

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter I – Mishnah 15

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

Shammai used to say: Make your [study of the] Torah a fixed [practice]; speak little, but do much; and receive all men with the expression of a pleasant countenance.

יש לדקדק, למה אמר "תורתך", הנה לו לומר, "עשה התורה קבע". ועוד, מהו "בסבר"? ומהו "את כל"? הנה לו לומר, "והוי מקבל האדם בפנים יפות". ומה היתה פונת השלם הזה במוסרים אלו.

Question 1: **We need to check: Why does it say, “your [study of the] Torah”? He should have said, “Make [the study of] Torah a fixed [practice].**

Question 2: Why did he say, “speak little, but do much”?

Question 3: **Also, what is this “expression”?** He should have said, “Receive all men with a pleasant countenance.”

Question 4: **Also, what is this “all [men]”?** He should have said, “Receive men with a pleasant countenance.”

What was the complete intention of these ethical teachings?

והאמת יורה דרכו, כי כבר כתבנו במשנה הקודמת, שהלל ושמאי לא נחלקו אלא על שלושה דברים בלבד, כדאמרין בפירק קמא דשבת דף ט"ו, ושמאי קבע מוסרים אלו, לפי סברתו באלו השלושה דברים דוקא.

“The truth instructs its [own] path,”¹ as we already wrote in the previous Mishnah, that Hillel and Shammai disagreed only on three things, as it is said in the first chapter of tractate Shabbat, page 15a, and that Shammai established these ethical teachings according to his understanding of these three things.²

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¹ Chiddushei Ramban on Shabbat 74b; Sefer HaChinukh 456:2; perhaps derived from Micah 4:2 or Ps. 25:12.

² Hundreds of disputes developed between the schools of Shammai and Hillel, but the masters themselves only differed on three matters during their lifetimes.

והמתלוקת האחת, איתא בריש מסכת נדה, שמאי אומר, כל הנשים דניין שעטן. והלל אומר, מפקידה לפקידה, ואפילו לזמנים הרבה. ובגמרא שם דף ג', דקאמר ליה הלל לשמאי, אין, טעמא קאמרתי, דאם איתא דנהיה דם, מעיקרא הנה אחי, ומיהו עשה סיג לזבירה, דמאי שנא מכל התורה כולה דעבדינו סיג. אומר ליה, אם כן, בטלת בגות ישראל מפרה ורביה. והלל, מפרה ורביה מי קאמינא, לטהרות הוא דקאמינא. ושמאי, לטהרות נמי לא, דאם כן, לבו נוקפו ופורש. עד כאן.

One disagreement is brought at the beginning of tractate Niddah:

[Shammai] **says:** For **all women** [who do not have a fixed menstrual cycle], **their time is sufficient.** [I.e., their ritual impurity begins at the moment they noticed the flow of blood. They don't have to worry that perhaps it began earlier.]

Hillel says: From examination to examination. [I.e., she should assume she was ritually impure from the last time she examined herself], **and** [this is the law] **even** [if the last examination was] **several days** [earlier]. [Any ritually pure item with which she came in contact in the interim becomes ritually impure.]

- Mishnah Niddah 1:1; Niddah 2a

In the Gemara there, page 3b:

Hillel is saying to Shammai: Yes, you state the reason [for your opinion] **that if it is so that there was** [any menstrual] **blood** [previously], **it would have come** [out] **at the outset.** **Nevertheless,** [you should] **enact a safeguard for your statement** [and render her retroactively impure], **as in what** [way is this case] **different from the rest of the entire Torah, where** [the Sages] **enact safeguards?**

[Shammai] **said to** [Hillel]: **If so** [i.e., if she is considered impure retroactively as a safeguard], **you will have caused the Jewish women to be derelict in** [the mitzvah to] **be fruitful and multiply.** [If a woman is always deemed retroactively impure, she and her husband might abstain from engaging in sexual intercourse out of fear that she is already impure even if she has not yet experienced bleeding.]

And [how does] **Hillel** [respond]? [Although I rule that she is retroactively impure] **did I say** [that she is forbidden to her husband and must therefore abstain] **from** [the mitzvah to] **be fruitful and multiply? I said** [only] **that** [she renders impure any] **ritually pure** [items that she touched].

And [how would] **Shammai** respond? **Even** [a safeguard that renders] **ritually pure** [items impure should] **not** [be imposed], **for if so,** [the] **heart** [of a scrupulous husband might] **strike him and he** [would] **separate** [from her, out of fear that she is impure].

- Niddah 3b

והנה הלל במתלוקת זה הנה רוצה לעשות סניג, אבל סניג זה לא הנה כולל וקבע, שהרי לבעלה לא הנה יכול לעשות סניג זה, משום בטול פרנה ורבנה, אלא לטהרות ונוקא. ושמאי לא רצה בנה הסניג, דהואיל שלבעלה אי אפשר לעשותו, משום בטול פרנה ורבנה, גם לטהרות לא עבדינו ליה, דילמא בהכי נמי אתי למבטל מפרנה ורבנה, דלבו נוקפו ופורש. ומשום הכי, הנהיר שמאי הנהון, "עשה תורתך קבע", הסניגים שהם תורתך ממש, דהיינו גדרות וסניגים שאמה רוצה לגזור, יש לה לינהר שיהיו קבועים וכוללים בכל הצדדים. ואם יש צד אחד שאינם יכולים להקבע בו, אין אמה יכול לחפש תורה זו וסניג זה.

Here, Hillel in this dispute wanted to enact a safeguard. But this safeguard was not included and made permanent, for [a woman's] husband could not enact this safeguard, because of the dereliction of [the mitzvah to] be fruitful and multiply. Rather, only specifically ritually pure [items are rendered impure].

Shammai didn't want this safeguard, as since it was forbidden for [a woman's] husband to enact it, because of the dereliction of [the mitzvah to] be fruitful and multiply, then also in terms of rendering impure the ritually pure, one shouldn't enact it. For if it were enacted, perhaps in this way he'll come to the cancellation of [the mitzvah to] be fruitful and multiply, for if so, [the] heart [of a scrupulous husband might] strike him and he [would] separate [from her, out of fear that she is impure].

Because of this, Shammai the elder warned, "Make your [study of the] Torah a fixed [practice]," the safeguards that are literally your Torah, which are the fences and safeguards that you want to enact. You should be careful that they are fixed and perfected from all sides, if there is one side which is not able to enact the safeguard, you are not able to create this teaching and safeguard.

This answers Question 1, why Shammai said "Make your [study of the] Torah a fixed [practice]." If a rabbi wants to create a safeguard to prevent violation of a Torah law, it is critical to consider all implications of that safeguard, and to ensure that the safeguard won't lead to harmful unintended consequences.

והמתלוקת השניה, שמאי אומר, מקב לחלה. והלל אומר, מקבנים. וכתב התוספות יום טוב ריש מסכת עדיות בשם הראב"ד, וזה לשונו, יש לסמוך טעם דבריהם, על מה שאמר הכתוב "ראשית ערסתכם חלה תרימו" וכו', וכמה עיסתכם, כדי עיסת מדבר, "והעמר עשרית האיפה" וכו'. והלל סבר, משום דאיפה שמונה עשר קבין, ועשרית מלבר, היינו שני קבין, משום הכי, באותו שיעור צריך להפריש חלה. ושמאי סבר, דצריך שתי חלות לעומר, שהיו עושין ממנו שתי אכילות, אחת בבקר ואחת בערב, ושיעור אכילה אחת חשיב שמאי עיסת מדבר, עכ"ל.

As for the second disagreement, Shammai says, "[Dough] of a kav [or more is subject to the law of] challah." And Hillel says: "Of two kavim or more."³ The Tosfot Yom Tov writes at the beginning of tractate Eduyot (1:2) in the name of the Ra'avad, and this is his language:

³ Mishnah Eduyot 1:2.

We can rely upon the reason for their words, on what Scripture says, “When you enter the Land to which I am taking you, and you eat of the bread of the Land, you shall set some aside as a gift to the L-rd, **the first of your dough you shall set aside as a gift.**”⁴

How much is “your dough”? As the amount of the dough of the wilderness. “The *omer* is a tenth of an *ephah*” (Ex. 16:36).⁵

Hillel explains, because an *ephah* is 18 *kavim*, and a tenth of this amount is two *kavim*. This is the amount from which one must take challah.

Shammai explains, that two challahs were required for the *omer*, as they ate twice from it, once in the morning and once at night. As for the amount used for one meal, Shammai looks at the amount of dough used in the wilderness.⁶ [I.e., Shammai agrees that “your dough” is a tenth of an *ephah*, or two *kavim*, but he holds that is enough for two challahs, so that each challah is one *kav*. “The first of your dough,” then according to Shammai, is the amount for the morning challah, which is one *kav*.]

- Tosafot Yom Tov, Eduyot 1:2

וְלָרְמוֹז עַל סִבְרָתוֹ בְּמַחְלֻקַּת זֶה, אָמַר, אָמֹר מֵעֵט וְעָשָׂה הַרְבֵּה, שֶׁהָרִי בְּכָאֵן הַפְּתוּב דִּיבַר מֵעֵט, "רִאשִׁית עֲרֹסְתְּכֶם" דְּמִשְׁמַע כָּל הָעוֹמֵר, שֶׁכֵּלּוּ גִקְרָא עִיסַת מִדְבָּר. וְאִף עַל פִּי כּוֹ, אֲנִי צָרִיכִים לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרְבֵּה, דִּהְיִינוּ לְסַלְקוֹ בְּשִׁמְי אֲכִילוֹת, כְּדִי שִׁיתַּרְבֵּה הַחַיִּיב שֶׁל הַסֻּלָּה. דְּמִסְתַּמָּא גַם הֵם הָיוּ מְסַלְקִים הָעוֹמֵר, חֲצָיו בְּבִקְרָ וְחֲצָיו בְּעֶרְב, וְהָיוּ עוֹשִׂים מְמַנּוּ שְׁתֵּי עִיסוֹת. וְזֶהוּ אָמֹר מֵעֵט וְעָשָׂה הַרְבֵּה, שְׂאֵם אֲתָה אוֹמֵר מִקֵּב לְסֻלָּה שֶׁהוּא שִׁיעוֹר מוֹעֵט, תְּבֵא לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרְבֵּה שֶׁתַּפְרִישׁ הַסֻּלָּה אֶפִּילוֹ מֵעֵסָה שֶׁל קַב אֶחָד לְכַד.

To hint at his opinion in this dispute, he said, “speak little, but do much,” for here the Scripture speaks a little, “the first of your dough you shall set aside as a gift,” which means the entire *omer*, for all of it is called “the dough of the wilderness.” Nevertheless, we need to do much, which is to divide it into two portions, in order to expand the obligation of the challah, that obviously they would also divide the *omer*, half for the morning and half for the evening, and they made from it two loaves. This is the meaning of “speak little, but do much,” that if you say “[Dough] of a *kav* or more is subject to the law of challah,” as Shammai says, which is a small quantity, you will come to do much, which is to take challah even from dough of only one *kav*.

⁴ Num. 15:18–20.

⁵ Eruvin 83b.

⁶ In addition to Tosafot Yom Tov for Eduyot 1:2, this appears in Tosafot for Shabbat 15a.

והמשפילים יזוהו בקוהר הרקיע בסוד המשנה הזו, הלא היא פתובה על ספר הישר בדירוש הרב הקדוש זכרוננו לחיי העולם הבא, שהחלה היינו הפלה העליונה, שהיא שם ב"ן, ונוטלת שני קבין, דהיינו קב חרובין של זמן הקדום, וקב טהור של מילואי ע"ב ס"ג מ"ה. וכנגד שתי בחינות אלו שהם שני קבין, פסק הלל שאז חייב בחלה, כיון שפכר יש הקב האחד של חרובין, ונוסף עליו קב השני הטהור, הרי נתחייב בחלה. אבל שמאי סובר, שפיון שיש קב אחד, פכר יש בו רמז אל הקב הטהור, ודי בנה, עכ"ל. וזהו ממש אמור מעט ונעשה הרבה, שפיונותינו ליתן לה גם הקב השני, אף על פי שאנו אומרים, "מקב" לחלה לבד.

The Toldot Shimshon now considers a Kabbalistic view of Hillel and Shammai's dispute of one *kav* vs two *kavim*. **The Kabbalists⁷ will warn according to the Heavenly Zohar about the esoteric secret of this Mishnah. For isn't it written about the midrashic work *Sefer HaYashar*⁸ in the explanations of the holy rabbi, the Arizal,⁹ may he be remembered for life in the World to Come, that the *challah* [חלה] is representative of the supernal bride [פלה] [kallah], which is the Name of ב"ן [52], one of the four full spellings of the letters of the Tetragrammaton. This is the spelling ו"ד ה"ו ה"ה, having a Gematria of 52.**

She takes two *kavs*. One is a *kav charuvim* [a *kav* of carobs] of the earliest time, referencing the teaching that the world was fed because of the holiness of Chanina ben Dosa, for whom a *kav* of carobs was sufficient to sustain him for an entire week.¹⁰ The root of the word *charuvim*, carobs, can also be interpreted as “destruction,” and in Kabbalistic terms, *kav charuvim* refers to the kings of the early worlds. G-d created these worlds only with the attribute of strict justice, and they were destroyed before He created this world, to which was joined the attribute of mercy.¹¹

The second is a pure *kav* of the other three full spellings of the Tetragrammaton, namely, the Name of ע"ב [72], having a spelling of ו"ד ה"ו ה"ה, with a Gematria of 72, the Name of ס"ג [63], having a spelling of ו"ד ה"ו ה"ה, with a Gematria of 63, and the Name of מ"ה [45], ו"ד ה"ו ה"ה, with a Gematria of 45. When only the added letters are considered, i.e., subtracting the *pashut*, the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, then the Names of ע"ב, ס"ג, and מ"ה will have remaining Gematrias of $72-26=46$, $63-26=37$, and $45-26=19$. The sum of these, $46+37+19=102$, which is the Gematria of קב, *kav*.

Against these two aspects, which are two *kavs*, Hillel held that then one is obligated to take *challah*, since there was already one *kav charuvim* from the earliest times, and the second pure *kav* was added to it, and thus with two *kavim*, one was obligated in *challah*.

But Shammai holds, that since there was one *kav* from the earliest times, there was already within it a hint of the pure *kav*, and this was sufficient to require the taking of *challah*. This is precisely the meaning of “speak little, but do much,” answering Question 2. Our intent

⁷ Literally, “the enlightened ones,” the *maskilim*, but this does not refer to the later *maskilim* who turned away from Torah, but refers to Kabbalists.

⁸ The *Sefer haYashar* was published in Venice in 1625. While its introduction claims an earlier printing in Naples in 1552, no evidence has been found of the earlier printing.

⁹ As taught by his principal student, Chaim Vital, *Sefer Etz Chaim*, Gate 19, chapter 3.

¹⁰ Berachot 17b.

¹¹ Per the *Sefer Etz Chaim*, this is taught in the *Idra* and in the *Sifra d'Tzniuta*, both of which are appended to the *Zohar*.

is to give her also the second *kav*, even though we say, [dough] of a *kav* alone is [subject] to [the law of] challah.

והמתחלוקת השלישית, הלל אומר, מלא הין מים שאובים פוסלים את המקנה. שמאי אומר, תשעה קבין. וחקמים אומרים, לא כדברי זה ולא כדברי זה, עד שבאו שני גרדנים משער האשפות שבירושלים, והעידו משום שמעיה ואבטליון, ושלושה לוגין מים שאובים, פוסלים את המקנה, וקיימו חקמים את דבריהם.

The third dispute:

Hillel says: “A *hin* full of drawn water renders the mikvah unfit.” And Shammai says: “Nine *kavs*.” But the Sages say: “Neither according to the opinion of this one nor according to the opinion of this one.” But when two weavers from the Dung Gate, which is in Jerusalem, came and testified in the name of Shemaiah and Avtalion, “Three *logs* of drawn water render the mikvah unfit,” the Sages confirmed their statement.

- Eduyot 1:3

ופרש רש"י התם בשבת, שהטעם שהוזכר שם אומנותם ושם מקומם, ללמדך שאל ימנע אדם עצמו מבית המדרש אפילו שעה אחת, שאין אומנות פחותה מגרדי, ואין שער בירושלים פחות משער האשפות, והקריעו בעדותן כל חכמי ישראל, עכ"ל. ועל פירוש צריך לומר, שמחמת עדות זה חזרו בהם אף שמאי והלל מסבירתם הראשונה, וזהו שדייק רש"י לומר, והקריעו בעדותן כל חכמי ישראל. וכן בדיון, שהרי שמאי והלל קבלו משמעיה ואבטליון, וכשבאו אלו והעידו משום שמעיה ואבטליון, בנדאי שלא חלקו על רבותם.

Rashi explained there in tractate Shabbat (15a), that the reason that the title of the occupation and the name of the place was mentioned, is to teach you that a person should not prevent himself from attending the study house even one hour.¹² The reason is that there is no occupation lower than a weaver, and there is no gate in Jerusalem lower than the Dung Gate, and yet these men knew the halacha, because of the time they spent in the study house, and all the wise men of Israel decided according to their testimony.

You necessarily need to say, that because of this testimony, even Shammai and Hillel backtracked from their initial opinions. This is why Rashi was precise to say, “and all the wise men of Israel decided according to their testimony.” This is the law, for Shammai and Hillel received the Torah from Shemaiah and Avtalion,¹³ and when these weavers came and testified in the name of Shemaiah and Avtalion, it’s certain that [Shammai and Hillel] wouldn’t dispute their teachers as to the halacha.

¹² As Rabbi Yonatan is quoted as saying in Shabbat 83b.

¹³ Pirkei Avot 1:10–12.

ויבנגד זה אמר שמאי, נהגוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות, ואפילו שיהיה אדם גרוע שיעיד איזה דין או סברא מפי חכם גדול, יש לה להזור מסברתה בשמחה. "בסבר" לשון סברא, "בפנים יפות" בשמחה רבה. ומשום שאלו שהעידו, היו בהם שני דברים לגריעותא בנאמר לעיל, משום הכי קאמר "את כל", שהם שני רבויים.

Corresponding to this, Shammai said, “receive all men with the expression of a pleasant countenance.” In Question 3, asked why our Mishnah didn’t simply say “Receive all men with a pleasant countenance.” The answer is that **even if an inferior man testifies about some law or opinion according to a great Torah scholar, one should happily turn from his own opinion** and follow the correct ruling. That is, the word **בסבר** [*be sever*] [“with the expression”] is hinting at the **language of סברא** [*s’vara*] [“opinion”]. Similarly, **“with a pleasant countenance” [means] with great happiness.**

We also asked, in Question 4, why our Mishnah said “receive all men,” instead of simply saying, “receive men.” The answer is **because these who testified had two inferior things about them**, viz, having the lowly occupation of being weavers, and having lived in the vicinity at the Dung Gate, **as mentioned above. Because of this, it says “all men,” for there are two plurals.** I.e., “men” alone is plural, but saying “all men” stresses that there is a plurality. This is parallel to the fact that the weavers at the Dung Gate had not just one inferior thing about them, but two inferior things.

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