

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek V

25 Menachem Av, 5780 – August 15, 2020

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos
Chapter V

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Chapter V

פרק ה', משנה י"ט: ... תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו, אוכלין בעולם הזה ונוחלין בעולם הבא, שנאמר (משלי ח', כ"א), להנחיל אהבי יש, ואצרתיהם אמלא ...

Chapter 5, Mishnah 19: ...The disciples of our father Avrohom benefit in this world and inherit the World to Come, and as is stated¹, "There is substance to give as an inheritance to those who love Me, and I will fill their treasuries." ...

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah contrasts the students of the righteous Avrohom with those of the wicked Bilaam. It first lists the attributes of each. Then the Mishnah goes on to tell us the consequences which arise as a result of these traits. The Mishnah tells us of the reward which is given to the disciples of Avrohom and the punishment which Bilaam's students receive.

What reward do Avrohom's students receive? The Mishnah says that they "benefit in this world and inherit the World to Come." It then cites a proof text², "There is substance to give as an inheritance to those who love Me, and I will fill their treasuries." Avrohom is called one "who loves Me," as it is written³ "Avrohom, who loves Me." "Substance" refers to this world; "I will fill their treasures" refers to the World to Come⁴.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Mishnah, as discussed above, is teaching us the reward which those who are "disciples of Avrohom" will receive. According to this, we need to understand why the Mishnah speaks of inheritance when discussing the World to Come. The proof text, which is cited by the Mishnah, also uses the words "to give inheritance." An inheritance is not a reward for one's actions. Instead, an inheritance comes as a matter of course to the one who inherits. It is simply a matter of his relationship to the one from whom he inherits.

1. Mishlei 8:21.

2. Ibid.

3. Yeshayahu 41:8.

4. See the Bartenura's commentary to this Mishnah.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Furthermore, we find elsewhere that the Sages use the verb "give" rather than "inherit" regarding reward, precisely as we would expect. The Talmud says that⁵ "in the future, Hashem will *give* (rather than bequeath) to every Tzaddik 310 worlds." The use of the word "inheritance" in our Mishnah seems to require explanation.

The Explanation

This can be explained by understanding our Mishnah differently. The Mishnah is *not* teaching us the reward for performing Mitzvos. This is clear from the use of the verb "inherit," as explained above. Instead, it shows us the perfection which one can achieve as a result of serving G-d out of love for Him ("to those who love Me").

The famous Rogotchover Gaon⁶ explained that inheritance is different than a sale, or any other manner of transferring possession of a property from one person to another⁷. In the case of a deal, for example, "A" owns the property, and he transfers its ownership to "B." Inheritance does not work the same way at all. When "B" inherits property from "A," he is standing in "A's" place. "A" and "B" are considered as one unit. This is expressed by Scripture in the verse⁸, "Your sons will be *in place of* your fathers." In this manner, inheritance is different than any other form of acquisition.

The same is right of spiritual inheritance. We can perfect ourselves by learning Torah and performing Mitzvos. The root of the word Mitzvah is the Hebrew word meaning commandment. However, it is also related to the Aramaic word meaning connection (צוותא). This is because each time we perform an act which the Almighty commanded us to do, we are connecting ourselves to Him⁹. This is the meaning of what the Zohar says¹⁰, that "the Holy One Blessed be He, the Jews and the Torah are all one."

This is shown by the proof text which our Mishnah quotes¹¹. "There is substance to give as an inheritance ..." The Rambam explains the words "something of substance" (Yesh - יש) as¹² "an absolute, constant, unlimited existence." Based on this, the verse is saying that Hashem declares that He will

5. Sanhedrin 100, a.

6. Rabbi Yosef Rosen, 1858 – 1936.

7. She'aylos U'teshuvos Tzafnas Pa'aneach (Dvinsk edition), Section 1, Chapter 118.

8. Tehillim 45:17.

9. The same is true in the English language. To "join" means to connect two things together. To "enjoin" means "to direct or impose by authoritative order or with urgent admonition." See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary.

10. Zohar Section 3, Page 73, a.

11. See footnote 1.

12. See his Commentary to the Mishnah, at the end of Tractate Uktzin.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

bequeath to those that love Him absolute, unlimited existence. This is because the World to Come is a world of eternal life.

The question remains, how is it possible for a limited creation such as ourselves to merit unlimited existence? The explanation is that “unlimited existence” it is not *given* to us. Instead we inherit it. We are Hashem's children¹³; as such, we inherit Him, as so to speak.

*Adapted from the Sichah of 19 Kislev and Motzo'ai Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev and Mikeitz
5738)*

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

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13. See Tanya, the beginning of Chapter 2.

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