

CHAPTER 3: MISHNA 7: PART 4

by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky

In the first chapter of Berachoth (6a) it is taught "Ravin bar Ada said in the name of Rebbi Yitzchak: What is the source that when ten people pray, the Divine Presence resides among them? As it is written Elokim stands in a Divine gathering...' (Tehillim 82:1). And what is the source that when three people sit in judgment, the Divine Presence is with them? As it is written 'In the midst of Elohim(referring to judges) He (referring to G-d) shall judge' (ibid). And what is the source that when two sit and are involved in Torah [study] that the Divine Presence is with them? As it is written Then those who fear G-d spoke to each other, and G-d listened and He heard; and a book of remembrance was written before Him...' (Malachi 3:16). And what is the source that even one [person] who sits and is involved in Torah [study] that the Divine Presence is with him? As it is written In every place that I allow my name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you' (Shmoth 20:21). And since it is true of even one, is it necessary to teach me about two? Two have their words recorded in a book of remembrance; one does not have his words recorded. And since it is true of two (who study Torah) is it necessary to teach me about three (who sit in a Torah judgment)? [Had three not been taught explicitly] I would have said that a judgment is simply making peace (conflict resolution), and the Divine Presence doesn't arrive. [Therefore] it informs me that a judgment is also Torah [study]. And since it is true of even three, did it need to teach me about ten? With ten, the Divine Presence arrives even before the entire group of ten [has gathered]; with three, It doesn't arrive until they have all sat down (in judgment/ to study)."

Why is five not mentioned in the above discussion, while in our Mishna, five is mentioned? Furthermore, it discusses three who are sitting in judgment, while in our Mishna, we are taught only about three who are involved in Torah study that the Divine Presence among them! And the discussion about two and one seems to be superfluous, since it is an explicit Mishna! (The Amoraim of the Talmud don't simply restate lessons that have already been taught in the Mishna. If they seem to be saying the same thing, there must be a new lesson to justify this seeming repetition.)

But the thesis we have presented above (in our last shiurim, parts 2 and 3) clarifies the difference between the lesson of the Mishna and the lesson of Ravin bar Ada. The Mishna is discussing how the variation in the number of people participating in the Torah study affects the intensity of the Divine attachment they receive. Not all attachments are equal. Ten creates a more intense attachment than five, which creates a more intense attachment than three, etc. (And that there is no fundamental increase when going from three to four, or from five to six, seven, etc. The transformation points are at

ten, five, three, two and one.)

But Ravin bar Ada is teaching us what is unique about each number, which has something that doesn't exist in any other size group. Therefore, he omits five, since a group of five doesn't bring about something that isn't also found in the other groups. And three people involved in Torah study aren't creating a reality that isn't also created by other size groups. (Even though what is created may vary in intensity, it doesn't vary in kind. Five and three are creating an attachment to the Divine Presence, and the only difference between the five/three and the other size groups is in the intensity of that attachment.) Now the questions and answers of the Gemara are better understood. First it asks "Since it is true of one, why was it necessary to teach me about two?" And the Gemara responds that two have their words written, something which doesn't happen at all with one.

Why should two have their words written, something which isn't attainable at all by one person? (The Maharal implies that it is understandable that two can bring about the same result in a more intense fashion compared to one, as indicated by our Mishna. But he requires and provides an explanation of why two should be able to bring about a result that is not available at all to one person.)

The explanation is based on what we studied in Mishna 3. (See our explanations of this Mishna, especially parts 2 and 3. We will elaborate on those ideas here.) When two people sit together and study Torah, there is an element of stability and permanence, since they require an appointed time and place, compared to one person, who can study Torah in a more haphazard way. The result of this stability and permanence is that their words are "written in a book," since writing results in a dimension of permanence for the words (relative to words which are simply spoken).

What is the meaning of this "writing"? As we have explained earlier, man and his actions "draw" the image and representation of the world. (See our explanation of Mishna 2 in this chapter, all three parts) While the actions of animals don't have a fundamental effect on the way the world looks, man, due to his elevated nature (being created as a reflection of G-d, as a creator) has his actions define a picture of the world. If man's actions are good, the world looks good. And if, Heaven forbid, man's actions are corrupt, a picture is created, and that picture reflects the negative world that man has drawn. (A drawing or a picture is not identical with the original but is rather a representation of it. The implication is that the world man draws is a representation of a higher level, more transcendent reality.) This is the "book" in which all of man's actions are written, as we explained in the first Mishna of Chapter 2. (See our explanation of Ch. 2, Mishna 1, part 5 which should be available in the archive it was distributed over eight years ago!) This book is the impression on the world created by the Torah study of two people. There is a stability and permanence inherent in their study, since it is being done together, rather than individually. To make a lasting impression on a world -- "writing in the book" -- which was created with a dimension of stability, requires an activity which itself has a

dimension of stability. This cannot be accomplished if less than two people are studying Torah together.

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