



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES



CHAPTER 1, MISHNA 3 INTENTION IS CRITICAL - GOD WANTS YOUR HEART!

“ אַנטִיגֹנוֹס אִישׁ סֹכּוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֶל תְּהִיוּ כַעֲבָדִים
הַמְשַׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, אֲלֵא הָיוּ כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב
שְׁלֹא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם:

Antigonus, man of Sokho, received 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.”



**FILL IN YOUR OWN QUESTIONS ON THE MISHNA ABOVE
BEFORE PEEKING AT OUR QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE!**

OUR QUESTIONS

- 1 The first two mishnayos offered the wisdom of individual Rabbis who were the leaders of their respective generations and the people responsible for transmitting the Torah to the next generations. In our mishna, we see that the statements of two great Rabbis are offered. Why? And how does this impact the transmission of the Torah to successive generations?
- 2 The Mishna begins with two statements regarding the proper motivation or spirit in which we should be serving G-d: the first is what "not to do" and the second is what "to do." First, shouldn't it start with what to do, before what not to do, and secondly, once you tell me either one of them, what do I need the second phrase for? Couldn't I figure that out on my own?
- 3 Also, the Mishna uses the language of a Servant and a Master to describe the relationship between us and G-d. Is that the kind of relationship we want to have with G-d, "our Father in heaven"?
- 4 The second phrase says, "Be like servants who serve their master 'not' for the sake of receiving reward." Isn't it simpler and more correct to say "Be like servants who 'do not' serve their masters for the sake of receiving reward? Does this usage suggest anything about the intention that we are supposed to have in serving G-d?
- 5 The last phrase speaks about having fear/awe of G-d. What place does serving G-d out of fear have in Judaism? And what does this have to do with serving G-d with proper intention discussed at the beginning of the Mishna?

COMMENTARY BY RABBI MORDECHAI ROTTMAN

OUTLINE

Even though we will be rewarded for the good which we do, we should strive to serve G-d with love and awe. And as our relationship with G-d deepens, so will our enthusiasm and fervor. Hopefully, we will reach the level where we can feel within our hearts the words of the psalmist, "My soul thirsts for the Almighty," (Psalms, 42:3) every moment of the day, continuing to grow and develop our spiritual connection through the Torah

A Deeper Look:

Focusing on the reward when we perform mitzvot can deny us the opportunity to develop a deep and meaningful relationship with G-d, as compared with one who serves G-d out of awe and joy. When we have reached that level of attainment, the reward we receive becomes insignificant compared to the satisfaction and deep fulfillment that we feel when we serve Him.

One who does mitzvot because of the reward is like the man who works at a job that provides a paycheck at the end of the month, but leaves him unfulfilled and uninspired. If the paycheck would not be there, neither would he.

On the other hand, one who serves out of love and awe, is like the man who is inspired and cares deeply about the work he does. If he could afford it, he would do the work even if there were no paycheck at all.

If you were running a business, which one of the two workers would you rather have?
Obviously the second.

The person who is working for the paycheck will never do anything unless it is absolutely necessary. Even the work he does lacks enthusiasm and creativity.

One who is working because he loves the work will bring energy to his surroundings. He is a never-ending source of ideas and inspiration. He is usually the one who volunteers for the projects others avoid and stays late putting finishing, loving touches on his work.

Antigonus wanted students who act with a vibrancy, with an awe and a passion for G-d and Torah. He wanted to create the kind of students who could fire the imaginations of others with visions of spirituality and striving. He wanted to encourage them to look into their hearts and find true spiritual meaning -- the kind of meaning they would never find if they focused on the reward alone.

SUMMARY

Service which focuses on reward alone indicates a lack of depth in the service being done. Focusing on the love and awe that we can have for G-d will motivate us to a higher level of action and create within us a far greater deep and meaningful relationship with our Creator.

The message of this Mishna seems clear. The relationship between man and G-d cannot be dependent on man receiving a reward from G-d. For what will happen if G-d does not fulfill an erroneous expectation being made by man? Or what if man decides that the immediate gratification he gets from transgressing the Torah is more worthwhile than G-d's reward? Therefore, the Mishna teaches us that one should serve G-d even if he were not receiving a reward. "Fear of Heaven," is a sufficient reason, says the Mishna.

Doing something out of fear is not a very popular idea in Western culture. When a person does something out of fear, we assume that in reality, he is doing something that he would rather not do. Is the Mishna advocating a relationship with G-d based on fear? Is this a healthy attitude for one to uphold?

To understand the Mishna, we must realize that there are two kinds of fears. One kind of fear is based on reality and the other has no basis in reality. If a person has the former kind of fear, one for which there is no basis in reality, he is engaged in an unhealthy situation. However, if a person's fears are grounded in reality, it would be considered unhealthy to ignore them. Imagine a person fearlessly crossing a busy street without proper precautions! Ignoring a fear which has a basis in reality is an immature response to danger, a denial that can be highly destructive.

When we speak of fear of G-d, which one of the two are we speaking of? If a man believes that the world was created and is being sustained by an infinite G-d who possesses unfathomable wisdom and power, would fear of this Being not be appropriate? Would it not be logical to postulate that this Infinite Being would have some reason for creation; that He created man for a purpose and that if man were to neglect his mission, he would be held accountable for it?

This indeed is what the Torah teaches us. Man has a mission. After man leaves this world he is judged for his behavior in this world. Once a person realizes this, fear of G-d no longer assumes the form of a negative emotion, but rather a healthy **concern** for the opinion of the Creator which will motivate man to accomplish his mission in this world.

While on the topic of fear of Heaven, it is important to realize that there are two levels of fear of G-d. The first level is the one already mentioned, a healthy consideration for the ramifications of man's responsibility in this world. The second, which is considered a higher form of "fear of Heaven," is an overwhelming awe which occurs when one is filled with an awareness of G-d's transcendent greatness. While the first is directly related to man's actions, their consequences and retribution, the second is not. Both however, are considered important facets in man's relationship with G-d.

It is most important to realize that the Torah teaches us that with fear alone, man's relationship with G-d is not complete. Together with fear there must be love. Serving Hashem from fear **and love** is the proper way to serve Him.

Indeed, fearing and loving G-d are two of the all-important six constant mitzvos which a person is obligated to perform at all times.

The sophisticated, multi-dimensional relationship between man and G-d is indeed not a simple one. One could hardly expect less from a relationship with the Divine.