

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Chapter I

26 Tammuz, 5786 – July 11, 2026

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

A Project of
Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos
Copyright 2026©

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

Likkutei Sichos Volume 27, Pages 164 - 166

פרק א', משנה ו': יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי קיבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר: עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות.

Chapter 1, Mishnah 6: Yehoshua ben Perachia and Nitai Ho'arbeili received (the transmission of the Torah) from them. Yehoshua ben Perachia would (often) say, "Assume for yourself a teacher, acquire for yourself a friend (with whom to study), and judge every person favorably."

The Simple Explanation

Our explanation will focus on the third teaching of Yehoshua ben Perachia: to "judge every person favorably." Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura explains as follows. There are times when one performs an evil action. However, we cannot determine whether or not a particular person is a guilty party. Either that or suppose that we know who acted. However, we cannot determine whether or not the person's intentions were positive. Both sides of the balance scale appear equal. If we knew the person, we could base our conclusion on the sort of person he is¹. However, we are discussing one with whom we are not familiar. The Mishnah teaches us that a Chossid² must judge the person favorably.

Others explain judging one favorably differently. The Mishnah discusses one who knows that his fellow has committed a transgression. Nonetheless, the Mishnah tells us to assume that his action was accidental or unintentional. This is the approach the Alter Rebbe takes³. He explains the Mishnah⁴ "Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" as follows. "For it is his 'place' (his physical environment) that causes him to sin since his livelihood requires him to go about the marketplace all day. Whenever he is not busy in the marketplace, he is one of those who sit on the street corners. Hence, his eyes see all sorts of temptation, and 'what the eyes see, the heart desires

1. See the commentary of the Rambam, Rabbeinu Yonah and others.

2. In this context, the meaning of a Chossid is one who goes above and beyond the letter of the law. In fact, all of the teachings of Pirkei Avos teach us how to be a Chossid. This is in keeping with the teaching of the Talmud (Bava Kama 30, a) that "... one who wishes to be a Chossid ... should fulfill the teachings of Avos ..."

3. See Tanya Chapter 30, which we quote below.

4. Pirkei Avos Chapter 2, Mishnah 4.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

⁵.¹ Additionally, it may be his spiritual place, the nature of his evil impulse, that leads him to sin: his evil nature burns like a baker's fiery oven, which is heated with greater frequency and intensity than a domestic oven, as it is written in Hoshea⁶, 'It burns like a flaming fire.'"

The Alter Rebbe says I must always give another the benefit of the doubt. Even if I know he did something wrong, I must realize he is not entirely responsible.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

Based on the various explanations offered above, we need to understand the language of the Mishnah. The Mishnah is extremely precise with its wording. It would appear that the Mishnah should have said not to judge anyone unfavorably. Why does the Mishnah write that we are to judge our fellow favorably? We must not jump to unwarranted conclusions.

The explanation we cited from the Alter Rebbe has nothing to do with my fellow's relationship with Hashem; he is writing about my relationship with him. I may not judge him *unfavorably*, for his challenges are more significant than mine. However complex his challenges may be, he is expected to control himself.

The Alter Rebbe continues in the same chapter, "In truth, even he whose nature is extremely passionate and whose livelihood obliges him to sit all day at the street corners has no excuse whatever for his sins." This being the case, how can the Torah demand that I judge him favorably?

The Explanation

As taught by the Baal Shem Tov, everything happens by Divine providence. My position in life is not of my own choice. G-d assigned different tasks to each of us ⁷. However, the same G-d Who sets my place in life also creates me every moment ⁸. Therefore, He only gave me a task I was capable of. As the Sages write in the Midrash ⁹, "He only demands of us that which we are capable of fulfilling."

Our thoughts and speech are compelling. How we judge someone can help "tilt the scales" and correct their behavior; however, there is something even more powerful that one can accomplish by judging favorably. He can reveal the hidden strengths that our fellow possesses; his

5. See Rashi's comments to Bamidbar 15:39.

6. Hoshea 7:4,6.

7. This does not contradict the idea of free choice. Hashem placed me where I am. However, I am the one that chooses what to do there.

8. See Shaar Hayichud Vehoemunah Chapter 1.

9. Bamidbar Rabbah 12, 3.

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

strengths are proportionate to his challenges.

Not judging him unfavorably would not bring this out. However, favorably judging him can reveal all the latent powers Hashem grants him.

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Emor, 5742)

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

Click here to dedicate a week, a month, or a year to Pirkei Avos of the Week.

You can find us online at www.RebbeTeachesRashi.org.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
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

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mr. and Mrs. **Ari Nesanel and Rachel שיחיו Laric**

Mr. and Mrs. **Baruch and Chaya שיחיו Sollins**

*

DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS

Mr. & Mrs. Yosef and Miriam שיחיו Goldstein

* * *

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתחי Sharabani

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

*

DEDICATED BY HER SON

Mr. Gershon (Geri) שי Bentov

מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

*** * ***

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

*** * ***

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

*** * ***

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