



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

LIVING LIFE ALL IN! SOURCE SHEET AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Let's begin our journey towards living an "All In" life with an unlikely source describing the attitude a Hebrew servant should have in order to properly serve his master:

SOURCE 1: Pirkei Avos – Ethics of Our Fathers (Chapter 1:Mishna 3)

Antigonos, man of Sokho, received (the tradition) from Shimon the Righteous. He would say, "Do not be as servants who are serving the master in order to receive a reward, rather be as servants who are serving the master not in order to receive a reward; and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." (1:3)

אֲנִיגִנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְדִּיק. הוּא
הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֶל תְּהִי כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת
הָרֵב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרוֹס, אֲלֵא הוּוּ כַעֲבָדִים
הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב שְׁלֵא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרוֹס,
יְיָהּ מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עָלֵיכֶם

Q: When the source describes serving G-d, it does so in the language of servant to master. Why is our relationship to G-d expressed in terms of servant to master? Being a servant/slave is certainly a less than desirable condition/relationship!

The question is all the more interesting since G-d describes Moses, who possessed the greatest level of prophecy any human being has ever achieved in the following way:

SOURCE 2: Bamidbar – Numbers (12:7)

"Not so is My **servant** Moses; in my entire house he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth I speak to him, in a clear vision...Why did you not fear to speak against my **servant** Moses?

Q: Why do you think the Torah describes Moses as a servant?

Q: It is obviously a compliment. Is there another way to look at servitude that we are missing?

Consider the following:

SOURCE 3: Teachings of the Chassidic Master from Gerrer- the Imrei Emes.

When the Chassidic master the Imrei Emes succeeded his father as Rebbe of Gerrer, a group of older chassidim asked him, "your father promised us if we would recite the verse **"Please Hashem"** in the Hallel service with great devotion and intent, all our wishes would be granted from Heaven. Rebbe, we tried. Why didn't it work?"

The Rebbe answered," which verse did you think my father meant, **"Please Hashem save us now?"**, he actually meant **"Please Hashem for I am your servant"** (psalms 116:16) Just as a mortal master must provide all the needs of his servants, so too G-d provides for His True servants. But first we must commit ourselves to His service.

Q: How do we understand this? What would it feel like to be totally committed to our relationship with G-d (or other important relationships, for that matter)?

KEY TAKE-AWAY: Just as the Master must be “all in” regarding the responsibility that he takes for his servant’s needs, a true servant is similarly “all in” - fully committed to his master and his goals. Really the master/servant relationship describes, under ideal circumstances, when neither master nor servant shirks their responsibility, a totally committed relationship.

Let’s take a look back at source #1 to begin to apply this to our relationship to G-d. Consider the following question:

Q: Antigonos urges us not to serve G-d for the reward. Why is this discouraged, particularly since it is a well-founded tenant of Judaism that we will receive reward for our service of G-d?

The next 2-part source sheds light on this question:

SOURCE 4a: *R. Boruch of Kossov commenting on Antigonos of Sokho Source #1*

Imagine a person enjoying a delicious meal. If someone asked him, why he was doing it, he would of course reply, for my pleasure. He is not doing it for money (even if he were being paid); He is doing it for the pleasure. The service and the reward are one. **This taught Antigonos, should be the way we view serving G-d - not as a chore deserving of pay, but as an enjoyment which is an end in of itself.**

Q: If this is the ideal that our pleasure is our reward, why does our tradition promise another kind of reward?

Often, we do things as a means for acquiring something else; we work to make money so that we can afford a nice lifestyle, send our kids to school, drive nice cars etc. The Mishna is saying that if we serve G-d as a means (reward) rather than as an end, we will lose out. Of course, we are going to get reward, but the greatest reward of all is the pleasure of serving; that’s the delicious meal! We need the motivation of reward to get going, but we shouldn’t lose sight of the real prize.

Q: How is serving G-d like eating a delicious meal? Is the pleasure comparable?

SOURCE 4b: *R. Boruch of Kossov Continued:*

How do we relate to those whom we serve; Our parents, teachers and most of all G-d? We can be like a construction worker carrying heavy beams in and out of a construction site who is only doing it for the money. If we could be paid without the work, you bet we surely wouldn’t do it. However, the son of the owner would do it, because it’s for the father he loves, and he is doing it for his father. **That’s his real reward, that’s his pleasure.** (R. Boruch of Kossov)

Q: Judaism teaches that love of G-d is the greatest of all pleasures. How does the love of a son for his father relate to his reward for serving him?

It’s the greatest reward possible. Considering that, it’s certainly a pity if we serve others without feeling the proper love for them available through that service. Focusing upon our relationship with them (and

Let's take a look at one more aspect of the Mishna (source #1) to refine our view of worthwhile service:

Q: Note that source 1 uses a specific term for reward –“pras” – which is a broken piece of bread. What do you think the mishna means to convey by this unusual term?

Consider the following source:

SOURCE 5: *Rabbi Pinchas Halevi Hurwitz, the Haflaah, (as quoted in Lachmei Toda p.84)*

The Haflaah teaches that the word **“pras” literally means one half or slice of bread**. He goes on to explain that our sages teach us “that no man dies with “half” of his physical desires within his reach,” for “whomever has one hundred, will then desire a second hundred” and so on. Therefore, the Mishna (**source #1**) is telling us, do not serve G-d for the things in life that will always be no more than “halves.” Don't shortchange yourself, whatever this world will offer a man, it's only a small fraction of what the mitzvot are really worth.

We are all going to serve someone, or something. You can take it to the bank. However, let's make sure our service is for something real, enduring, so we are not left with “halves” at the end of our lives. Also, if we are going to serve, how crazy is it put in all the work and not enjoy it, but instead merely to “suffer” through it?

Q: Do you ever feel you are missing pleasure in your service, (to G-d, at work, with your family) only getting “half” a loaf?

Maybe we are losing sight of the forest (point of it all) for the trees (the day-to-day grind). Let's consider one more aspect to this conversation:

The Mishna is telling us that we need to do mitzvot for the mitzvot themselves, because they have real value and are precious to us, and because they will make us better, more perfect people. If we do them for a mere “slice” of something else, then we are really missing the point and true opportunity.

Let's take this one step further:

SOURCE 6: *Talmud Nedarim (22a)*

“R. Shmuel bar Nachmani said quoting R. Yochanon, He who gets angry, all kinds of Hell control him... Not only that, he also suffers from hemorrhoids.” (Gemara Nedarim 22a)

Q: Once a person is suffering from all forms of hell, is it that important to know that he will have hemorrhoids also?

Maybe we can intuit an answer by asking another question:

Q: When we are tempted to do things that aren't right or good, why do we do them?

Most of us want to be good and try to do the right things in life. However, when we do the wrong thing it's because we believe we will get something out of it. The angry person, however, gets nothing but a miserable life. The angry person's relationship with his children suffers, the angry person loses his friends, and his job suffers. The Talmud testifies that the angry person loses on all levels. Not only does he do great spiritual damage for which he suffers greatly, he hurts himself emotionally and physically ; he ends up with a life of hemorrhoids!

Q: Can we draw a conclusion from this source about the effect on a person of bad and conversely good behavior?

Anger is just one of many behaviors that the Torah warns against. However, this principle applies to all negative behaviors. There is a negative spiritual impact caused by bad behavior and an emotional and often physical impact as well.

From the negative, we can learn out an even more important concept about the positive; Working on being a good person, doing the mitzvot and learning Torah will yield benefit (reward) to our souls (in the world to come) but also in our lives here and now, in sometimes dramatic impact on our emotional, psychological and physical well-being.

Antigonus teaches us that if we serve G-d in the right spirit and for the right reasons, we will be the biggest winners **now and forever!**

TAKEAWAYS:

1. Being a servant is not a bad thing. And all of us will serve somebody or something. It just means you are giving your all to something. Make sure it's something real, lasting and worth your investment.
2. Though reward motivates us and channels our behavior, the greater opportunity is to serve out of love.
3. As we grow in our understanding and relationship to G-d, our service and reward will become one. Just like we feel good when we give to those we love, we will grow to feel the same way about G-d.
4. Don't shortchange yourself by serving for only a "pras"- half a loaf. It will never fully satisfy you and G-d wants you to have a full portion of reward.
5. G-d designed the world in a way that good and bad will be experienced on a variety of levels - in your soul, your psyche, your heart and in your body. The greatest reward you can get for doing the right thing is that it's good for you, now and forever.

**For Questions, Comments and more FREE Learning Modules
Contact Rabbi Simcha Barnett, Director Inspired Jewish Learning
simchabarnett@gmail.com**