



Volume 7. Issue 5

Immeasurable Mitzvot

Masechet Peah opens with the law of leaving a corner of one's field for the poor. The first *Mishnah* teaches that biblically there is no requisite measure of land that one must leave. The *Mishnah* then lists other *mitzvot* for which the *Torah* does not prescribe a minimum or maximum quantity:

The following [*mitzvot*] do not have a measure: *Peah*, *Bikkurim* (bringing the first fruit), *Re'ayon* (appearing at the *Beit HaMikdash* for the Three Festivals), *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of kindness) and *Torah* study.

The same *Mishnah* then continues:

The following [*mitzvot*] one enjoys the fruit in this world, while principle [reward] stand for him in the Next World: honouring parent, acts of kindness, bringing peace amongst friends and *Torah* study is equivalent to them all.

The *Mefarshim* question the brevity of the *Mishnah* noting that there are many other *mitzvot* that do not have a *Torah* defined measure. The *Tosfot* citing the *Yerushalmi* brings many other cases that appear to be missing. One example is the quantity of ashes from the *para aduma* that should be used for *mei chatat* (to purify one from *tumat ha'met*). They cite the answer of *R' Yosi* who explains that the *mitzvot* listed are unique because there is a greater *mitzvah* the more one increases the measure.

Another example is the *Mishnah Achrona* who asks that the *mitzvah* of telling the story of leaving Egypt should have been included. He answers, that our *Mishnah* only mentions those *mitzvot* that also have no minimum (unlike *sippur yetziyat mitzrayim*). A further case is the *chatat* (sin offering) which has no value, yet the more one spends the better. The *Mishnah Achrona* suggests that unlike the *chatat*, the *Mishnah* wanted to list *mitzvot* that one should pursue in order to fulfil.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* provides a fascinating understanding of the selection of *mitzvot* and how they are presented in the *Mishnah*. He explains that the *mitzvah* of *Peah* should ideally be performed at the end of harvesting, while *Bikkurim* is performed at the beginning. They are polar opposites and present boundaries of time and space. Similarly from an internal-quality perspective, the *mitzvah* of *Re'ayon*, to see and present one's self where *Hashem's* presence presides, is the opposite quality of the *mitzvah* of *Gemilut Chasadim*, which is in the thick of the physical and highly active. These *mitzvot* therefore present the boundaries of both quantity and quality. Since boundary points are just that, points, it makes sense that these *mitzvot* have no measure.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* continues, just as the performance has no measure, the *Mishnah* lists those *mitzvot* that have no measure in their reward. These *mitzvot* have a similar sense of scope. Honouring parents begins life, *Gemilut Chasadim* is at the end (visiting the sick and burial), while bringing peace spans the time between. Juxtaposed to these practical *mitzvot* is the theoretical and spiritual one that too encompasses and spans one's life – *Talmud Torah*.

Perhaps then we can suggest a novel exposition of our *Mishnah*. This *Mishnah* is recited daily after *birkat ha'torah* as one of the first things learnt in the morning.¹ As such, when we read "These matters have no measure..." we not only learn the meaning as intended by the *Mishnah*, but remind ourselves that "these matters", *Torah* and *mitzvot*, span our every part of our lives and experience. In their entirety they should be pursued and have no measure both in their depth and reward.

Yisrael Yitzchak Bankier

¹ We recite only the first part of our *Mishnah*. The continuation of what is read is similar to the end of our *Mishnah*, yet comes from the *Gemara* (*Shabbat*).

Revision Questions

ברכות ט' ה'

- What (four things) does the *Mishnah* learn from the following *pasuk*: (ט' ה')
"ואהבת את ה' א' בכל לבבך ובל נפשך ובכל מאודך"
- What (seven things) should one refrain from doing in the *Beit ha'Mikdash*? (ט' ה')
- What extra phrase was added to *brachot* in the *Beit ha'Mikdash* and why? (ט' ה')
- What other decree was instituted that is listed in the *Mishnah*? (ט' ה')

פאה א' א' – ב' ז'

- Which *mitzvot* have no fixed measure? (א' א')
- What is the minimum proportion of a field that one must set aside for *peah*? What are the three criteria that one uses to determine how much more to leave beyond this minimal amount? (ב' א')
- Explain the three-way debate regarding where in the field one must leave *peah*. (ג' א')
- What are the characteristics of a field that has the obligation of leaving *peah*? (ד' א')
- Name the fruit trees that have all the above characteristics. (ה' א')
- Until when is *peah* exempt from *trumot* and *ma'asrot*? What are the five laws brought that have the same cut-off point? (ו' א')
- What are the seven things that divide a field such that each side is independently obligated to leave *peah*? (ז' א')
- According to *R' Yehudah* how wide must an irrigation channel be in order that it divides a field? (ז' ב')
- Under what conditions is a hill not considered a halachic division? (ז' ב')
- What is considered a *halachic* division in the case of trees? (ז' ג')
- How do carob trees differ from the above ruling? (ז' ד')
- Are the following cases defined as a single field or two: (ז' ה')
 - A field that contains one type of produce but is harvested at different times.
 - A field that contains two types of produce and is harvested at the same time.
 - A field containing two species of wheat harvested, at the same time, And at two different times.
- What is the source of this law? (ז' ו')
- What are the four cases where a cut produce is exempt from leaving *peah*? (ז' ז')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
8 st August כ"ח אב	9 nd August כ"ט אב	10 rd August ל' אב	11 th August א' אלול	12 th August ב' אלול	13 th August ג' אלול	14 th August ד' אלול
Peah 2:8-3:1	Peah 3:2-3	Peah 3:4-5	Peah 3:6-7	Peah 3:8-4:1	Peah 4:2-3	Peah 4:4-5

