

CHAPTER 2: MISHNA 2: PART 1

by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi says: Beautiful is the study of Torah with derech eretz (lit. "ways of the world"), for the striving of both makes one forget sin. And all Torah that does not have work accompanying it is ultimately nullified and drags [in] sin. And all those who are involved with the community (doing communal work) should be involved for the sake of Heaven. For the merit of their forefathers assists them, and their righteousness stands eternally, and you -- I apportion reward to you as if you had done it (alone).

The language of this Mishna is problematic, for it should have said "Beautiful is Torah when derech eretz accompanies it," implying that Torah is the foundation, and the derech eretz is the accompaniment. (Yafeh talmud Torah k'asher imah derech eretz.) The way it is written implies that the foundation is the derech eretz (and the Torah is the accompaniment, made beautiful by that role). (The subtle distinction that the Marhal is pointing out is more apparent when seen in the original Hebrew.)

"...for the striving of both makes one forget sin." If it is a function of the process of striving that distracts one from sin, then one should strive exclusively in Torah, without the need for struggling in work. The struggle in Torah (alone) should make one forget sin!? Why is struggle in work a requirement?

"...all Torah that is not accompanied by work is ultimately nullified..." How can this be understood in light of the fact that there were many Torah scholars who were not laborers! Furthermore, why should it "drag in sin," implying that it causes sins having nothing to do with his failure to have a source of income. It might be reasonable to expect that a lack of work could lead one to steal (and violate other financial prohibitions). But then the proper language to indicate that would have been "Torah that is not accompanied by work... causes sin" rather than "drags in sin," which implies that sins are being brought in from outside sources.

A further problem is how to understand the connection that the Halacha "And all those who are involved with the community..." has with the first two Halachot. It should have started a new set of lessons with the phrase "He used to say..." (as we find in the coming Mishnayoth, unconnected lessons are taught by the same author). And what is the meaning of the merit of the forefathers

assisting them? And if the conclusion of the Mishna is still the words of Rabban Gamliel, it should have said "and I apportion reward to you..." What is the extra "and you, I apportion..."?

This chapter opened with the lesson of Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi who was instructing man in the proper path the person should follow in his performance of the Divine commandments, which bring a person to his eternal reward. This lesson is now followed by the lesson of his son, who gives man instruction on proper involvement with this world, which is a prerequisite for man to succeed in his ultimate purpose. (Man has to be able to function in the world provided to us by G-d, in order to accomplish the tasks entrusted to us.) So the Halacha is formulated to imply that the Torah is the accompaniment to the *derech erez*, proper behavior in the ways of the world, since *derech erez* is the preliminary foundation. (*Derech erez* means both proper interpersonal behavior, as well as being involved in developing the world.)

The lesson of Rebbe comes first, since Torah and Mitzvoth themselves are Divine acts, and as such are on a higher objective level. But it is immediately followed by the lesson that teaches the proper way to function in this world, building a foundation of *derech erez* which is necessary for Torah and Mitzvoth.

Rabban Gamliel is teaching that a person should not think that performance of heavenly matters such as Torah [study] is sufficient, and that "He who keeps the Mitzvoth, shall know no evil" (Koheleth 8:5) without the need to turn to involvement with the functioning of the world to do work. Rather, heavenly matters are supposed to be done in the proper order, first *derech erez* and then Torah, which is the intention of the construction "Beautiful is Torah study with *derech erez*" where *derech erez* precedes the Torah study. This idea was been developed in the introduction. (See our shiurim on the Maharal's introduction to *Derech Chaim*.)

This follows the order of the creation and the development of the human being. The more intellectual and spiritual elements always come after the development of the ones which are less intellectual and spiritual. (Man's physical creation preceded the injection of the Divine soul -- "nishmath chaim." See Breishith 2:7. A child's intellectual faculties always develop after his physical abilities.) An individual is also supposed to follow this developmental order. First he should learn *derech erez*, which is not a spiritual endeavor, and then move on towards the Torah which is spiritual. This is the implication of the lesson "Beautiful is Torah study with *derech erez*.)

Teaching us that "the striving of both makes one forget sin" follows what we learned at the end of the previous chapter. When man is complete, with no lack or deficiency, then he is distanced from sin, for sin is nothing more than a manifestation of man's incompleteness. When man is complete in both *derech erez* and Torah then he is complete in all aspects of his existence, with no lack or deficiency, and through this he is distanced from sin, which is deficiency. But if man is lacking in either *derech erez* or in Torah, the deficiency breeds further deficiency, leading to sin. When a person is complete, that state is not easily undermined. (An tangible example of this concept is as a

small hole which grows to become a bigger one, while something which is complete can withstand strain without damage.)

(This Mishna always brings up the issue of Kollel vs. working, and the "Torah im derech eretz" ideology of Rav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch, as well as the "Torah u'Madah" ideology of Yeshiva University. As usual, the Maharal will be presenting us with the principles and ideal picture of the system. How to apply the principles in changing circumstances, or for limited periods due to requirements of time or place, is exactly where we seek the authority and guidance of the Torah scholars and leaders of each generation. It is important for us to know the principles, and view the contemporary situation from that perspective.)

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