

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek IV

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 IV**

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Chapter IV

פרק ד', משנה ה': ... רבי צדוק אומר: ... ואל תעשה עטרה להתגדל בה, ולא קרדום לחתוך בה; וכך היה הלל אומר: ודאשתמש בתגא, חלף. הא למדת, כל הנהנה מדברי תורה, נוטל חייו מן העולם.

Chapter 4, Mishnah 5: ... Rabbi Tzaddok would (often) say, ‘... Do not make the Torah a crown to make oneself great with, or a spade with which to dig.’ So would Hillel say, ‘one who makes personal use of the crown of Torah shall perish.’ Hence, one who benefits himself from the words of Torah, removes his life from the world.

The Simple Explanation

The Bartenura explains this Mishnah as follows¹. “Making Torah a crown” refers to learning in order to be called a great rabbi, or in order to sit in a place of honor. Rather one must study Torah out of love of G-d. Honor must not be the motivation for Torah study. Furthermore, do not make Torah “a spade with which to dig.” Do not learn Torah in order to “have a trade.” Torah study is not a course one takes in order to receive a diploma. One should not learn in order to become a Rosh Yeshivah, a teacher of Torah, or in order to become a rabbi. The Bartenura cites the Talmud as a proof of this prohibition². The Talmud quotes the words which Moshe spoke to the Jewish nation³, “Hashem commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances ...” The Talmud says that just as Moshe taught us without charge, so too must we teach without receiving compensation.

However, he questions this. Why is it permissible for a teacher in a Torah school to receive a salary? He explains that one is actually receiving payment for taking care of the children. Likewise, why should it be permissible to pay a rabbi for rendering Halachic decisions? The explanation is that he is being paid for his time. He could have used that time to earn a living by performing a trade. He is being paid for the income which he could otherwise have made.

1. His commentary to the Mishnah here.
2. Talmud Nedorim 37, a.
3. Devorim 4:14.

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The Rambam takes a somewhat different approach⁴. He explains at length the strict prohibition of earning a livelihood from Torah⁵. Likewise, he complains about those who study Torah constantly, and rely upon the community for their sustenance. He writes similar things in the Mishnah Torah⁶.

There are latter day codifiers who disagree with the Rambam⁷. They cite various proofs to demonstrate that one may derive sustenance from Torah.

The Alter Rebbe's Position

The Alter Rebbe decides the law as follows⁸. One is only cautioned not to make Torah a “spade with which to dig” at the *beginning* of his studies. One may not commence learning Torah in order to use it to “make a living.” However, this does not apply to one who began Torah study for proper motives, i.e. love of G-d. However, if later on he realizes that he has no way to support himself he may indeed sustain himself through Torah. After all, if he will be lacking essential things he will not be able to continue his studies. The Alter Rebbe's words can be explained in two different manners:

1. One may support himself from Torah study. Otherwise he will be busy looking to study a trade. As a result of this he will totally neglect learning Torah. In other words, supporting himself from Torah study is what allows him to study Torah.
2. There is a difference between before the fact and after the fact. One may not begin learning in order to sustain himself. However, provided he began in a permissible way there is no problem.

An example of this would be one who began studying as a child. He was supported by his parents; hence this was no concern. Once he is grown up and needs to support himself, he has no other option. Therefore, he may support himself by means of his Torah study.

This concept is similar to another law regarding Shabbos⁹. One is not permitted to embark on a ship immediately before Shabbos, inasmuch as it could lead to desecration of the Shabbos.

4. See his commentary to the Mishnah here.

5. Please note that the Rambam supported himself from the practice of medicine.

6. See the Laws of Torah Study, Chapter 3, Paragraph 10.

7. See the Kessef Mishnah's comments to the Rambam *ibid*. See also the Tashbatz Volume 1, Chapter 147.

8. Shulchan Laws of Torah Study, Chapter 3, Paragraph 10.

9. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, Chapter 248, Paragraph 5.

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However, if he left earlier, at a time that it was permissible¹⁰, he may continue travelling on Shabbos. So too if he began Torah study at a permissible time, there is no difficulty.

Another Application

This will also help us understand a different Mishnah¹¹. “Rabbi Nehorai says, I would set aside all of the trades in the world, and only teach my son Torah.” We need to understand how he could say such a thing. The Sages have taught us that¹² “one is obligated to teach his son a trade!”

Based on the above we can understand this. When his son begins learning, he is a child. He therefore has no need to support himself. Once he grows up he will then be permitted to support from the Torah which he studied.

It is irrelevant that his father knows all along that he will ultimately need to use the Torah which he studied as a child. This is the same as boarding a ship three days before Shabbos. The fact that he knows that he will be aboard the ship on Shabbos does not prevent him from boarding it at that time.

(Adapted from a talk given on 20 Menachem Av, 5718)

To dedicate a week, a month or a year of

Pirkei Avos of the Week, visit

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

10. Three days prior to Shabbos.

11. Mishnah Kiddushin Chapter 4, Mishnah 14.

12. Talmud Kiddushin 29, a.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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

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**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"י Cohen
For a complete and speedy recovery**

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**DEDICATED BY
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar ש"י Mars**

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

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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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

נפטרה ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

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לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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נתרם ע"י

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