



GLOBAL WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN TO LEARN PIRKEI AVOS

לע"נ הרב מנחם מענדל ע"ה בן יבלח"ט הרב ישראל שיחי'

SHIUR #1

פרק ב, משנה א:

רבי אומר, איזוהי דרך ישרה שיבר לו האדם, כל שהיא תפארת לעושיה ותפארת לו מן האדם.

Rebbi would say: Which is the correct path that a man should choose?
The path that is harmonious for himself and harmonious for those around him.

WAIT A MINUTE...

- 1) Why is Rebbi asking such a basic question, "what is the correct path for man to choose?" We know that the proper path for a person in life is the path of Torah. What does he mean?
- 2) Why does Rebbi use specifically the word אדם when talking about a person? There are many Hebrew words to refer to man. What significance does the term אדם have in this context?

The four Hebrew words אנוש, גבר, איש, אדם are different terms a person may be called. They actually refer to four different levels a person may reach in his עבודת ה' and אדם is the highest level. This name (like אדם הראשון) is the name of perfection. אדם refers to a person who keeps all the מצוות properly and has no shortcomings.

REDEFINED

The question Rebbi is asking is: once someone is an אדם, he is complete! So where does he go from there? A person must always grow in קדושה but now that he has covered the basics the question is what is the "proper path", in other words, the next step in serving Hashem?

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

The answer is two pronged and must be implemented simultaneously.
A path that is beautiful, beneficial and honorable for the person- אדם who is doing it. He must now start focusing inwards on deepening his connection to Hashem and make it harmonious and honorable. Our basic connection to Hashem is through learning His Torah and keeping his Mitzvos. But once one has already reached that level, he or she must try to connect to Hashem in a more individual, personal and unique way. This will, by definition, be different for each person.

THINK AND DISCUSS...

What does it mean to you to have a personal connection to Hashem? Do you feel a deeper connection when you make a mitzva your own and more "harmonious" to you through learning or intention? Is it when you find joy and excitement in a mitzva? Or adding extra hiddurim to make sure the mitzva is being kept in the best possible way? Do you feel a more intimate connection with Hashem when you strengthen your emunah and bitachon? Or when you express your gratitude to Hashem? Share your thoughts!

On the other hand, the correct path for a person to advance in their Avodas Hashem must also be "And harmonious and beneficial for those around him". One can't get carried away with his or her own personal, deep, exciting and uplifting relationship with Hashem. A person must always be aware of the



people around him. He must make sure that not only aren't they put off by the fervor of his intimate relationship with Hashem but he must also manage to connect to those around him and even take them along for the ride.

THINK AND DISCUSS...

Why might this be difficult? Can people around us drag us down in our spiritual growth? How can we maintain our growth without it exacting a cost on others? How can we make our deeper, more meaningful relationship with Hashem spill over and positively impact those around us? Share your thoughts!

These two עבודות may feel contradictory but an אדם has the capacity to handle contradictions. אדם is like to the word אדמה לעליון which means that man is similar to Hashem and can handle opposites at the same time.

IS THIS ALL RELEVANT TO REGULAR ME?

One can think that these עבודות are not relevant to us regular people. We certainly aren't an אדם- a person whose מצות are complete who now only has to deepen his connection to Hashem! Many of us feel we may be flawed in our actual מצוה observance.

That may be true on an individual level. However generationally, the אידן as a whole, through all their trial and tremendous hardships through the many years of גלות, have perfected the keeping of תורה and מצות. Our generation now stands ready, on the level of an אדם, to bring משיח.

The Frierdiker Rebbe compared us to soldiers ready for battle, with many grueling months and years of perfecting their training behind them. All that's left for them to do is to polish the buttons on their uniform.

So being that we are all collectively an אדם, the path we must go on to bring משיח is clear and has been outlined well by Rebbe, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. We must deepen our personal connection to Hashem while making sure that the world around us becomes a holy dwelling place for Hashem.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi was born the day Rabbi Akiva was killed by the Romans. He lived in the era after the 2nd Beis Hamikdash was destroyed. He lived a long life and was the Nasi of the Yidden for many years. He realized that the Mishna was being forgotten by the average איד and that it didn't stand a chance of surviving the long golus ahead. He made it a priority to gather the chachomim of the generation and reconcile and then to record all the halachos together. He wrote down the Mishnayos as we know it today. From the Mishnayos came Gemara and halacha as we practice it almost 2000 years later.

PRACTICED WHAT HE PREACHED

It is clear that Rebbe himself lived up to and exemplified these standards. He himself was a נשיא which literally means a leader but also translates as "elevated". He was an elevated and deeply holy person. Yet he made it his business to ensure that his devotion to learning and understanding Torah would elevate all the אידן of his generation, and indeed of all generations to come.

“

"The chassid knows that life's journey has two chapters. In 'chapter one,' Moshe receives the Torah at Sinai and hands it over to Yehoshua, and to all subsequent generations, as the divinely ordained path of life. In 'chapter two,' this right path is chosen as harmonious for the one who does it, and harmonious for all mankind."

(Yanki Tauber, chabad.org)

”

A STORY FOR THE SOUL

Gedalia Moshe Goldman, who later became the Grand Rebbe of Zvhil, and Chaim Shaul Bruk, a renowned Chabad Mashpia, were serving time together in a Soviet prison camp. Their "heinous" crime? Observing and spreading Yiddishkeit under the Communist regime.

One Shabbos, the sadistic commandant of the camp called Gedalia Moshe into his office. "I have here the papers for your release," he said as he waved some papers in the air, "and if you sign them now you will be a free man."

"But it is Shabbos," replied Gedalia Moshe. "I cannot and will not sign on Shabbos."

The commandant – who, of course, knew that Gedalia Moshe wouldn't transgress the Shabbos – shouted, "If you don't sign the papers now you will remain here another eight years!"

"Nevertheless, I will not sign and desecrate the Shabbos."

"Very well," sneered the commandant. "Don't sign. You will be in this prison for eight more years. And we'll see how your G-d will help you..."

"If my G-d wants to help me, He'll do it without you. And if He wants me to be in this prison eight more years, I will be here eight more years even if you would decide to let me go," replied Gedalia Moshe calmly. "It has nothing to do with you."

The already enraged commandant saw red. He whipped his pistol out of its holster, pointed it at Gedalia Moshe's heart, and screamed "Let's see who will help you now!"

He cocked the gun...

And his daughter walked into the office. She saw her father pointing the gun at Gedalia Moshe and said in a bored voice, "Father, it's a waste of a bullet..."

Slowly the commandant lowered the gun. "Don't think it was your G-d that saved you!" he shouted at Gedalia Moshe who was standing there serenely. "If it hadn't been for my daughter you would be dead meat by now!"

He turned to an aide and yelled to him, "Bring in the other Jew trouble-maker, Chaim Shaul!"

A few moments passed, and Chaim Shaul was standing in the office next to Gedalia Moshe. The commandant made him the same offer as he had to Gedalia Moshe: "Sign these papers and you can go free."

"Of course I can't sign the papers," replied Chaim Shaul, "It's Shabbos, and I don't violate the Shabbos."

"You will remain here another eight years."

"I will not write on Shabbos."

Suddenly Gedalia Moshe said, "Give me the papers. I will sign for him."

The commandant was dumbfounded. "What? You said you wouldn't write on Shabbos! You're going to be here for another eight years! And now you'll sign for him?"

"Of course I wouldn't sign on Shabbos to gain my freedom," Gedalia Moshe replied. "But this is different. I'm strong, and I can withstand the conditions in this prison another eight years. But Chaim Shaul is weaker, and he cannot stand this place any longer. It would be dangerous for him to remain here another eight years. Give me the papers and let me sign..."

Both men were freed from prison within the next few days. For after all, it wasn't the commandant who was in control. (adapted from Chabad.org)

CONNECT THE DOTS

For his own connection to Hashem and his Yiddishkeit, Reb Gedalia Moshe held the utmost standard, an unwavering devotion reminiscent of the "harmonious for himself" avoda. At the same time, for his friend, Chaim Shaul, he would do whatever was needed and was best for him, "harmonious for those around him" even if it meant signing him free on Shabbos!

Onward and Upward Our marching orders are clear. We need to examine within and search.

- What can I do to make yiddishkeit my own?
- How can I uplift the people around me?