

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Week of

Chapter IV

15 Iyar, 5786 – May 2, 2026

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

by
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn
North Miami Beach, FL

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos
Chapter IV**

Likkutei Sichos, Volume 16, Pages 535 - 538

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 to dig.' So would Hillel say, 'One who makes personal use of the crown of Torah shall perish.' Hence, one who benefits from the Torah's words removes his life from the world.

The Simple Explanation

The Bartenura explains this Mishnah as follows¹. "Making Torah a crown" refers to learning to be called a great rabbi or to sit in a place of honor. Instead, 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 to "have a trade." Torah study is not a course one takes to receive a diploma. One should not learn Torah to become a Rosh Yeshivah, a Torah teacher, or a rabbi. The Bartenura cites the Talmud as proof of this prohibition². The Talmud quotes Moshe's words 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 receives payment for caring for the children. Likewise, why is it 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 income he could have earned elsewhere.

The Rambam takes a somewhat different approach⁴. He explains the strict prohibition of earning a livelihood from the Torah⁵. Likewise, he complains about those who constantly study Torah and rely

1. See his commentary to the Mishnah here.

2. Talmud Nedorim 37, a.

3. Devorim 4:14.

4. See his commentary to the Mishnah here.

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

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upon the community for 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 with the aim of "making a living." However, this does not apply to one who began Torah study for proper motives, i.e., the love of G-d. However, if he realizes he has no way to support himself later, he may sustain himself through Torah. After all, if he lacks essential things, he cannot continue his studies. The Alter Rebbe's words can be explained in two different ways:

1. One may support himself through Torah study; otherwise, he will be busy seeking to learn a trade. As a result, he will neglect to learn Torah. In other words, supporting himself from Torah study allows him to study Torah.
2. There is a difference between before the fact and after the fact. One may not begin learning to sustain oneself. However, provided he started well, there is no problem.

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

This concept is similar to another law regarding Shabbos⁹. One is not permitted to embark on a ship immediately before Shabbos, as this could lead to the desecration of Shabbos. However, if he left earlier when it was permissible¹⁰, he may continue traveling on Shabbos. So too, if he began Torah study at an allowable 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

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.

10. Three days prior to Shabbos.

11. Mishnah Kiddushin Chapter 4, Mishnah 14.

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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 one's son begins learning, he is a child and therefore does not need to support himself. Once he grows up, he will be permitted to support himself from the Torah he studied.

It is irrelevant that his father knows that he will ultimately need to use the Torah he studied as a child. This is the same as boarding a ship three days before Shabbos, and knowing that he will be aboard the ship on Shabbos does not prevent him from boarding it then.

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

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

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12. Talmud Kiddushin 29, a.

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THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE**

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The Soldiers of "Tzivos Hashem"

CHAIM, AIDEN ODED, ZACHARIAH MATAN, AND NOACH ARIEL שיחיו

MORRIS

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

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Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem Mendel** and **Chaya Mushka** שיחיו

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IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Esther שתחילי **Sharabani**

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

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DEDICATED BY HER SON

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*** * ***

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חיילי "צבאות השם"

חיים, עזן עודד, זכרי' מתן, ונת אריאל שיחיו

מאריס

נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו

מאריס

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מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

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