

בס"ד

# PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

## Perek III

26 Sivan, 5779 – June 29, 2019

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 III**

Likkutei Sichos Volume 7, Pages 365-367

Toras Menachem Hisvadu'yos 5744 Volume 4, Page 2324-2325

**Chapter III, Mishnah 15**

פרק ג', משנה ט"ו: הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה, ובטוב העולם נדון, והכל לפי רוב המעשה.

**Chapter 3, Mishnah 15:** All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted. The world is judged with goodness, but in accordance with the amount of man's positive deeds.

**The Simple Explanation**

The Bartenura explains the meaning of “the world is judged with goodness,” that Hashem judges the world through His attribute of mercy. However, this Divine mercy does not apply to all of us equally. The application of G-dly mercy is applied to each one “in accordance with the amount of Man’s positive deeds.”

In addition to this explanation, both the Bartenura and the Midrash Shmuel quote the Rambam’s comments on this Mishnah. The Rambam in his Commentary to the Mishnah explains that “all is foreseen,” meaning that whatever each person has done, and all that he will do, is known by Hashem. One might think that this being the case, there is no such thing as free choice<sup>1</sup>. Since Hashem knows everything that everyone will do, each of us is therefore *forced* to be either a Tzaddik or a Rasha. That is why the Mishnah continues by saying that “freedom of choice (literally ‘permission’) is granted.” Hashem’s knowledge does not force one to behave in a particular manner.

Why does the Mishnah say that the world is judged “in accordance with the *quantity*, the amount of man’s positive deeds?” It seems that it would have been more appropriate for the Mishnah to have said that the judgment is made in accordance with the *quality* of man’s deeds. Quality is much more important than quantity, meaning the amount of times that one performs a deed.

The Rambam explains this as follows. He says that there are times that quantity has an

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1. We know that there is free choice from the verse “Behold, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,” (Parshas Nitzovim, Devorim 30:16).

## PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

advantage over quality; for example, regarding the Mitzvah of Tzedokoh<sup>2</sup>. It is greater to give one dollar to a poor individual one hundred times, than to give the same person a hundred dollars at once. By extending the Tzedokoh over many times, one refines himself one hundred-fold. He becomes accustomed to giving Tzedokoh to the point that he actually acquires this all-important trait as his own.

The Alter Rebbe offers a deeper explanation why giving smaller amounts of Tzedokoh over a longer period of time is greater than giving one large amount<sup>3</sup>. “Whoever is enlightened as to so great and wondrous a matter, will discover and appreciate how profound are the words of the Sages, of blessed memory, when they said, ‘Everything is judged according to the amount of positive deeds.’ This refers to the act of charity which is performed numerous times, which draw down the ultimate form of life ... This is also similar to what the Rambam wrote in praise of the repeated giving of Tzedokoh, ‘(that it serves to) refine the soul.’”

The repetition of these actions, when performed over a span of time, draws down the ultimate form of Divine life. It enables us to constantly bask in His presence, receiving life directly from Hashem.

### **Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah**

We need to understand how it is possible to reconcile freedom of choice, with the fact that whatever choice one will ultimately make is *already* known by Hashem? If the choice that one will ultimately make is a given before he even decides what he will do, how can we say that he was free to do whatever he chose? It would seem to be cause and effect; Hashem’s knowledge caused him to behave in a certain way.

### **The Explanation**

In order to understand this, we must first realize that Hashem is not bound by any physical limitations, including those of time and/or space. Past, present and future are all one for Him. This being the case, we can understand that Hashem’s knowledge of the choice which an individual *will* make, whether positive or not, is not the *cause* of his actions, rather it is the effect of his actions. From Hashem’s perspective there is no difference between past and future. Hence, the actions which the person will perform (in the future), caused Hashem’s knowledge (in the past). We

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2. There is actually a far simpler allegory. It is necessary for ten men above the age of Bar Mitzvah to join together in order to have a Minyan, a quorum required for the recitation of various prayers. It does not help to have nine men, even if they are all of the stature (quality) of Moshe Rabbeinu.

3. See Igerres Hakodesh, Chapter 21.

## PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

originally assumed (based on our own limitations) that Hashem's knowledge caused the individual's actions. The truth is, that it actually works the other way around. Hashem's knowledge is the *result* of the person's choice. Despite the fact that from our perspective G-d's knowledge came first, nevertheless, from Hashem's perspective time is not a factor.

*(Adapted from a letter written on 22 Teves, 5709 and the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Devorim, 5744)*

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER**

Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoheן ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

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**מוקדש לזכות  
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש**

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

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**ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.**

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**נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו**