

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter I – Mishnah 7

נתאי הארבלית אומר, הרחק משכן רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע, ואל תתיאש מן הפרענות.

Nittai the Arbelite used to say: Stay away [הרחק] [*harchek*] from a bad neighbor, do not attach yourself [תתחבר] [*hitchaber*] to the wicked, and do not abandon your belief [תתיאש] [*hit'ya'esh*] in [Divinely-ordained] disaster.

סדרן של פתובים, ומנהג העולם, "התקוששו וקושיו", וסייד קודמיו, והטוב קודם להמטיב. ולכן מצאו מקום המפרשים לדקדק, למה אומר "הרחק", מההפעיל שהוא יוצא לאחר, ולא אומר "התרחק".

The order of the writings,¹ and the custom of the world, “Gather yourselves together [התקוששו] [*hitkosheshu*], gather [קושיו] [*koshu*], O nation without shame,² and “your life takes precedence over the life of your friend,”³ and “Who is good” precedes “Who does good.”⁴ The Toldot Shimshon’s poetic introduction to this Mishnah relates to the first question he will ask, as to why the second and third verbs, “do not attach yourself” and “do not abandon your belief,” are in the reflexive grammatical form *hitpael*, but the first verb, “stay away,” is in the active grammatical form *hiphil*. “Gather yourselves together, gather,” is an example of a reflexive *hitpael* verb followed by an active *hiphil* form of the same root. “Your life takes precedence over the life of your friend” also implies one should act toward himself, i.e. reflexively, before acting toward another. “Who is good” precedes “Who does good” also puts the focus first on the actor, and then on the action.

Question 1: Therefore, the commentators⁵ found room to check, why does it say, “stay away” [harchek] [הרחק] in the grammatical form *hiphil* that one person says to another, and it

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¹ Bava Batra 14b: “The order of the Writings is: Ruth and the book of Psalms, and Job and Proverbs; Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations; Daniel and the Scroll of Esther; and Ezra and Chronicles.”

² Zeph. 2:1.

³ Bava Metzia 62a: “[A Baraita teaches]: Two [people] were walking on [a desolate] path and [there was] a jug of water in the possession of one of them, [and the situation was such that] if both drink [from the jug, both will] die, [as there is not enough water], but if [only] one of them drinks, he will reach a settled area, Ben Petora taught: [It is] preferable that both of them drink and die, and let neither one of them see the death of the other. [This was the accepted opinion] until Rabbi Akiva came and taught [that the verse states]: ‘And your brother shall live with you,’ (Lev. 25:36) [indicates that] your life takes precedence over the life of the other.”

⁴ Mishnah Berachot 9:2 cites the prayer, “Blessed is He, Who is good, and Who does good.”

⁵ Moses ben Baruch Almosnino (c. 1515–c. 1580), *Pirkei Moshe* (Thessalonika 1563); Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac Levi (1532–1600), *Lev Avot* (Thessaloniki 1565); Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller (1579–1654), *Tosafot Yom Tov* (1614–17); Rabbi Binyamin HaKohen (“Rabach”), *Avot Olam* (Venice, 1719).

doesn't say, "distance yourself" [*hitrachek*] [הִתְרַחֵק] in the grammatical form *hitpael*, as a person would tell himself?

ועוד, למה מתחלה אמר "רע", ולבסוף "רשע". ועוד דקדוקים אחרים, שיתיישבו במאי דאיתא בעירובין פ'ק פ'ק הדר, שגוי ישראלים הדרים עם הגוי בקצור אחת, הגוי אוסר עליהם, וכן הוא בפוסקים. ואיתא בגמרא הטעם, דחד לא שכיח דדייר במקום הגוי, משום דגויים חשוד אשפיכות דמים. אבל תרי, שכיחי דדיירי, וחדו חכמים שפא ילמוד ממעשיו, ומשום הכי, אסרו עליו עד שישפור רשותו.

Question 2: **Also, why at the beginning of the Mishnah did [the Tanna] say "bad" [*ra*] [רע] and at the end he said "wicked" [*rasha*] [רשע]?**

Question 3: The Toldot Shimshon will also discuss how abandoning belief in Divinely-ordained disaster is connected to the rest of the Mishnah.

Also other details, that are explained by what is brought in tractate Eruvin, chapter 6, "One who resides," that regarding two Israelites who dwell with a non-Jew in one courtyard, the non-Jew [renders it] prohibited for them [to carry from their respective dwellings to the courtyard or vice versa, unless they rent the non-Jew's rights in the courtyard].⁶ Thus it is in the rulings of the rabbinic decisors.⁷ The reason brought in the Gemara, is that for one Jew, it's not common to live in the non-Jew's place, because with the presence of non-Jews, there would be the fear of spilling blood, i.e., that the non-Jew would kill the Jew. But with two Jews, it is common to live together, and the sages felt lest [the Jew] learn from the deeds of [the non-Jews], and because of this, they forbade [the Jew] to carry from his dwelling to the courtyard or vice versa, until he would rent [the non-Jew's] rights.

ולכו הנהיר הפנא, הרחק משכן רע, שאם יהיה אדם אחד שמבקש לדור עם הגוי, והוא לבדו אינו רוצה לדור שם, מפני ראת הגוי שלא יתרגנו, ומבקש ממך שתדור עמו, "לא-תאבה . . . ולא תשמע", ובזה תגרום שגם חברך יתרחק ממנו. ולפיכך אמר "הרחק", ולא "התרחק".

Therefore, the Tanna warned, "stay away from a bad neighbor." For if one man requests to dwell with a non-Jew, and he doesn't want to dwell there alone because of the non-Jew, so that he shouldn't kill him, and requests from you that you should dwell with him, do not assent or listen.⁸ By doing so, your friend too will distance himself from him. Therefore, it says, "stay away," and not "distance yourself." I.e., as discussed below, Rabbi Yossef in Chapter II, Mishnah 9 teaches that you should "distance yourself" from dwelling with a non-Jew. The focus of this Mishnah, though, is that by refusing to join a fellow Jew in his desire to dwell with a non-Jew, you are effectively telling him "stay away." This then, is the answer to Question 1, as to why "stay away" is in the active *hiphil* form, and not the reflexive *hitpael* form.

⁶ Eruvin 62a.

⁷ Rambam on Eruvin 2:10; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 382:10.

⁸ Deut. 13:9.

וְלֹא דֵי שֵׁיזֵשׁ לָהּ לְהִתְרַחֵק מִלְדוֹר בְּקִבְעוֹת בְּשִׁכּוֹנַת הַגּוֹי, דְּמִסְתַּמָּא הוּא רַע, אֲלֵא אֲפִילוּ לְהִתְחַבֵּר עִמּוֹ בְּאַיְזָה עֶסֶק פְּרָטִי. וְאֲפִילוּ אֵינּוּ רַע אֲלֵא רְשָׁע, עַל דְּרַךְ שְׂאֲמָרוּ ז"ל עַל פְּסוּק "אֹי לְרְשָׁע רַע", דְּיֵשׁ רְשָׁע רַע, וְיֵשׁ רְשָׁע שְׂאֵינּוּ רַע. וּבִפְרָק ז' דְּסִנְהֶדְרִין דִּף ס"ג אָמַר אַבּוּהָ דְּשִׁמוּאֵל, אֲסוּרוֹ לְאַדָּם שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה שׁוֹתְפוֹת עִם הַגּוֹי, שְׂמָא יִתְחַיֵּיב לוֹ שְׁבוּעָה, וְנִשְׁבַּע בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה שְׁלוֹ, וְהַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָה "לֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל-פִּיךָ". וּבִפְרָק ד' דְּמַגְלָה דִּף כ"ח, תִּיִּתִי לִי דְלֹא עֲבָדִי שׁוֹתְפוֹת בְּהַדִּי גוֹי. וְכִתְבוּ הַתּוֹסְפוֹת, אֲפִילוּ בְּעִנְיָן שְׂאֵינּוּ יָכוֹל לְבוֹא לִידֵי שְׁבוּעָה. וְהָר"ן כְּתַב בְּפְרָק קַמָּא דְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה, אֲפִילוּ אֵינּוּ רְגִיל הַגּוֹי לִישְׁבַּע בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה וְכו'.

Question 2 asked about the distinction between “staying away from a bad neighbor” and “not attaching oneself to the wicked.”

It’s not enough that one must distance himself from dwelling permanently in the neighborhood of the non-Jew who is obviously bad, i.e., who may cause physical harm to a Jew. But one must not allow himself even to connect with him in some private business. This is true even if he is not bad but wicked, in the way that [the rabbis] of blessed memory said on the verse, “Woe to the bad wicked one.”⁹ They asked, “Is there a wicked man who is bad and is there one who is not bad? Rather, [one who is] bad toward Heaven and bad toward people is a bad wicked person; [and one who is] bad toward Heaven and not bad toward people is a wicked person who is not bad.”¹⁰ I.e., as they are used here, the words “bad” and “wicked” have different implications. There are laws between man and G-d, and laws between man and his fellow man. One who violates the laws between man and G-d is wicked. If he also violates the laws between man and his fellow man, he is a bad wicked one.

Also, in the seventh chapter of tractate Sanhedrin page 63b, Shmuel’s father said, “It is prohibited for a person to enter [into] a partnership with a gentile, lest [their joint ventures lead them to quarrel, and his gentile partner] will be obligated to take an oath to him, and he will take an oath in [the name of] his [object of] idol worship; and the Torah states: ‘Neither let it be heard out of your mouth’ [which includes causing a gentile to take an oath in the name of an idol].”

Also, in the fourth chapter of tractate Megillah, page 28a, “Avuh bar Ihi and Minyamin bar Ihi [were talking]. One said: May [a blessing] come to me, for I never gazed at a non-Jew. And one said: May [a blessing] come to me, for I never formed a partnership with a non-Jew.”

The Tosafot write on Megillah 28a: “[A blessing should come to one who never forms a partnership with a non-Jew], even for a matter that cannot possibly lead to an oath.”

The Ran¹¹ wrote on the first chapter of tractate Avodah Zarah (22a), that one shouldn’t enter into a partnership with a non-Jew, even if he was not accustomed to swear in the name of an idol.

⁹ Isaiah 3:11.

¹⁰ Kiddushin 40a.

¹¹ Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven (the “Ran”) (1320–76), Spanish Talmudist.

ומשום הכי, אמר התנא, ואל תתחבר לגוי, שהרי הוא רשע, אף על פי שאינו רשע רע, שלא ישבע בעבודת זרה. עם כל זה, לא תתחבר עמו בשום שותפות, שמא תלמד ממעשיו.

Because of this, said the Tanna, do not attach yourself to the non-Jew, for he is wicked.

G-d gave seven laws to all men, before He gave laws specifically to the Jews. These are known as the Noachide laws, and include the law not to worship idols, and not to take G-d's Name in vain. This discussion about non-Jews as being wicked should not be taken to include those righteous gentiles who faithfully observe the Noachide laws. Rather, it is talking specifically about an idolator, who is "bad toward Heaven," violating the first of the Noachide laws. One should not attach himself to such an idolator, **even if he is not a bad wicked one, who does not take an oath in [the name of] his [object of] idol worship.** I.e., even though he is an idolator, and thus wicked, he is sensitive enough to appreciate that if he were to take an oath in the name of idol worship, it would be abhorrent to his Jewish neighbors. Thus, he abstains from doing so, and while being wicked, i.e., being bad toward Heaven by being an idolator, he is not a bad wicked one, i.e., he is not bad toward his fellow man.

With all this, don't become attached to him because of a partnership, lest you will learn from his actions.

ואף על גב דבפרק ב' דשבת אמרינו, שמואל לא עבר אלא במכר דאית ביה גוי, דשטנא, בתרי אומי לא שליט. שפירא מלאן דלפעמים מותר להתחבר עם הגוי, עם כל זה אל תתקשר מן הפורענות, שהרי אם אתה חייב למקום, אף פשתהיה עם הגוי, לא יועיל לך, שגם יונה היה בספינה עם הנכרים, ולא הועילו לו כלום, ש"האגיה חשבה להשבר". ודוקא שמואל שהיה צדיק, היה יכול לעשות כן אצל אדם אחר, לא.

However, in the second chapter of tractate Shabbat (32a), it is said: "Shmuel would only cross in a ferry if there was a non-Jew in it. He said: Satan does not have dominion over two nations [simultaneously]." Question 3 asked about the connection between not abandoning belief in Divinely-ordained disaster and the rest of the Mishnah. It appears from here that sometimes it is permissible to be attached to a non-Jew, nevertheless, don't discount the possibility of disaster happening if you do this, for if you are in debt to the Omnipresent, even if you will be with a non-Jew, it won't help you. For even Jonah was in a boat with the non-Jews, and they didn't help him at all by their presence, for "the ship was in danger of breaking up." Also, it is precisely because Shmuel was a righteous man, that he was able to do this, but another man is not allowed to do so.

ואי אפֿשֿר לומר, שִׁפְנוּנַת הַסַּנָּא הִיא לְהַנְהִיר אֶת הָאָדָם שִׁיתְרַחֵק מִכָּל מִין שָׂכֵן רַע, דָּאֵי הֲכִי, קִשְׁיָא הָא דְתַנְי לְמִזְן בְּפִרְק ב' אִיזוּ הִיא דְרַךְ רַעָה שִׁיתְרַחֵק מִמֶּנָּה הָאָדָם, ר' יוֹסֵי אוֹמֵר, שָׂכֵן רַע. דְּמַהוּ הַחִידוּשׁ שֶׁהַשְּׂמִיעָנוּ ר' יוֹסֵי, אִם כִּבְר לְמַדְנֵנוּ זֶה מִנְמַאי הָאֲרַבְלֵי שָׂקְדָם לֹא כַּמָּה דוֹרוֹת. אֶלָּא נִדְאֵי צָרִיךְ לומר, שֶׁנִּמְאֵי הָאֲרַבְלֵי דְתַנְי הֲרַחֵק מִשָּׂכֵן רַע, וְלֹא תַנְי הֲתַרַחֵק, רוּחַ אַחֲרַת הַיְתָה אִתּוֹ כַּנ"ל, דְּמִיִּירֵי בְּשָׂכֵן רַע פְּרָטִי, וּמִשׁוּם הֲכִי סְמִיךְ לִיה נֶאֱל תַּתְּחַבֵּר לְרַשָּׁע וְכו'. וְגַם זֶה רַאָּה מְכַרְעַת, שֶׁכָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתְּנָאִים הִלְלוּ בָּאוּ קִשְׁוֹרִים וְצִמּוּדִים בְּנִפְתּוּלֵי אֱלֹהִים, וּבְזֶה הֵנִיחַ מְקוֹם לר' יוֹסֵי הִבָּא אַחֲרָיו, לְהוֹדִיעָנוּ חוֹבַת הַרְיַחוּק מִכָּל מִין שָׂכֵן רַע.

It's impossible to say that the intent of the Tanna was to warn the man that he should distance himself from any kind of bad neighbor. For if so, a difficulty is that it is taught later, in the second chapter, Mishnah 9, Rabban Yochanan taught, "Which is the bad path from which a man should distance himself? . . . Rabbi Yosseï said, a bad neighbor."

So what is the novelty that we hear from Rabbi Yosseï in Chapter II, Mishnah 9, if we already learned this in our current Mishnah from Nittai the Arbelite, who preceded him by several generations?

Rather, it's certainly necessary to say, that Nittai the Arbelite, who taught "stay away [harchek] [הֲרַחֵק] from a bad neighbor," and he didn't teach, "distance yourself" [hitrachek] [הִתְרַחֵק], which has a different sense, as discussed above, that it's talking about connecting with a bad neighbor in some private business. Because of this, [the Tanna] places this instruction near the instruction, "do not become attached to the wicked." This, too, is decisive evidence, that all these words of the Tannas came connected and attached to "the bonds of G-d,"¹² and in this he made room for Rabbi Yosseï who came after him, to inform us of the duty of staying away from any kind of bad neighbor.

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¹² Gen. 30:8.