

מִסְכֵּת אָבוֹת • פֶּרֶק שֵׁנִי

Learned like the daf, the literal words in bold, flowing with the elucidation

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, our holy Sages guide us on how to direct our hearts and actions to serve Hashem with true yiras Shamayim. We begin with the golden advice of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi on choosing a straight path in life, balancing Torah study with a worldly occupation, and working for the sake of Heaven. The Mishnah warns us to be careful with the ruling authorities and teaches us to nullify our own will before the will of Hashem, ensuring our avodah is pure and complete.

We then learn the profound teachings of Hillel, who cautions us against separating from the community or trusting in ourselves before the day of our death. The chapter transitions into the legacy of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and his five chashuve disciples. Through their holy discussions, we are shown the ultimate traits a Yid must cleave to, such as a good heart, and the destructive traits we must run away from, alongside practical guidance on honoring our friends and guarding ourselves from the yetzer hara.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

מִשְׁנָה א

Mishna 1 • The Straight Path and Caution in Mitzvos

רַבִּי אוֹמֵר,

Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi says:

אִיזוּהִי דֶרֶךְ יִשְׁרָה שְׂיִכַּר לּוֹ הָאָדָם,

Which is the straight path that a person should choose for himself?

כָּל שֶׁהִיא תַפְאֶרֶת לַעֲוֹשֶׁיהָ

Any path that is an honor to its doer, bringing him inner harmony and self-respect in his service of Hashem,

וְתַפְאֶרֶת לּוֹ מִן הָאָדָם.

and is also a source of honor to him from other people, as they respect his upright behavior.

וְהָיִי זֶהִיר בְּמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבִתּוּמָוָה,

And be just as careful with a light mitzvah, one that seems minor to you, as with a grave and weighty one,

שֶׁאִין אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל מִצְוֹת.

for you do not know the giving of the reward of the mitzvos, as Hashem has hidden their true spiritual value in the World to Come.

וְהָיִי מַחֲשַׁב הַפֶּסֶד מִצְוָה כְּנֶגֶד שְׂכָרָה,

And be calculating the temporary, worldly loss of a mitzvah—the effort or money it costs you—against its eternal reward,

ושְׁכַר עֲבֵרָה כְּנֶגֶד הַפְּסָדָה.

and the fleeting reward of a transgression—the physical pleasure or gain—against its devastating spiritual loss.

והִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אֶתָּה בָּא לְיַד עֲבֵרָה,

And look at three things, and by keeping them in mind, you will not come to the hands of transgression:

דַּע מַה לְּמַעַלָּה מִמֶּנּוּ,

know what is above you:

עֵינַי רְוָאָה וְאָזְנוֹ שׁוֹמֵעַת,

an eye that is seeing your every action, and an ear that is hearing your every word,

וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ בְּסֵפֶר נִכְתָּבִין:

and all of your deeds are written in a book before the Master of the Universe.

מִשְׁנָה ב

Mishna 2 • Combining Torah Study with Work and Laboring for the Sake of Heaven

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר,

Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, says:

יָפָה תְּלֻמוֹד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ,

Excellent is the study of Torah when combined with a worldly occupation,

שִׁגִּיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּח עוֹן.

for the toil of both of them causes a person to forget sin.

וְכָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאֵין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה,

And all Torah study that is not accompanied with work,

סוּפָה בְּטִלָּה וְגוֹרֶרֶת עוֹן.

its end is that it will be nullified, and it ultimately drags along sin.

וְכָל הָעֹמְלִים עִם הַצָּבוּר,

And all who labor with the community in public matters

יִהְיוּ עֹמְלִים עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם,

should labor with them for the sake of Heaven, purely for the sake of Hashem,

שְׂזִכּוֹת אֲבוֹתָם מְסִיעֵתָן

for the merit of their forefathers assists them,

וְצִדְקָתָם עוֹמֶדֶת לָעַד.

and their righteousness endures forever.

וְאַתֶּם, מַעֲלָה אֲנִי עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂכָר הַרְבֵּה כְּאִלּוּ עָשִׂיתֶם:

And Hashem says: "As for you, I reckon upon you a reward much as if you accomplished it all on your own."

מִשְׁנָה ג

Mishna 3 · Being Careful in Dealings with the Ruling Authorities

הָיוּ זִהְרִין בְּרִשּׁוֹת,

Be careful with the ruling-authority and do not trust them blindly,

שְׂאִין מִקְרָבִין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצָרָה עֲצָמָן.

for they do not draw near to a person except for the need of themselves and their own political interests.

נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשַׁעַת הַנֶּאֱתָן,

They appear like friends at the time of their benefit, when they can gain something from you,

וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחָקוֹ:

but they do not stand for a person at the time of his distress when he actually needs their help.

מִשְׁנָה ד

Mishna 4 · Doing the Will of Hashem and Proper Conduct with the Community

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר,

He, Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, used to say:

עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כְּרְצוֹנְךָ,

Do His will, the will of Hashem, with joy and eagerness like your own will, as if you were doing your own personal desires,

כְּדִי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנְךָ כְּרְצוֹנוֹ.

so that He will do your will like His will, answering your prayers and granting you success.

בְּטֵל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנוֹ,

Nullify your will before His will, by overcoming your yetzer hara and refraining from what He forbade,

כְּדִי שְׂיִכְבֹּט לְרֵצוֹן אַחֲרֵים מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנְךָ.

so that He will nullify the will of others who may wish to harm you, before your will.

הלל אומר,

Hillel says:

אל תפרש מן הצבור,

Do not separate yourself from the community, but rather share in their distress and help them in their needs;

ואל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך,

and do not trust in yourself, thinking you are safe from sin, until the day of your death, for even a righteous person can stumble;

ואל תדין את חברה עד שתגיע למקומו,

and do not judge — your fellow until you reach his place, meaning you must not condemn him until you have faced the exact same trial and temptation;

ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמע, שסופו להשמע.

and do not say a thing that is not possible to understand, thinking that in the end it will be understood, but rather speak clearly and immediately;

ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה,

and do not say, "When I am free from my business and chores, I will study Torah,"

שמא לא תפנה:

for perhaps you will not be free, and you will lose the opportunity to learn altogether.

משנה ה

Mishna 5 - Personal Traits for Torah Study and Ethical Conduct in Society

הוא היה אומר,

He, Hillel, used to say:

אין בור ירא חטא,

An empty person who lacks all knowledge cannot be a fearer of sin, because he does not even know what is forbidden;

ולא עם הארץ חסיד,

and nor can an ignoramus, who knows basic laws but lacks deep understanding, be pious and go beyond the letter of the law;

ולא חבישן למד,

and nor can the bashful person learn, because he is too embarrassed to ask his rebbe when he does not understand;

ולא מקפדן מלמד,

and nor can the impatient person teach, because his students will be afraid to ask him questions;

וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסִחְרָה מַחְכִּים.

and not everyone who increases in business becomes wise in Torah, as he will not have enough time to dedicate to learning.

וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אָנָשִׁים,

And in a place where there are no men to stand up and lead,

הַשֵּׂתִיד לְהִיּוֹת אִישׁ:

strive to be a man and take responsibility to do what is needed for the sake of Heaven.

מִשְׁנָה ו

Mishna 6 · Measure for Measure and the Ultimate Punishment of Evildoers

אִךָ הוּא רָאָה גְּלִגְלַת אַחַת שֶׁצָּפָה עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם.

Also he, Hillel, saw a certain skull that was floating on the surface of the water.

אָמַר לָהּ, עַל דֵּאִטְפָּתְךָ, אֲטָפוּךָ.

He said to it, speaking to the skull: Because you drowned others, they drowned you, as midah k'neged midah—measure for measure.

וְסוֹף מְטִיפֶיךָ יִטּוּפוּן:

And in the end, the end of those who drowned you will themselves be drowned, for they had no right to take the law into their own hands.

מִשְׁנָה ז

Mishna 7 · Increasing Torah and Charity Brings Life and Peace while Materialism Brings Worry

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר,

He, Hillel, used to say:

מְרַבֵּה בָּשָׂר, מְרַבֵּה רֵמָה.

One who increases flesh by overeating and indulging in physical pleasures, only increases worms in the grave.

מְרַבֵּה נְכָסִים, מְרַבֵּה דְאָגָה.

One who increases possessions and material wealth, only increases worry about losing them.

מְרַבֵּה נָשִׁים, מְרַבֵּה כְּשָׁפִים.

One who increases wives beyond what is proper, increases witchcraft because of the jealousy between them.

מְרַבֵּה שְׂפָחוֹת, מְרַבֵּה זָמָה.

One who **increases maidservants** in his household, **increases lewdness** and immorality.

מְרַבֵּה עֲבָדִים, מְרַבֵּה גִּזְלִים.

One who **increases servants**, **increases robbery**, as they are not careful with others' property.

מְרַבֵּה תּוֹרָה, מְרַבֵּה חַיִּים.

But on the spiritual side, one who **increases Torah study**, **increases life** and spiritual vitality.

מְרַבֵּה יְשִׁיבָה, מְרַבֵּה חֲכָמָה.

One who **increases sitting** in the Beis Medrash to learn, **increases wisdom**.

מְרַבֵּה עֲצָה, מְרַבֵּה תְבוּנָה.

One who **increases counsel** by consulting with wise mentors, **increases understanding**.

מְרַבֵּה צְדָקָה, מְרַבֵּה שְׁלוֹם.

One who **increases charity** and acts of chesed, **increases peace** in the world.

קָנָה שֵׁם טוֹב, קָנָה לְעַצְמוֹ.

One who has **acquired a good name** through his fine character, has **acquired it for himself**, as it is his own true achievement.

קָנָה לוֹ דְּבָרֵי תּוֹרָה, קָנָה לוֹ חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

And one who **has acquired for himself words of Torah**, has **acquired for himself the life of the World to Come**, which is eternal.

משנה ח

Mishna 8 · The Disciples of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and Their Unique Virtues

רַבִּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי קָבַל מֵהִלֵּל וּמִשְׁמַאי.

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai received the chain of the Torah tradition from Hillel and from Shammai.

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם לָמַדְתָּ תּוֹרָה הֲרַבָּה, אַל תִּחְזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמָךְ, כִּי לָכֶּה נּוֹצְרֶתָ.

He used to say, "If you have learned much Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, because for this purpose you were created by Hashem."

חֲמִשָּׁה תַלְמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ לְרַבִּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי, וְאֵלֵינוּ הֵם.

Five disciples were to him, to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, and these are they:

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס, וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָה, וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, וְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גִּתְיָאֵל, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah, and Rabbi Yose the Priest, and Rabbi Shimon ben Nethaneel, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Arach.

הוא הִזָּה מוֹנָה שְׁבָחָן.

He used to list their praise, highlighting the unique spiritual strength of each one:

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הֵיֶרְקָנוֹס, בּוֹר סוּד שְׂאִינוֹ מֵאֶבֶד טֶפֶה.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus is like a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop of its water, remembering all his learning perfectly.

רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָה, אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹלְדָתוֹ.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah—praise worthy is she who bore him, for she caused him to become a great sage.

רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, חֲסִיד.

Rabbi Yose the Priest is a pious man, acting beyond the strict measure of the law.

רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן נֶתַנְאֵל, יִרָא חֵטָא.

Rabbi Shimon ben Nethaneel is one who fears sin and avoids even the slightest transgression.

וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָה, מַעֲזִין הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר.

And Rabbi Eleazar ben Arach is like a spring that gathers force, constantly producing new insights in Torah.

הוא הִזָּה אוֹמֵר, אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְאֶלִּיעֶזֶר בֶּן הֵיֶרְקָנוֹס בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מְכַרִּיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.

He used to say, "If all the Sages of Yisrael would be on one scale of a balance, and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus on the second scale, he would outweigh them all in his breadth of received knowledge."

אָבָא שָׂאוּל אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ, אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים וְרַבִּי אֶלִּיעֶזֶר בֶּן הֵיֶרְקָנוֹס אַף עִמָּהֶם, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָה בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מְכַרִּיעַ אֶת כָּלָם:

Abba Shaul says in his name, "If all the Sages of Yisrael would be on one scale of a balance, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus even with them, and Rabbi Eleazar ben Arach on the second scale, he would outweigh them all with his deep, creative understanding."

מִשְׁנָה ט

Mishna 9 • The Straight Path to Cleave to and the Evil Path to Avoid

אָמַר לָהֶם, צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיזוֹהִי דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׁרָה שֶׁיִּדְבַּק בָּהּ הָאָדָם.

He, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, said to them, to his five main talmidim: "Go out and see which is a straight path that a person should cleave to, so that he can live a truly good and holy life?"

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר, עֵין טוֹבָה.

Rabbi Eliezer says: A good eye, meaning one should look at others with generosity, being happy for their success and content with what Hashem has given him.

רבי יהושע אומר, חבר טוב.

Rabbi Yehoshua says: A good companion, a loyal friend who will encourage him in his avodas Hashem and help him grow.

רבי יוסי אומר, שכן טוב.

Rabbi Yose says: A good neighbor, someone who lives nearby and influences him positively day in and day out.

רבי שמעון אומר, הרוצה את הנולד.

Rabbi Shimon says: One who foresees the outcome of his actions, thinking ahead to the spiritual consequences before he acts.

רבי אלעזר אומר, לב טוב.

Rabbi Elazar says: A good heart, which is the source of all pure intentions and middos.

אמר להם, רואה אני את דברי אלעזר בן ערף מדבריכם, שנכלל דבריו דבריכם.

He said to them: I see the words of Elazar son of Arach above your words, for included in his words are your words, since a good heart naturally leads to a good eye, good friends, and proper foresight.

אמר להם צאו וראו איזוהי דרך רעה שיתרחק ממנה האדם.

He said to them: Go out and see which is an evil path that a person should distance himself from, so he does not fall into sin.

רבי אליעזר אומר, עין רעה.

Rabbi Eliezer says: An evil eye, which is jealousy and begrudging the good that others have.

רבי יהושע אומר, חבר רע.

Rabbi Yehoshua says: An evil companion, who drags a person down and influences him to do wrong.

רבי יוסי אומר, שכן רע.

Rabbi Yose says: An evil neighbor, whose constant proximity brings bad influence into the home.

רבי שמעון אומר, הלזה ואינו משלם.

Rabbi Shimon says: One who borrows and does not repay his debt.

אחד הלזה מן האדם, כלזה מן המקום ברוך הוא, שנאמר תהלים לו לזה רשע ולא ישלם, וצדיק חונן ונותן.

Whether one borrows from a man, it is like borrowing from the Omnipresent, blessed is He, as it is said in Tehillim 37: "The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous is gracious and gives."

רבי אלעזר אומר, לב רע.

Rabbi Elazar says: An evil heart, which breeds bad desires and corrupt middos.

אָמַר לָהֶם, רוּאָה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שֶׁבְּכָל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם:

He said to them: I see the words of Elazar son of Arach above your words, for included in his words are your words, because an evil heart is the root of all these bad traits.

מִשְׁנָה י

Mishna 10 · Honoring One's Friend and Fearing the Sages

הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים.

They, these five disciples of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, each said three things, which are fundamental principles for life.

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר,

Rabbi Eliezer says:

יְהִי כְבוֹד חֲבֵרְךָ חָבִיב עָלֶיךָ כְּשֵׁלְךָ,

Let the honor of your friend be as dear to you as your own honor,

וְאַל תְּהִי נוֹחַ לְכַעַס.

and do not be easy to anger, for anger causes a person to lose his wisdom and sin.

וְשׁוּב יוֹם אֶחָד לִפְנֵי מִיתָתְךָ.

And repent of your sins one day before your death; since a person does not know when he will die, he should spend every day in a state of teshuvah.

וְהָיִי מִתְחַמֵּם כְּנֶגֶד אוֹרֵן שֶׁל חֲכָמִים,

And be warming yourself opposite the fire of the Sages, drawing close to them to absorb their warmth and Torah teachings,

וְהָיִי זֶהִיר בְּגִחַ לְתֵן שֶׁלֹּא תִפְוָה,

and be careful with their coal so that you will not be burned, meaning you must treat them with immense respect and not overstep your bounds,

שְׁנֵי שִׁיכָתָן נִשְׁיכֶת שׁוּעָל,

for their bite is as deep and difficult to heal as the bite of a fox,

וְעִקְצָתוֹ עִקִּיצַת עֲקָרָב,

and their sting is as painful and venomous as the sting of a scorpion,

וּלְחִישָׁתוֹ לְחִישַׁת שָׂרָף,

and their hiss, even their quietest whisper of disapproval, is as deadly as the hiss of a fiery serpent,

וְכָל דְּבָרֵיהֶם כְּגִחַ לִי אֵשׁ:

and all of their words are like coals of fire, which can warm those who treat them properly, but consume those who treat them lightly.

משנה יא

Mishna 11 · Traits and Behaviors That Remove a Person from the World

רבי יהושע אומר,

Rabbi Yehoshua says:

עין הרע,

An evil eye—meaning, begrudging others their success and looking upon them with jealousy—

ויצר הרע,

and the evil inclination—allowing oneself to be dragged after physical desires and refusing to master one's passions—

ושנאת הבריות,

and hatred of the creations—harboring causeless animosity toward other people—

מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:

remove a person from the world, destroying both his physical well-being and his spiritual life.

משנה יב

Mishna 12 · Cherishing the Property of Others and Exerting Oneself in Torah Study

רבי יוסי אומר,

Rabbi Yose says:

יהי ממון חברך חביב עליה כשלה,

Let the property of your fellow be as precious to you as your own, and just as you would not want your own money to be lost, be careful with his;

והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה,

and prepare yourself to study Torah, putting in the necessary effort and diligence,

שאינה ירשה לך.

for it is not an inheritance to you that comes automatically without labor.

וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים:

And let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven, even your physical activities like eating and sleeping should be done to serve Hashem.

רבי שמעון אומר,

Rabbi Shimon says:

הוי זהיר בקריאת שמע ובתפלה.

Be careful with the proper timing and concentration of the reading of Shema and with the Shemoneh Esrei prayer.

וכשאתה מתפלל,

And when you pray,

אל תעש תפלתך קבע,

do not make your prayer like a burden or a fixed routine that you just want to get over with,

אלא רחמים ותחנונים לפני המקום ברוך הוא,

but rather let it be an outpouring of compassion and supplications before the Omnipresent, blessed is He,

שנאמר

as it is said in the Navi in

יואל ב

Yael chapter two:

כי חנון ורחום הוא

"For gracious and merciful is He,

אך אפים ורב חסד

slow to anger and abundant in kindness,

ונחם על הרעה.

and relenting of the evil decree when we cry out to Him."

ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך:

And do not be wicked in front of yourself by viewing yourself as a hopeless rasha, which would prevent you from doing teshuvah and praying with sincerity.

רבי אלעזר אומר,

Rabbi Elazar says,

הָיִי שְׂקוּד לְלַמַּד תּוֹרָה,

be diligent to learn Torah, so that you will have a deep and clear understanding,

וְדַע מָה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹס.

and know what to answer to an epicuros who challenges the truth of the Torah.

וְדַע לְפָנַי מִי אֶתָּה עֲמַל.

And know before Whom you toil, keeping in mind that your ultimate devotion is to Hashem,

וְנֶאֱמָן הוּא בֹעַל מְלָאכָתְךָ

and faithful is the Master of your work, Hashem Who has commanded you to labor in His Torah,

שִׂישְׁלָם לְךָ שְ�כָר פְּעֻלָּתְךָ:

Who will pay to you the reward of your labor in the World to Come.

מִשְׁנָה טו

Mishna 15 • The Shortness of Life and the Greatness of Torah Study

רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן אוֹמֵר,

Rabbi Tarfon says:

הַיּוֹם קָצֵר

The day is short and a person's lifetime in this world passes so quickly,

וְהַמְּלָאכָה מְרֻבָּה,

and the work of Torah study and mitzvos is plentiful,

וְהַפּוֹעָלִים עֲצֵלִים,

and the laborers—which are we, the people of this world—are lazy, as the yetzer hara tries to hold us back,

וְהַשְּׂכָר הַרְבֵּה,

and the reward waiting in the World to Come is exceedingly great,

וּבֹעַל הַבַּיִת דּוֹחֵק:

and the Master of the House—Hashem, the Creator—is pressing us to fulfill our purpose.

הוא הָיָה אומר,

He, Rabbi Tarfon, **was saying** to encourage us in our avodah:

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגֹמֵר,

It is **not upon you to complete the work** of Torah study, as the depth of Hashem's Torah is endless,

וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְבָטֵל מִמֶּנָּה.

and yet, **you are not a free man to desist from it** entirely, for every Yid is obligated to toil in Torah according to his ability.

אִם לְמִדַּת תּוֹרָה הִרְבֵּה,

If you **studied much Torah** with diligence and yiras Shamayim,

נוֹתְנִים לָךְ שָׂכָר הִרְבֵּה.

they **give to you much reward** from Heaven.

וְנִאֲמָן הוּא בֹעַל מְלָאכָתְךָ

And **faithful is the Master of your work**, Hashem Who commanded you to learn,

שִׂישִׁילֶם לָךְ שָׂכָר פֶּעַלְתְּךָ.

Who will **pay to you the reward of your labor** for every single moment of effort.

וְדַע מִתֵּן שָׂכָרְךָ שֶׁל צְדִיקִים

And **know** that the ultimate **giving of the reward of the righteous**

לְעָתִיד לָבֹא:

is **in the future to come**, in Olam Haba, where the neshama will bask in the light of the Shechinah.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter flows from foundational principles of personal avodah and communal responsibility into the deep teachings of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples. We are taught to weigh the temporary loss of a mitzvah against its eternal reward, to avoid anger, and to repent daily. The Sages outline how positive traits like a good heart, a good eye, and a good companion bring a person closer to Hashem, while warning that an evil eye, the yetzer hara, and hatred of others can completely remove a person from the world. Ultimately, we are exhorted to treat our fellow's property with the same care as our own and to warm ourselves in the fire of the wise.

In this chapter, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai asks his greatest disciples to find the one path a person must cleave to above all else. While they suggest beautiful paths like a good eye or a good friend, he points to the answer of Rabbi Elazar ben Arach: a "lev tov", a good heart. The Rebbe explains that a good heart is the root of everything; if the heart is pure and aligned with Hashem, then the eyes, the actions, and the relationships will naturally follow.

We often get caught up trying to fix every external detail of our lives, but the real avodah starts from within. When you work on cultivating a lev tov, you are building a foundation of genuine love for Hashem and His creations. This inner goodness is what transforms a person's entire life, ensuring that their Torah study and mitzvos are alive, warm, and true.

Today, before you speak to a family member, a coworker, or a neighbor, pause for one second and consciously bring a feeling of warmth and genuine goodwill into your heart toward them, letting your words flow from a true lev tov.