

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek V

Compiled from the works of
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn

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Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos
Chapter V**

Likkutei Sichos, Volume 4, Pages 1226 - 1228

Chapter V

פרק ה', משנה א': בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם ...

Chapter 5, Mishnah 1: The world was created with ten utterances ...

The Simple Explanation

This week we learn the fifth chapter of Pirkei Avos. The first six Mishnayos (plural of Mishnah) list things that are in groups of ten. Ten utterances¹, ten generations², ten tests³, ten miracles in Egypt⁴, ten miracles in the Bais Hamikdosh⁵ and ten things created during twilight of the sixth day of creation⁶. The reason for this is that ten is a complete, perfect number which includes all of creation.

We can see that this is so from the very first Mishnah in our chapter. It teaches us that the world was created with ten utterances. The commentaries explain⁷ what the ten utterances were. “G-d said ‘let there be light,’” “G-d said ‘let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters,’” etc. However, if we count the number of times that it says “G-d said let there be,” it only adds up to nine! The explanation is that we also include the first verse in the Torah¹⁰, “In the beginning of G-d’s creation of the heavens and the earth.” This is in keeping with the saying of the Sages that¹¹ “Bereishis (in the beginning) is also an utterance.”

On the outset of creation, with the very first verse of the Torah, Hashem created the primordial matter from which each individual creation would be made. On each day, Hashem “said,” meaning commanded, called for, the potential matter to take its final form.

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1. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 1.
 2. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 2.
 3. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 3.
 4. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 4.
 5. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 5.
 6. Pirkei Avos Chapter 5, Mishnah 6.
 7. See the comments of the Bartenura and the Rambam to this Mishnah.
 8. Bereishis 1:3.
 9. Bereishis 1:6.
 10. Bereishis 1:1.
 11. Talmud Rosh Hashanah 32, a and Megillah 21, b.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Mishnah seems to have neglected to mention one group of ten; the Ten Commandments. The entire world is derived from the Torah. The fact that Torah is included in Ten Commandments is the reason that the world was created in ten utterances. One would think that Torah would certainly be at the head of the list.

This is certainly so based on the way the Sages explain the verse¹² "... each spoon weighing ten (shekels)¹³ according to the holy shekel ..." They explain that the ten utterances are parallel to the ten commandments¹⁴. Accordingly, the Ten Commandments should certainly have been listed here.

The Explanation

The explanation is as follows. It is true that the entire world is derived from the Torah. However, Torah is infinitely greater than the world. Torah is in a totally different category than the world. Torah is Hashem's will and wisdom; and He and His will and wisdom are one. Therefore, Torah cannot be listed together with creation.

Granted, there are miracles included within the lists of ten. There are the ten miracles which constantly occurred in the Bais Hamikdosh. The Holy Temple is the place where G-d Almighty's presence rested in this world! It would therefore seem as if Torah could also be included.

However, this is not the case. The Bais Hamikdosh is the epitome of perfection of this world. In fact, it can be said that the world was created for the sake of the Temple. The purpose of creation was because Hashem¹⁵ "desired to have a dwelling place below, in this world."

However, Torah preceded the world¹⁶. It surpasses the world and everything in it, including the Holy Temple. The purpose of the world is, as previously said, to have a dwelling place below. However, Torah and G-d are one. We cannot say that there is a *reason* for having G-d in the world. His existence is complete and perfect.

A Practical Lesson

The very word Torah means a lesson. We must learn a lesson from everything in Torah.

12. Bamidbar 7:86.

13. The original Hebrew text says "ten, ten, the spoons according to the holy shekel." Obviously that is not syntactically correct in English.

14. See Zohar Section 3 11, b.

15. Midrash Tanchumah Parshas Naso 16.

16. See Talmud Pesachim 54, b and Nedorim 39, b.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Not only that, but we must even learn a lesson from what Torah does not say. The fact that our Mishnah does not mention Torah teaches us *how* to study Torah. Our Torah study must be for its own sake, not for any worldly benefit.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai, 5719)

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Chaim and Aiden Oded שיקחי Morris**

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

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**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**

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

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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נפטרה ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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