New Weekly Series

Pirkei Avos Gems

CHAPTER ONE

2 Shimon Hatzadik was from the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He would say: The world stands on three things: Torah, worship and deeds of kindness.

15 Shammai said: Make your Torah study a permanent thing. Speak little and do much. And receive every person with a cheerful countenance.

In accordance with the with the מנהג of the Alter Rebbe as quoted in the Siddur, Chassidim learn Pirkei Avos during the Shabbosim that are between Pesach and Shavuos. Some continue to do this throughout the summer weeks as well.

A beautiful new sefer on Pirkei Avos has recently been published by Kehot Publication Society. A new commentary anthologized from the works of classic commentators and the Chassidic masters, this sefer seeks to contribute to the appreciation of the wisdom of Pirkei Avos and its application to daily life.

As part of a new summer series, Yagdil Torah brings you weekly excerpts of selected Mishnayos so that you may benefit from these beautiful explanations.

פרק ראשון

ב **שמעון** הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד: על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות חסדים.

טו **שמאי** אומר: עשה תורתך קבע, אמור מעט ועשה הרבה, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות.

MISHNAH 2

העולם עומד THE WORLD STANDS. The "world" in this context refers also to the "miniature world" that is the human being. A person must achieve perfection in all three aspects of life:

Torah: Through Torah we transcend our purely animalistic selves and achieve perfection of self.

Worship: By serving and worshipping Hashem, we achieve perfection in our relationship with Hashem.

Deeds of Kindness: Through deeds of kindness we achieve perfection in our relationship with others.

התורה TORAH. The Divine power of Torah enables us to imbue the physical world with holiness, causing the world to "stand" i.e. to achieve its purpose. This is why the Torah is mentioned as the first pillar.

העבודה WORSHIP. This refers to the sacrifices (*Bartenura*), the archetype of all Divine worship (*Maharal*), which includes fulfillment of the mitzvoth (*Midrash Shmuel*).

גמילות חסדים DEEDS OF KINDNESS. Such as comforting mourners, visiting the sick, and burying the dead (*Bartenura*). Such deeds are superior to charity in several ways, such as: 1) they can be performed with one's body, not only with money; 2) they can benefit the poor as well as the rich, the living as well as the dead (*Sukkah 49b*).

These three pillars are embodied in the three other pillars of the world, the Patriarchs:

Torah – Yaakov

Worship – Yitzchak

Kindness – Avraham

Avraham was known for his extraordinary hospitality [and for reaching out to the people of his generation to teach them about Hashem] – Deeds of Kindness.

Yitzchak was offered as and agreed to be a sacrifice – Worship.

Yaakov – was known as a "dweller of tents" i.e. one who studied Torah. Yaakov, the third Patriarch is associated with Torah, which is associated with three. As the Talmud states (*Shabbos 88a*) "The threefold Torah (Scriptures, Prophets, Writings) was given to the threefold people (Kohanim, Leviim, Yisraelim) through the third one (Moshe, the third child to his parents, born after Miriam and Aharon) on the third day (of the preparations for the giving of the Torah) in the third month (Sivan).

MISHNAH 15

קבע PERMANENT. Make the study of Torah your primary pursuit; all the rest should be secondary. If you succeed in your other endeavors – good; if not, it is no great loss (*Rambam*). Your primary activity, day and night, should be Torah study. When you get tired of study, then work – not vice versa (*Bartenura*).

Even if you can only study for a short period each day, the study you do at that time should be "permanent" – engraved upon your heart so that it lingers with you throughout the day (*The Rebbe in Biurim*).

Additionally, make your Torah consistent – do not be strict with yourself and lenient with others or vice versa. (*Bartenura*).

The *Ben Ish Chai* explains the Mishna as follows: Study Torah with the proper motives, in such a way that your Torah insights will become "permanent", quoted continuously from generation to generation.

In this way, you will say little and do much, since your one statement will be quoted again and again in future generations.

How do you ensure that your Torah will merit permanence? When you greet each person cheerfully; even that student who has difficulty understanding.

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We would like to encourage you to purchase this sefer so that you can learn each Perek in its entirety each week. This sefer is available at the Kehot Showroom 291 Kingston Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11213, or online at www.kehot.com

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