דברייהם.

**4.** YOSAY BEN YOEZER OF TZREDAH AND YOSAY  
BEN YOCHANAN OF JERUSALEM RECEIVED [THE  
ORAL TRADITION] FROM THEM. YOSAY BEN YOEZER

19. *Avos d'Rabbi Nossan* 5:2

20. See the *Rambam's Commentary to the Mishnah, Avos* 1:3.

OF TZREDAH SAID: “LET YOUR HOUSE BE A MEETING PLACE FOR SAGES; SIT IN THE DUST AT THEIR FEET, AND DRINK IN THEIR WORDS THIRSTILY.”

**LET YOUR HOUSE BE A MEETING PLACE FOR SAGES** — One’s dwelling should continually serve this function, to the extent that it defines the nature of the home. Then, even when the Sages are not present, their influence will continue to affect the events that transpire within.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Acharei, 5722)*

**SIT IN THE DUST AT THEIR FEET** — It is possible that a person will become proud that sages frequent his home. Therefore, the *mishnah* emphasizes the importance of conducting oneself with humility.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Acharei, 5722)*

Alternatively, the term “dust at their feet” can be interpreted figuratively. “Feet” can refer to the sages’ students, and “dust” to negative attributes.

During the time of Yosay ben Yoezer, gaps appeared in the chain of tradition and differences of opinion arose between the Sages.<sup>21</sup> When this happens, it is natural for “dust to be stirred up” by their students, as each tries to argue the virtues of his own teacher’s position. The *mishnah* teaches that one should “Sit... at their feet,” and “drink in their words,” for by patiently opening oneself to the teachings of the sages themselves, one will offset any negative influence that might be generated by the “dust” of their students.

*(Sichos Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei, 5739)*

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21. See *Tosafos, Chagigah* 16a, the gloss of *Tosafos Yom Tov* to this *mishnah*.

ה יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר: יהי ביתך פתוח לרוחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה, באשתו אמרו, קל לחמר באשת חבירו. מפאן אמרו חכמים: כל המרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנום.

**5.** YOSAY BEN YOCHANAN OF JERUSALEM SAID: “LET YOUR HOUSE BE WIDE OPEN [FOR GUESTS]. TREAT THE POOR AS MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD, AND DO NOT INDULGE EXCESSIVELY IN CONVERSATION WITH THE WOMAN.”

THIS WAS SAID CONCERNING ONE’S OWN WIFE; HOW MUCH MORE SO DOES IT APPLY TO THE WIFE OF ANOTHER! HENCE THE SAGES HAVE DECLARED: “ANYONE WHO INDULGES EXCESSIVELY IN CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN CAUSES EVIL TO HIMSELF, NEGLECTS THE STUDY OF TORAH, AND WILL IN THE END INHERIT GEHINOM.”

**\*TREAT THE POOR AS MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD** — Our Sages state<sup>22</sup> that “poverty is becoming to the Jews,” for it humbles a person and brings him closer to *teshuvah*. By opening one’s home to the poor, one benefits from the humbling influence of poverty without being subjected to it oneself.

(*Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XVII, p. 364*)

**\*DO NOT INDULGE EXCESSIVELY IN CONVERSATION** — In *chassidic* terminology, when mankind is contrasted with the animal and plant kingdoms, a human being is referred to as a מדבר, “one who talks.”

Why is speech singled out over intellect or emotion to define man’s uniqueness? Because every other element of a person’s character centers around himself, while speech gives him

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22. *Chagigah* 9b.



the ability to transcend his own being and relate to another person.<sup>23</sup>

In light of the uniqueness of this potential, our Sages proposed<sup>24</sup> that שיחה, “conversation,” is the purpose of man’s creation. Nevertheless, they reject this hypothesis and explain instead that the goal of man’s creative efforts should be Torah study. For Torah study enables a person to establish a bond with G-d that transcends the natural limits of creation and endows a person and his environment with a new dimension of spiritual awareness.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. VI, pgs. 115-116; Vol. XV, p. 96ff)*

וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתְאִי הָאֲרָבִלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה  
אָמַר: עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב, וְקַנְיָה לְךָ חֵבֵר, וְהָיוּ דִן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף  
זְכוּת.

**6.** YEHOSHUA BEN PERACHYAH AND NITTAI OF  
ARBEL RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM  
THEM. YEHOSHUA BEN PERACHYAH SAID: “PROVIDE  
YOURSELF WITH A MASTER; ACQUIRE FOR YOURSELF A  
FRIEND; AND JUDGE EVERY PERSON FAVORABLY.”

**PROVIDE YOURSELF WITH A MASTER** — The intent is not merely to recommend getting a teacher who will enhance one’s knowledge, but a guide whom one consults regarding one’s conduct.

By nature, man is influenced by self-love. This natural bias makes it difficult to know whether we are making adequate efforts in our study of Torah, in our gifts to charity, and in other elements of our divine service.

23. *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5628, p. 167.

24. *Sanhedrin* 99b.

How can we know? By consulting another person who can look at our situation objectively. Every man, woman and child should consult a Torah personality whom he respects, and should accept that person's advice, not merely as friendly counsel, but as the directives of "a master."

Holding himself responsible for the evaluation of another individual will enable a person to make maximum use of the potential with which he has been endowed.

Even when a person is himself a teacher and capable of instructing others, he should seek a master for himself.<sup>25</sup> No matter how great his own wisdom, he can make greater progress when his conduct is scrutinized by the objective eyes of a person who wants to help him advance.

The Hebrew term *נָשָׂא*, translated as "provide," can also mean "force."<sup>26</sup> In this vein, the *mishnah* is teaching us to accept a master even if we must force ourselves to do so.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Devarim, 5746)*

**ACQUIRE FOR YOURSELF A FRIEND** — The guidance of a master is not sufficient. A person also needs colleagues at his own level with whom to share the trials and triumphs of advancing in divine service.<sup>27</sup>

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei, 5742)*

**JUDGE EVERY PERSON FAVORABLY** — Even when a person's conduct does not seem worthy of favorable judgment, one should endeavor to find redeeming virtue within him.

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25. This concept is reflected in the fact that the author of this teaching was Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachyah, the *Nasi*, the Torah leader of the Jewish people. Even Rabbi Yehoshua appreciated the necessity of subjugating his conduct to the review of a colleague (*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Behaalos'cha, 5741*).
26. See the notes of the *Beis Yosef* to the *Tur* (*Yoreh De'ah, sec. 248*). See also the commentary of the *Rambam* and R. Ovadiah of Bartenura to this *mishnah*.
27. See also Chapter 6, *Beraisa 6*, which teaches that one of the means through which "the Torah is acquired" is "close association with colleagues."

In this context, it is possible to cite a narrative from Rabbi Yehoshua's own life. Our Sages relate<sup>28</sup> that "that person" (a Talmudic term used to refer to J. of Nazareth) was one of Rabbi Yehoshua's students. Even after "that person" had forsaken Jewish observance, Rabbi Yehoshua tried to persuade him to repent.

"That person" refused, replying: "I received the following tradition from you: 'A person who sins and causes others to sin is not given the opportunity to repent.'"

Of course Rabbi Yehoshua knew this principle, but he also knew that if a person makes a sincere attempt, his repentance will be accepted regardless of his previous conduct.<sup>29</sup> Despite his former student's behavior, Rabbi Yehoshua judged him as capable of repenting sincerely enough to regain G-d's favor.

*(Sichas Shabbos Parshas Behaalos'cha, 5741)*

\*Judging a person favorably involves an honest appreciation of the challenges which that person faces.<sup>30</sup> And this awareness should also lead to the understanding that G-d has surely given that person the ability to overcome these challenges.<sup>31</sup> This, in turn, should heighten the esteem with which we regard this individual, for he is a person to whom G-d has entrusted the formidable powers necessary to overcome severe challenges.

When the manner in which we relate to that person reflects such respect, this will inspire the individual to bring these potentials to the surface.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVII, p. 164-165)*

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28. *Sanhedrin* 107b, according to *Chisronos HaShas*.

29. *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 4:6; *Tanya*, ch. 25.

30. See *Tanya*, ch. 30, in explanation of *Pirkei Avos* 2:4, which explains that a person should not look down at a colleague who is involved in worldly affairs. Such a person faces greater challenges in his divine service than one who is involved in Torah study.

31. For as our Sages (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:3) state, G-d forces a person to confront only those challenges which he can overcome.

ז נתאי הארבלִי אומר: הרחק משכן רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע, ואל  
תתיאש מן הפרענות.

**7.** NITTAI OF ARBEL SAID: “KEEP AWAY FROM A  
BAD NEIGHBOR; DO NOT FRATERNIZE WITH A  
WICKED MAN; AND DO NOT ABANDON BELIEF IN  
[DIVINE] RETRIBUTION.”

**KEEP AWAY FROM A BAD NEIGHBOR** — The *mishnah* does not say: “Keep away from a wicked neighbor,” for its intent is not that one should judge another’s conduct. Instead, the intent is that a person should decide whether closeness to a particular individual is beneficial or detrimental to his own divine service. The neighbor may be above all reproach, but traveling a different path of divine service. Any attempt to identify with him might thus be “bad,” i.e., create confusion and discord.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1181ff)*

**DO NOT FRATERNIZE WITH A WICKED MAN** — Here, the *mishnah* does not use the term “keep away,” for the intent is not that one should sever contact with a person because his conduct is unworthy. ואל תתחבר, translated as “do not fraternize,” literally means “do not join to.” One should not “join” a wicked person by accepting his standards. One should, however, reach out with warmth and love to all people, regardless of their conduct, and endeavor to inspire them to improve themselves.

*(Ibid.)*

**DO NOT ABANDON BELIEF IN [DIVINE] RETRIBUTION** — When a person lives in constant awareness of the possibility of Divine retribution, he will sincerely regret any misconduct. The discomfort this awareness brings will

itself atone for his misdeeds, precluding the necessity for retribution from Heaven.

*(Ibid.)*

**ח** יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן שטח קבלו מהם, יהודה בן טבאי אומר: אל תעש עצמך בעורכי הדין, וכשיהיו בעלי הדין עומדים לפניך, יהיו בעיניך כרשעים, וכשנפטרים מלפניך, יהיו בעיניך כזכאים, כשקבלו עליהם את הדין.

**8.** YEHUDAH BEN TABBAI AND SHIMON BEN SHATAH RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM THEM. YEHUDAH BEN TABBAI SAID: “DO NOT ACT AS A COUNSELOR [WHEN SITTING AS A JUDGE]. WHEN THE LITIGANTS STAND BEFORE YOU, REGARD THEM BOTH AS GUILTY, BUT WHEN THEY LEAVE, HAVING ACCEPTED THE JUDGMENT, REGARD THEM BOTH AS GUILTLess.”

**\*REGARD THEM BOTH AS GUILTY** — רשעים, translated as “guilty,” also means “wicked.” The very fact that two people are involved in a dispute severe enough to bring them before a judge appears to indicate that both possess a certain measure of wickedness. When two people cannot resolve their differences without arbitration, both need to increase their love for their fellow man.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXIV, p. 155)*

**ט** שמעון בן שטח אומר: הוי מרבה לתקור את העדים, והוי זהיר בדבריך, שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשקר.

**9.** SHIMON BEN SHATACH SAID: “EXAMINE THE WITNESSES THOROUGHLY; AND BE CAUTIOUS WITH YOUR WORDS, LEST THROUGH THEM THEY [THE WITNESSES OR THE LITIGANTS] LEARN TO SPEAK FALSEHOOD.”

**SHIMON BEN SHATACH SAID: “EXAMINE THE WITNESSES THOROUGHLY”** — Our Rabbis<sup>32</sup> associate this teaching with a tragedy that occurred to Rabbi Shimon: his son was executed because of false testimony delivered in court.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, we find that Shimon ben Shatach reproved his colleague, Yehudah ben Tabbai, for executing a lying witness when Torah law did not require his death.<sup>34</sup> These two incidents intensified Rabbi Shimon’s commitment to investigate testimony thoroughly before acting upon it.

There is also a homiletic dimension to this teaching. Our Sages say:<sup>35</sup> “The walls of a person’s house testify regarding his [character].” On the most simple level, it is possible to “examine the witnesses” and determine a person’s character by studying the walls of his house — which books, whose pictures, and which art do they feature.

*(Sichos Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5739; Sichos Shabbos Parshas Kedoshim, 5741)*

י שְׁמַעְיָה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן קָבְלוּ מֵהֵם, שְׁמַעְיָה אָמַר: אֶהְיֶה אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה,  
וְשֵׁנָא אֶת הַרְבָּנוֹת, וְאֵל תְּתוּדַע לְרֵשׁוֹת.

**10.** SHEMAYAH AND AVTALYON RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM THEM. SHEMAYAH

32. *Midrash Shmuel*, quoting the *Rashbam*.

33. *Rashi*, *Sanhedrin* 44b, based on *Yerushalmi*, *Sanhedrin* 6:6.

34. *Makkos* 5b.

35. *Taanis* 11a.

SAID: “LOVE WORK; ABHOR TAKING HIGH OFFICE; AND DO NOT SEEK INTIMACY WITH THE RULING POWER.”

**SHEMAYAH SAID** — These three directives reflect Shemayah’s humility.

**LOVE WORK** — Do not say: “It is beneath my dignity to perform common labor.”<sup>36</sup>

**ABHOR TAKING HIGH OFFICE** — A person should not seek to place a crown on his own head.<sup>37</sup>

**DO NOT SEEK INTIMACY WITH THE RULING POWER** — Nor should he boast: “I am a friend of the ruler of the city!”<sup>38</sup>

Since Shemayah was the *Nasi* — the Torah leader of the Jewish people — he knew the importance of humility. For a leader’s prominence comes as a result of his selflessness. Because he has no concern for himself, he is fit to serve as a medium to lead his people to an awareness of G-d’s sovereignty.<sup>39</sup>

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5728)*

יא אבטליון אומר: חכמים, הנהרו בדבריכם, שמא תחובו חובת  
גלות ותגלו למקום מים הרעים, וישתו התלמידים הפאים אחרים  
וימותו, ונמצא שם שמים מתחלל.

**11.** AVTALYON SAID: “SAGES, BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR WORDS, FOR YOU MAY INCUR THE PENALTY OF EXILE AND BE BANISHED TO A PLACE OF EVIL WATERS [HERESY], AND THE DISCIPLES WHO

36. See *Rashi's* commentary.

37. The interpretation of *Avos d'Rabbi Nossan* 11:2.

38. *Ibid.*:3.

39. See *Tzemech Tzedek, Derech Mitzvosecho, Mitzvas Minui Melech*, sec. 1.

FOLLOW YOU THERE WILL DRINK AND DIE  
[SPIRITUALLY], AND CONSEQUENTLY THE NAME OF  
HEAVEN WILL BE DESECRATED.”

**THE DISCIPLES WHO FOLLOW YOU THERE WILL DRINK AND DIE** — The *mishnah* does not express fear with regard to the future of the teacher himself, since he is a mature person, protected by the virtues of his Torah knowledge.<sup>40</sup> His students, by contrast, are more vulnerable, since they have not developed as thorough a knowledge of the Torah. Therefore there is greater concern for their fate.

(*Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini*, 5728)

**יב** הָלַל וְשִׂמְאֵי קִבְלוּ מֵהֶם, הָלַל אֹמֵר: הֲגַי מִתְלַמְּדֵיךָ שֶׁל אֶהְרֵן,  
אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם, וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה.

**12.** HILLEL AND SHAMMAI RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM THEM. HILLEL SAID: “BE OF THE DISCIPLES OF AHARON, LOVING PEACE AND PURSUING PEACE, LOVING THE CREATED BEINGS, AND BRINGING THEM NEAR TO THE TORAH.”

**BE OF THE DISCIPLES OF AHARON... LOVING THE CREATED BEINGS, AND BRINGING THEM NEAR TO THE TORAH** — The use of the term “created beings” instead of “people” implies that Aharon would reach out to individuals whose only redeeming virtue was the fact that they were G-d’s creations.<sup>41</sup>

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40. See *Yoma* 38b.

41. See *Tanya*, ch. 32.



Aharon's concern for his fellow man was all the more impressive because of his exalted position as High Priest. Leaving the Sanctuary where G-d's Presence was openly revealed, he would reach out to people who had no virtue other than their having been created by G-d.<sup>42</sup>

The order used in the *mishnah* is also significant. It implies that Aharon first concerned himself with establishing a relationship of love and trust, confident that this would in turn enable him to draw them near to the Torah.<sup>43</sup>

Also significant is the phrase, "bringing them near to the Torah." Although Aharon reached out to these individuals and tried to accommodate them to the fullest degree possible, his efforts were centered on "bringing them near to the Torah," and not, *ויהי*, bringing the Torah near to them.

His willingness to extend himself on behalf of others did not involve any compromise of Torah law.

*(Sichos Shabbos Kedoshim, 5727; Sichos Acharon Shel Pesach, 5736; Sichos Matos-Masei, 5737)*

לֵב הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: נִגְדַּ שְׂמָא אֲבַד שְׂמִיהּ, וְדָלָא מוֹסִיף יְסָף, וְדָלָא  
יְלִיף קְטָלָא חֵיב, וְדָא שְׂתַמֵּשׁ בְּתַנְגָּא חֵלְף.

### 13. HE USED TO SAY: "HE WHO SEEKS RENOWN LOSES HIS REPUTATION; HE WHO DOES NOT INCREASE [HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE TORAH]

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42. There is an added dimension of self-sacrifice to Aharon's conduct. While outside the Sanctuary dealing with people on this level, it is very possible that Aharon would contract ritual impurity and this would require him to remain outside the Sanctuary for an even longer period. Nevertheless, he was willing to take this risk to spread love and unity.
43. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* (ch. 2, second order, sec. 19) explains that G-d followed the same pattern. First He revealed miracles and wonders for the Jews while redeeming them from Egypt, despite their low spiritual level. Only afterwards did He give them the Torah on Mount Sinai.

DECREASES IT. HE WHO DOES NOT STUDY [THE TORAH] DESERVES DEATH; AND HE WHO EXPLOITS THE CROWN [OF THE TORAH FOR HIS OWN ENDS] SHALL PERISH.”

**HE USED TO SAY** — This *mishnah*, in contrast to the majority of *Pirkei Avos*, is in Aramaic, the language used by the common folk in Talmudic times. The rationale is that it follows the previous *mishnah*, which teaches that one must “be of the disciples of Aharon... loving the created beings, and bringing them near to the Torah.” In this *mishnah*, Hillel reaches out to people who do not understand *Lashon HaKodesh*, the holy tongue of the *Mishnah*.

He explains that a person involved in outreach may feel superior, and seek to be honored for his efforts. Therefore, Hillel states...

**HE WHO SEEKS RENOWN LOSES HIS REPUTATION,** — emphasizing that the opposite will happen. Such an approach will cause him to lose his reputation rather than amplify it.

Moreover, by stating this teaching in Aramaic, Hillel informs the person’s students that granting their teacher the honor he seeks will hurt his growth.

Since a person’s efforts toward outreach may harm his progress, it is quite possible that he will think: “Why involve myself in the first place? It is better to proceed without seeking new frontiers.” To this Hillel replies...

**HE WHO DOES NOT INCREASE... DECREASES** — To quote an expression of the Mittlerer Rebbe: “*A zibela zel fun dir veren, uber chassidus zolstu chazzaren.*”<sup>44</sup> {The expression defies

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44. See *Sichos Kodesh* 5740, Vol. II, p. 216ff.

translation; this is our best attempt: Even if the pride a person feels when teaching others arouses negative effects so great that they cause him to become an onion, he should continue.} For a person must constantly open new frontiers, extending the Torah's teachings so that more people will be exposed to them.

With regard to material wealth, it is often explained that a rich man's affluence is granted to him so that he can serve as a trustee, spreading charity throughout the world. This concept is even more applicable with regard to knowledge. Whatever insights a person has been granted were endowed to him for the benefit of others as much as for himself.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Naso, 5734, 5743)*

### **HE WHO EXPLOITS THE CROWN [OF THE TORAH]**

— Our Sages explain<sup>45</sup> that “the crown of the Torah” refers to the study of *halachah*, the practical application of Torah law. Thus there is an obvious connection with Hillel's exhortation to spread Torah. For as one comes in contact with people on the fringes of Jewish observance, one must teach them Torah law. Also, the new situations which one confronts require new applications of *halachah*.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5745)*

**יד** הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי, וּכְשֶׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מִה אָנִי, וְאִם לֹא עֲבָדְשׁוּ, אֵימְתִי.

**14.** HE USED TO SAY: “IF I AM NOT FOR MYSELF, WHO IS FOR ME? AND IF I AM ONLY FOR MYSELF, WHAT AM I? AND IF NOT NOW, WHEN?”

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45. *Megillah* 28b, explained in *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 29.

This teaching can be interpreted within the context of the charge to reach out to others (*mishnah* 12).

**IF I AM NOT FOR MYSELF** — I.e., if I do not take an active role in these efforts...

**WHO IS FOR ME?** — What merit will I have? Whether or not a person involves himself, the task he was required to fulfill will be accomplished, for the good destined to be achieved in our world will not be decreased. Nevertheless, when a person does not shoulder the task destined for him, he will lack the merit he was fated to acquire.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5737)*

**AND IF I AM ONLY FOR MYSELF** — A person may be willing to apply himself to the task before him, but “only for himself,” without seeking advice or help from others. And then...

**WHAT** — not who

**AM I?** — i.e., he falls beneath the level of humanity.

*(Ibid.)*

**AND IF NOT NOW, WHEN?** — He must be conscious of the urgency involved, and not postpone his efforts.

*(Ibid.)*

**טו** שִׁמַּאי אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרַתְךָ קְבֵעַ, אֲמֹר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה, וְהָיוּ מְקַבְּלִים אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר פְּנִים יְפוֹת.

**15.** SHAMMAI SAID: “SET A FIXED TIME FOR YOUR STUDY OF TORAH; SAY LITTLE AND DO

MUCH; AND RECEIVE EVERY PERSON WITH A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE.”

**SET A FIXED TIME FOR YOUR STUDY OF TORAH**

— The Alter Rebbe explains<sup>46</sup> that Torah study must be fixed not only in time, but also in its position in the soul, serving as the foundation of a person’s life. Even if a person’s talents lie along another path of divine service, e.g., prayer or deeds of kindness, the foundation on which his effort rests must be the study of Torah.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVII, p. 347ff)*

**SAY LITTLE AND DO MUCH** — On a simple level, this clause is teaching us to minimize the commitments we make, and fulfill them in excess of our promises.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, from a deeper perspective, this clause can be seen as an extension of the directive to make Torah study the foundation of our lives.

In that context, “say little” can be interpreted to mean: Do not be overly concerned with making statements of Torah law. Instead, a person should immerse himself in Torah study for the sake of the Torah itself, above all other considerations. This approach may cause him to retreat from involvement in worldly things, so the *mishnah* continues:

**DO MUCH** — Perform an abundance of *mitzvos*. Moreover, it emphasizes...

**RECEIVE EVERY PERSON WITH A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE** — Do not let your involvement in Torah study prevent you from developing relationships with others. More specifically, the *mishnah* states that one must extend oneself to “every person,” i.e., not only to those dedicated to the

46. *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. I, p. 13 (English translation).

47. R. Ovadiah of Bartenura and others.

study of Torah, but to all others, regardless of their level of religious commitment.

*(Ibid.)*

Alternatively, “every person” can be interpreted to include even gentiles.<sup>48</sup> This raises a question: There is a well-known narrative<sup>49</sup> which relates that a gentile came to Shammai and demanded: “Teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.” Shammai drove him away. Hillel, by contrast, received him with gentle forbearance and told him: “What is distasteful to you, do not do to a colleague. This is the entire Torah; the rest is merely explanation.”

Shammai’s conduct seems to conflict with his own directive to “receive every person with a cheerful countenance.”

It can be explained that the above narrative reflects Shammai’s natural tendencies. Nevertheless, after Shammai heard Hillel’s teaching — “Be of the students of Aharon” — he changed his nature and taught his students to “receive every person with a cheerful countenance.”<sup>50</sup>

*(Op. cit., p. 114-115)*

טז רבן גמליאל הִיא אומר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רֵב, וְהִסְתַּלַּק מִן הַסֵּפֶק, וְאַל תִּרְבֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲמֵדוֹת.

## 16. RABBAN GAMLIEL SAID: “PROVIDE YOURSELF WITH A MASTER AND FREE

48. See *Tosafos* (*Yevamos* 61a).

49. *Shabbos* 31a.

50. This explains why in this instance, Hillel’s teachings are mentioned before those of Shammai although generally Shammai’s teachings are given precedence. See *Tosafos*, *Chagigah* 16a.

YOURSELF OF DOUBT. AND DO NOT TITHE BY ESTIMATION, EVEN IF GIVING IN EXCESS OF THE REQUIRED AMOUNT.”

**PROVIDE YOURSELF WITH A MASTER** — This directive was mentioned previously in this chapter.<sup>51</sup> Why is it necessary to repeat it?

The answer depends on the rationale — “and free yourself of doubt” — appended by Rabban Gamliel. After Hillel and Shammai died, their students perpetuated the differences in approach which had characterized their masters, causing the Talmudic academy to be split among the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel. In Rabban Gamliel’s age, unanimity did not exist with regard to many questions of Torah law. Thus it was necessary for a person to find a Torah guide to direct him in areas where doubt might arise. This relates to Rabban Gamliel’s second directive...

**DO NOT TITHE BY ESTIMATION, EVEN GIVING IN EXCESS OF THE REQUIRED AMOUNT** — Because of doubt as to the precise requirements of his religious obligations, a person might decide to always act more stringently, as in the case of tithes when, instead of measuring exactly, he gives more than the necessary amount.

The *mishnah* emphasizes that this is not a proper approach. One should find a master who can instruct him with regard to the course of conduct which is particularly appropriate to his nature and character, and follow that master’s directives, whether lenient or stringent.<sup>52</sup>

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Shemini, 5747)*

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51. 1:6.

52. See also the *Midrash Shmuel*, which explains that when a person has several teachers, their different perspectives may confuse him. But when he has a single teacher, he will have a straightforward path charted out for him.

ז' שְׁמַעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר: כָּל יְמֵי גִדְלָתִי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לְגוֹף,  
טוֹב מִשְׁתִּיקָה, וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ עֶקֶר אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה דְבָרִים  
מְבִיא חֲטָא.

**17.** SHIMON HIS SON SAID: “ALL MY DAYS I GREW  
UP AMONG THE SAGES AND DID NOT FIND  
ANYTHING BETTER FOR ONE’S PERSON THAN  
SILENCE.

“STUDY IS NOT THE ESSENTIAL THING, PRACTICE IS;  
AND WHOEVER ENGAGES IN EXCESSIVE TALK BRINGS  
ON SIN.”

**SHIMON HIS SON** — Although the following *mishnah* refers to him by the title Rabban Shimon, this *mishnah* refers to this Sage merely as “Shimon his son.” As will be explained, the fundamental purpose of this *mishnah* is to teach humility.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Matos, 5741)*

**ALL MY DAYS I GREW UP** — An important lesson can be derived from this introductory phrase. Rabbi Shimon never ceased growing as a person; he was constantly expanding his horizons. And the *mishnah* explains that this is because he lived...

**AMONG THE SAGES** — Their company and example pushed him toward continued advancement.

*(Ibid.)*

**I... DID NOT FIND ANYTHING BETTER FOR ONE’S PERSON THAN SILENCE** — Silence refers to the qualities of humility and selflessness. לגוף, translated as “one’s person,” literally means “his body.” The most effective means of refining the body is by studying the Torah with humility and selflessness. For the Torah is transcendent, G-dly truth.



Thus rather than “breaking” the body<sup>53</sup> as other approaches might, studying Torah with humility enables one to transform it into a vehicle for holiness.

*(Ibid., Likkutei Sichos, Vol. I, p. 70ff)*

**STUDY IS NOT THE ESSENTIAL THING, PRACTICE**

**IS** — Since the purpose of creation as a whole is to give G-d a dwelling in the lower worlds,<sup>54</sup> living the Torah in deed and action — and not merely in thought and speech — is of fundamental priority.<sup>55</sup>

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1186)*

**WHOEVER ENGAGES IN EXCESSIVE TALK BRINGS**

**ON SIN** — Pride and self-consciousness — the opposites of humility — are often characterized by excessive talk. The *mishnah* points out that adopting this manner may therefore lead to sin. Moreover, אטח can also be interpreted as meaning “a lack.”<sup>56</sup> Surely a tendency to excessive talk implies a lack of awareness of the true nature of the Torah.

Alternatively, this clause can be considered as a directive to teachers. Our Sages state<sup>57</sup> that a person should always instruct his students in short, concise phrases. “Excessive talk” could create confusion and cause a student to misinterpret the teacher’s instructions. At the very least, it could lead to a lack as mentioned above.

*(Sichos Shabbos Parshas Matos, 5741)*

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53. See *HaYom Yom*, entry 28 Shvat.

54. *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Bechukosai*, sec. 3; see *Tanya*, chs. 33 and 36.

55. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. VIII, p. 108.

56. *Likkutei Torah, Matos* 82a, based on *I Melachim* 1:21; and *Rashi’s* commentary.

57. *Pesachim* 3b.