

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Perek VI

17 Tammuz, 5779 – July 20, 2019

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

by
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos
Chapter VI
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Chapter VI

פרק ו', משנה ה': אל תבקש גדולה לעצמך, ואל תחמוד כבוד. יותר מלמודך עשה, ואל תתאוה לשולחנם של מלכים, ששולחנך גדול משולחנם וכתרך גדול מכתרם; ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

Chapter 6, Mishnah 5: Do not seek greatness for yourself, and do not desire honor. You shall do more than you study¹. Do not desire the table of kings, for your table is greater than theirs and your crown is greater than theirs. Your Employer is faithful to pay you for the rewards of your work.

The Simple Explanation

Our Mishnah² is part of the sixth chapter of Pirkei Avos, which is referred to as “Kinyan Torah – Acquiring the Torah.” As is the case with the entire chapter, this is a teaching which focuses on the importance of Torah study.

“Do not seek greatness for yourself,” means not to run after positions of leadership. “Do not desire honor,” teaches us that one who wishes to receive honor for his Torah knowledge, appears to be studying for ulterior motives. “Do more than you study,” is telling us that your Mitzvah observance must outweigh your Torah study. This is in keeping with the teaching that³, “one whose deeds are greater than his wisdom can be compared to a tree with many roots and few branches. All of the storms in the world cannot budge it from its place.” Our teaching continues, “Do not desire the table of kings, for your table is greater than theirs.” “Your table” refers to the reward which you will receive for Torah study⁴.

Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

We need to understand why one who is involved with Torah study would desire a king's table! This is rendered that much more difficult by the order in which these teachings are listed. First, we are told neither to seek greatness nor to desire honor. Only then are we taught not to desire sitting at a royal table. Obviously one who is not interested or honor would not desire a king's table!

However, the manner in which the Sages express this makes it seem as if a royal table in and of itself is not something negative. For we are taught that the reason not to desire it is because “your table is greater than

1. Literally, “More than you study, do.”

2. Unlike the first five chapters of Avos, whose teachings are all part of the Mishnah, this chapter consists of teachings from the Beraysoh. Beraysoh are teachings from the Sages of the Mishnah, which were not included in the body of the Mishnah. Hence their name; the word Beraysoh is related to the Aramaic word meaning outside; they are teachings which are outside of the scope of the Mishnah.

3. Pirkei Avos, Chapter 3, Mishnah 17.

4. The above is the explanation of the Bartenura.

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theirs.” It would seem as that if not for that, there might be a reason to desire a king’s table.

The Explanation

The Sages teach us that Pirkei Avos teaches one how to be a Chossid. The meaning of the word “Chossid” in this context is one who goes beyond what the letter of the law requires⁵. Hence, the same is true of the teachings contained in Avos regarding the acquisition of Torah. We are discussing one whose toil in Torah study is beyond that which might ordinarily be expected. Granted, he does enjoy learning Torah. However, his exertion is far greater than it would be were his studies purely for the pleasure which he derives.

This is in keeping with the teaching of our Mishnah to “do more than you study.” We explained that the deed which is expressed here refers to Mitzvah performance; that “one’s deeds must be greater than his wisdom.” That is true. However, it is also possible to explain this in a different manner. We can understand that the deed referred to here *is* Torah study itself. The Mishnah is saying that one should force oneself to study, do, beyond that to which he may naturally be accustomed.

The Torah makes a specific promise to one who studies in this manner. The Torah states that⁶, “If you follow My statutes,” which means⁷ “that you toil in the study of Torah,” the result will be that you shall receive the greatest rewards⁸; “I will give your rains in their time, the Land will yield its produce, and the tree of the field will give forth its fruit ...” In other words, one who toils in Torah study is assured of obtaining all of his physical needs. In fact, this means that he actually controls, rules over, the world. This is why the Sages say that “Who are our kings? Our rabbis⁹.”

That is why the Mishnah teaches us not to desire the table of kings. The fact is that one who *toils* in Torah, meaning that he exerts himself *beyond* his ability, is rewarded with sitting at the royal table. Nevertheless, one should not desire this. The Mishnah is not teaching us not to be involved with the physical, material world. To the contrary; one must use this physical world in order to elevate it to holiness. However, one must not desire, take pleasure from the physical for its own sake¹⁰.

However, this begs the question, why should one *not* want the king’s table? Elevating the world to G-dliness is an important part of our mission in this world. The explanation is, as the Mishnah continues, that “your table is greater than theirs and your crown is greater than theirs.” The connection with Hashem which can be achieved through Torah study is far greater than anything which one can attain through elevating the physical¹¹.

5. See Talmud Bava Kamma 30, a.

6. Parshas Bechukosai, Vayikroh 26:3.

7. See Rashi’s commentary *ibid*.

8. *Ibid.*, Verses 4-12.

9. See the Talmud Gittin 62, a.

10. See Tanya, the beginning of Chapter 7.

11. See Tanya Chapter 5.

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However, we must be involved with both the Divine and the material. In this manner we will bring about the fulfillment of Hashem's desire to have a dwelling place in this world. Thereby, we will bring the complete and true redemption now.

Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, 5722)

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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

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FAMILY שיקיו

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

* * *

לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

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

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' שלום משה בן ר' שלמה מאיר הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטר ש"ק פ' בשלח, י"ג שבט, ה'תשע"ט

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו