

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Chapters I - II

9 Elul, 5786 – August 22, 2026

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos Chapter I

Sefer Hasichos 5750, Volume 2, Page 635

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 Righteous was among the last surviving members of the Great Assembly ¹. He would say, "The world stands on three things: Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness.

The Explanation

The Bartenura explains that Shimon Hatzaddik would often make the statement attributed to him in our Mishna. Hashem created the world for these three things: Torah, the service of Hashem, and deeds of kindness. These are the pillars upon which the world rests.

The Alter Rebbe offers a different explanation of this Mishna². Each of these pillars represents one of our three patriarchs, Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Performing acts of kindness personified Avrohom's being. The Orchos Tzaddikim writes ³ that Avrohom was "generous with his soul, physical body, and possessions." Yitzchok, who was to be brought as an offering⁴, represents the sacrificial service of G-d (later replaced by prayer). Our forefather Yaakov represents Torah study. The verse ⁵ "He established a testimony in Yaakov, and He set down a Torah in Yisroel..." alludes to this.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

Based on the Alter Rebbe's explanation, the order in which the Mishna lists these three pillars is challenging to understand. It would seem that the Mishna should have first listed Avrohom's attribute (deeds of kindness), then Yitzchok's (the service of Hashem), and then Yaakov's (Torah study). This is the exact opposite of the order in which the Mishna lists the three.

Perhaps the Mishna may list them in their order in our daily schedule. This also requires explanation. The very first order of the day is prayer. However, even before praying, one should give Tzedek to the poor, thereby performing an act of kindness. We find in the Talmud that ⁶ "Rabbi Eliezer would give a coin to a poor person before commencing to pray." This

1. 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.

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

3. See Orchos Tzaddikim Gate 17.

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

5. Tehillim 78:5.

6. See Talmud Bava Basra 10, a.

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deed of compassion precedes prayer, i.e., Divine service. Prayer is to be followed by Torah study. Our Sages taught us that one goes ⁷ "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 globe most powerfully.

We find conflicting attributes of the Torah. The Torah is G-d's will and wisdom. Just as He is limitless, the same is true of Torah. Regarding the Torah, the verse says ⁸, "Longer than the earth is its measure, and wider than the sea." Nevertheless, through Torah study, this infinite Divine will and wisdom become united with a physical, human mind ⁹. Hence, Torah has the most potent effect on this world, drawing boundless G-dliness within each of us. G-d's purpose of creation was 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.

A Practical Lesson

"The essential thing is a deed." It is not enough for us to discuss the importance of Torah study; we must study Torah. However, that does not suffice. We must always seek to deepen our Torah study. Not only that, but we must influence those around us to learn Torah. This is indeed an excellent "deed of kindness." As a result, we will certainly transform this world into the dwelling place that Hashem desires. In this manner, we will bring Moshiach now.

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

Chapter II

Likkutei Sichos Volume 13, Pages 114 - 121

פרק ב', משנה י"ב: רבי יוסי אומר: ... והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה, שאינה ירושה לך ...

Chapter 2, Mishnah 12: Rabbi Yossi would say,... Perfect yourself to prepare for the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you ...

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah teaches that even if Torah study is part of one's family legacy, he should not expect it to come

7. See Talmud Berachos 64, a.

8. Iyov 11:9.

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

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easily to him. Instead, he must exert himself to acquire Torah ¹⁰. The Talmud teaches us that ¹¹ "if one is himself a scholar, and his son is a scholar, and his son's son is a scholar as well, the Torah will never cease from his descendants." The Talmud goes on to say that "the Torah *seeks* its home." This would seem to imply that Torah is indeed an inheritance. However, the Mishnah teaches that the only way to learn Torah is to toil in it.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

The Tifferes Yisroel asks ¹² that we find that ¹³ "the Torah which Moshe commanded us is an inheritance of the house of Yaakov." We see clearly in the Torah itself that it is an inheritance. How can the Mishnah write that "it is not an inheritance for you?"

The Explanation

There are various aspects of the bond between Jews and the Torah. Torah is indeed an inheritance, as quoted above. As such, it is the property of each Jew, without exception. Inheritance does not depend on the circumstances or age of the recipient. Even a newborn baby can acquire property through inheritance. That is why each Jew, without exception, is obligated to study Torah.

There is another aspect, which is called a sale, as we find that ¹⁴ "the Holy One blessed be He said to the Jews, 'I have *sold* you My Torah.'" This refers to acquiring knowledge of the Torah. To make a purchase, one must pay something in exchange for the object which he buys. The same is true of Torah knowledge; the only way to achieve it is by exerting oneself with great effort ¹⁵.

Regarding this, the Mishnah says, "It is not an inheritance for you." We cannot expect to inherit Torah knowledge. We must use our minds to delve into the Torah and understand it, each of us to the best of our ability.

Adapted from the Sichah of the Second Day of Shavuot, 5724)

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

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10. See the commentary of Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura.

11. See Talmud Bava Metzia 85, a.

12. See his commentary to our Mishnah.

13. Parshas Berochoh, Devorim 33:4.

14. See Midrash, Shemos Rabbah 33, 1.

15. See Likkutei Sichos there at length, where a third aspect of acquiring Torah is discussed, that of a present. There are parts of Torah which transcend our understanding. These we cannot *purchase*. We can only attain them as a present from Hashem.

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THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

* * *

IN HONOR OF

The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

Chaim, Aiden Oded, Zachariah Matan, and Noach Arieli שיחיו Morris

May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride
to their family and a Torah light to their community

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem Mendel and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris

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IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתחי Sharabani

May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים, עדן עודד, זכרי' מתן, ונח אריאל שיחיו מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

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לזכות

ר' ארי נתנאל וזוגתו מרת רחל שיחיו לאריק

ר' אליעזר ברוך וזוגתו מרת חי' שיחיו סאלינס

לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק

ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

ר' יוסף וזוגתו מרת מרים שיחיו גולדשטיין

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לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק

ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב