

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek I

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

Chapter I

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 Righteous¹ was among the last surviving members of the Great Assembly². He would say, “The world stands on three things, Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness.

The Explanation³

Shimon the Righteous, or Shimon Hatzaddik as he is known in Hebrew, would often make the statement attributed to him in our Mishna. The entire world was created for the purpose of these three things; Torah, the service of Hashem and deeds of kindness. How do we know this? The Talmud tells us⁴ that “if not for the Jews’ acceptance of the Torah, neither the heavens nor the earth would have been created.” This is in keeping with the verse⁵ “... if not for My covenant with the day and the night, the statutes of heaven and earth I would not have placed.” The service of Hashem refers to offering sacrifices⁶. The Sages teach us that⁷ “were it not for the *Ma’amados*⁸, the heavens and earth would not endure.” Deeds of kindness are also one of the pillars for which the world was created; as it is written⁹ “... the world will be built with kindness ...”

The Alter Rebbe¹⁰ offers a different explanation of this Mishna¹¹. Each of these pillars represent one of our three patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Performing acts of kindness personified Avrohom’s being.

1. He served as the High Priest – Kohen Gadol at the beginning of the Second Temple.

2. 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.

3. This explanation is based on that given by Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura, who wrote one of the standard, classic commentaries of the Mishnah.

4. See Talmud Shabbos 88, a.

5. Yirmiyahu 33:25.

6. Since the destruction of the Temple, this has been replaced by our regular prayers.

7. See Talmud Taanis 27, b.

8. The daily offerings were brought on behalf of all Jews. Therefore, all Jews must be present at the time that they were offered; this would be impossible. Hence the Jewish Nation was divided into groups which would serve as their representatives. They would be present at the offering of communal offerings. This is therefore a reference to the sacrificial service.

9. Tehillim 89:3.

10. The first Rebbe of Chabad.

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

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

The Orchos Tzaddikim writes¹² that Avrohom was “generous with his soul, his physical body and his possessions.” Yitzchok, who was brought up in order to be brought as an offering¹³, represents the sacrificial service of G-d (later replaced by prayer). Our forefather Yaakov represents Torah study. This is alluded to by the verse¹⁴ “He established testimony in Yaakov, and He set down a Torah in Yisroel ...”

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

Based on the Alter Rebbe’s explanation, the order in which the Mishna lists these three pillars is difficult to understand. It would seem that the Mishna should have first listed deeds of kindness, represented by Avrohom. He was the first of our forefathers. After that it should have listed service of Hashem, represented by Avrohom’s son Yitzchok. Then it should have come Torah study, which is represented by Yitzchok’s son Yaakov. This is the exact opposite of the order in which the Mishna lists the three.

Furthermore, it is possible that the Mishna did not wish to list the three in the order of our forefathers. The Mishna may have chosen to list them in their order in our daily schedule. This too 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 that¹⁵ “Rabbi Eliezer would give a coin to a poor person before commencing to pray.” This deed of kindness is followed by prayer, i.e. Divine service. Prayer is to be followed by Torah study. Our Sages taught us that one goes¹⁶ “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 world in the most potent way.

We find two seemingly conflicting attributes of Torah. On the one hand, it is G-d’s will and wisdom. Hashem is a perfect unity. Therefore, just as He is limitless, the same is true of Torah. Regarding Torah the verse says¹⁷, “Longer than the earth is its measure, and wider than the sea.” Nevertheless, through Torah study, this infinite Divine will and wisdom become one with a physical, human mind¹⁸. Hence, Torah has the strongest affect upon this world; drawing boundless G-dliness within each and every one of us. G-d’s purpose of creation was in order 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.

12. See Orchos Tzaddikim Gate 17.

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

14. Tehillim 78:5.

15. See Talmud Bava Basra 10, a.

16. See Talmud Berachos 64, a.

17. Iyov 11:9.

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

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

A Practical Lesson

“The essential thing is deed¹⁹.” It is not enough for us to discuss the importance of Torah study; we must actually 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 a great “deed of kindness.” As a result of this, we will certainly transform this world into the dwelling place which Hashem desires. In this manner we will bring Moshiach now.

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

To dedicate a week, a month or a year of

Pirkei Avos of the Week, visit

<http://rebbeteachersrashi.org/contact-us-dedicate-an-issue>

19. Pirkei Avos Chapter 1, Mishna 17. This is the chapter of Pirkei Avos which we learn this Shabbos.

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**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**IN HONOR OF
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיקחי Morris**

*

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

* * *

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER
Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheh ע"ה Cohen
Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

*

DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY

* * *

**IN HONOR OF
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia ש' Cohen
For a complete and speedy recovery**

* * *

**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar ש' Mars**

*

May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

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 וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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לעילוי נשמת

מרת ברכה בת ר' צבי נחמי' הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטר ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

* * *

לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מארס

*

יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן