



Volume 4. Issue 43

“For the Sake of Heaven”

R' Yosi says “...and let all your actions be directed for the sake of heaven.” (*Avot* 2:12)

Seemingly, even before Adam’s punishment, he was placed in the Garden to work, cultivate and develop the world, thus teaching us that constructive labour is an ideal that an ordinary people ought to engage themselves with. This ethic can be understood from both the perspective of the *cheftza* (an imperfect world that requires improvement through human effort) and that of the *gavra* (expressed through *g'millut chassadim*, helping each other). Whilst both of these views have been stressed by various schools of thought, other contrasts can be drawn beyond the narrow scope of indolence and work: How do we want to spend our lives? How do we want to earn a living? How do we balance professional ambitions with vigilant *Talmud Torah* and a narrow sense of *avodat Hashem* (confined to the four cubits of *Shulchan Aruch*)?

However, even within our analysis of *avodat Hashem*, two categories exist: *davar mitzvah*, that which we have specifically been commanded to perform, and service through *davar reshut*, the broad area of choice within one’s life.

Davar Mitzvah: Limited and Unlimited

Many mitzvot that we are obligated to perform have been clearly delineated: adding to them would be of no substance; in fact may be considered problematic. If one were to eat two *k'zatom* of *matza* instead of one, (according to most authorities) he has achieved naught, whereas if one decided to live in a *sukkah* for two weeks instead of one week, he has transgressed the prohibition of *bal tossif* (adding to mitzvot). However, some mitzvot - and these are amongst our most critical mitzvot - are not limited in any quantitative sense, and may therefore be viewed as laying claim to the totality of our being. These mitzvot are obligations of the heart and mind (to love, fear and

cling to *Hashem*). Since these mitzvot do not require any particular activity, they need not interfere or conflict with any other facet of life, and therefore do not come to negate the value of work or other human pursuits.

Davar Reshut: All for the sake of heaven

Founded on the ideal of “*be'chol derachecha de'ehu*” – “In all your ways know Him” (*Mishlei* 3:6), a person should orientate his life so to be able to serve G-d through every activity. Whilst stemming from the narrowly defined halachic responsibilities, ultimate totality of *avodat Hashem* grows on the much larger branches of *davar reshut*. *Rambam* (*Shemona Perakim*, 8) made this point when discussing the celebrated statement, “*Hakol bidei shamayim chutz m'yirat Shamayim*” - All is in the hands of heaven except for the very fear of Heaven itself. Following *Rabbeinu Bachya*, he claims that whilst one indeed does only control his *yirat shamayim*, the term *yirat shamayim* encompasses the entire range of human activity. Hence, whatever a person does or negates expresses his *yirat shamayim* or lack thereof.

A person must direct every single one of his deeds solely towards attaining knowledge of G-d. His sitting down, his standing up, and his speech should all be directed towards this goal...Even when he sleeps, if he sleeps with intention of resting his mind and body so that he does not become sick – for he is unable to serve the Lord when he is sick – his sleep shall become a service of G-d. Concerning this, *Chazal* commanded (*Avot* 2:12) “...and let all your actions be directed for the sake of heaven.”... (*Hilchot De'ot* 3:2-3)

The totality of a person’s existence must be orientated towards his relationship with G-d, towards *avodat Hashem*.

Ricki Bornstein

Based on an essay by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein *shlit"e*

Revision Questions

אבות ב' י' – ג' ז'

- What were the “three” statements of *R' Eliezer ben Hurkanus*? (ב'י: י')
- According to *R' Yehoshua* what three things “remove a person from the world”? (ב'י: י"א)
- What are the three statements of *R' Yosi*? (ב'י: י"ב)
- What three things did *R' Shimon* say regarding *tefillah*? (ב'י: י"ג)
- What three things did *R' Elazar* say regarding learning? (ב'י: י"ד)
- Complete the following statement of *R' Tarfon*: (ב'י: ט"ו)
היום ____, והמלאכה ____, והפועלים ____, והשכר ____, ובעל הבית ____
- What else did *R' Tarfon* say regarding work? (ב'י: ט"ז)
- What three things does *R' Tarfon* say regarding the reward for learning? (ב'י: ט"ז)
- According to *Akavya ben Mehalalel* if one looks at what three things will he not sin? (ג'י: א')
- Why does *Chanina segan Ha'Kohanim* say that one should pray for the welfare of the government? (ג'י: ב')
- What does *Chananya ben Tard'yon* say regarding two people that sit and do not converse in words of *Torah*? (ג'י: ב')
- What does he say regarding those that do? (ג'י: ב')
- What does *R' Shimon* say regarding three people eating together and do not share in words of *Torah*? (ג'י: ג')
- What does he say regarding those that do? (ג'י: ג')
- According to *R' Chananya ben Chachinai* what three people are “*mitchayev b'nafsho*”? (ג'י: ד')
- What does *R' Nechunya ben Hakana* say regarding one that accepts upon himself the “yoke of *Torah*”? (ג'י: ה')
- According to *R' Chalaftah ish Kfar Chananya*, when how many people learn does the *shechinah* preside amongst them? (ג'י: ו')
- Complete the following statement of *R' Elazar ish Bartuta*: (ג'י: ז')
תן לו משלו _____
- What does *R' Shimon* say regarding one who interrupts his learning to comment on the beauty of a tree? (ג'י: ז')

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday
Between mincha & ma'ariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat
10 minutes before mincha
Mizrachi Shul

Audio Shiurim on-line!

- 613.org/mishnah.html
- www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/

www.mishnahyomit.com

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
16 th March ט' אדר ב'	17 th March י' אדר ב'	18 th March י"א אדר ב'	19 th March י"ב אדר ב'	20 th March י"ג אדר ב'	21 st March י"ד אדר ב'	22 nd March ט"ו אדר ב'
Avot 3:8-9	Avot 3:10-11	Avot 3:12-13	Avot 3:14-15	Avot 3:16-17	Avot 3:18-4:1	Avot 4:2-3

