

CHAPTER 2: MISHNA 13: PART 3

by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky

He (RYB"Z) said to them (his five students): Go out and see which is a good path for a person to attach himself to. Rebbe Eliezer said "Ayin Tovah" (a good eye). Rebbe Yehoshua said "Chaver Tov" (a good friend). Rebbe Yossi said "Shachen Tov" (a good neighbor). Rebbe Shimon said "One who foresees the outcome (of his actions)." Rebbe Elazar said "Lev tov" (a good heart). He (RYB"Z) said: I "see" (prefer) the words (the opinion) of Rebbe Elazar be Arach, for included in his words are your words.

Rebbe Shimon added (to the lessons of his colleagues) "One who foresees the outcome (of his actions)." This is another indication of our fundamental thesis: Each path that was promoted by a specific Tanna was a direct outgrowth of the fundamental virtue of his character.

Shimon ben Netanel was praised [by RYB"Z] as one who fears sin. This was a result of his refined and lucid "sechel" which accounts for his ability to reach the level of fearing sin (since he has clarity and understanding about the nature of G-d and of His expectations). The opposite is an ignorant and empty person, who has no fear of doing wrong (for he lacks an understanding of G-d and His expectations).

This refined and lucid sechel, which leads to a fear of Heaven, also leads one to see the outcome of his actions. The "sechel" illuminates (in a conceptual and intellectual way) what a person sees before him, the way a bright torch illuminates (in a physical way) a path that lies in front of him. This contrasts with a fool, who always walks in the dark, with no sense of what lies ahead.

So Rebbe Shimon, whose virtue was that he fears sin, gave praise to the person who sees ahead the way a person with a bright and good quality lamp can see far ahead of his immediate vicinity. Both the virtue of Rebbe Shimon and the path that he praised are the result of a lucid and refined "sechel."

Rebbe Elazar ben Arach taught "lev tov," that a person should habituate himself to be good-hearted. (The implication is one of generosity and graciousness. The Maharal is troubled about why this trait should reside specifically in the heart.) The heart is the foundation and the center of all life-forces of the human being. It is the source of physical life ("kochot haguf") with the heart pumping the power of life (the blood) to every part of the body. And it is the source of the metaphysical dimension of man's life, with the heart being the source of wisdom and understanding. Rebbe Elazar's virtue was

that he was like a flowing spring that surges forth. The power of the spring is that it serves as an everflowing **source** (of life-giving water). Just as everything emanates and pushes forth from this flowing source, so do all dimensions of human life flow strongly from the heart. Rebbe Elazar, who himself was a surging spring, taught that the praiseworthy path is developing a "lev tov," a gracious heart, since the heart serves as the source of all human life-forces. His own character virtue was the foundation for his perspective on the proper path man should follow.

Why did RYB"Z prefer Rebbe Elazar's path, and why did he consider it inclusive of all the other paths suggested? When the heart is "good" and in a state of perfection, it indicates perfection in both the "kochot hanefesh" and in "kochot haguf" (both the physical as well as the metaphysical dimensions of the person). The heart is in the center of the body, and the center is the location of the source and root of each thing. The heart's location at the center of the human being indicates that it serves as the source of all of the life-forces of man. When the heart, **the foundation**, is good, everything is assured of developing in a good way. Therefore, each one of the good elements (taught by each of the others as the desired path) is rooted in the "lev tov," the heart which is good, and "included in his words are your words."

This shiur is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Rochel Neche bas Akiva, on her 36th yaarzheit, 12 Cheshvan

The class is taught by [Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky](#), Dean of [Darche Noam Institutions](#), Yeshivat Darche Noam/Shapell's and Midreshet Rachel for Women.
