

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter IV – Mishnah 6

רבי ישמעאל בנו אומר, הלמד על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות.

Rabbi Yishmael, his son,¹ said: He who learns in order to teach, it is granted to him to learn and to teach. But he who learns in order to practice, it is granted to him to learn and to teach, to observe and to practice.

"מִהָ הָאָדָם שִׁבּוֹא אַחֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר-כָּבַד עָשׂוּהוּ", וְאִיךָ יִתְכַנֵּן שְׂאָדָם יַעֲשֶׂה תְנָאי עַל מֵה שֶׁכָּבַד הוּא מְחַוֵּיב וּמוֹשְׁבֵעַ וְעוֹמֵד מֵהָר סִינַי, לְלַמּוֹד וּלְלַמֵּד לְשִׁמּוֹר וְלַעֲשׂוֹת. וְעוֹד, מֵאֵי שְׂנָא רִישָׁא, דְּמִסְפִּיקוּן בְּיָדוֹ כְּפִי תְנָאוֹ לְחֻדְיָהּ. וּמֵאֵי שְׂנָא סִפָּא, דְּמִסְפִּיקוּן בְּיָדוֹ יוֹתֵר מִכְּפִי תְנָאוֹ. וְעוֹד מֵה שֶׁדִּקְדָּקוֹ הַמְּפָרְשִׁים ז"ל, וְעֵינֵי בְּדַבְרֵיהֶם.

“For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.”² How is it possible for a person to make a condition on something for which he is already obligated and sworn to do and which has been in effect from Mount Sinai, viz, to learn, and to teach, to observe and to practice?

Also, what does the beginning of the Mishnah teach, that he is granted only his condition, i.e., to learn in order to teach? Also, what does the end of the Mishnah teach, that he is granted more than his condition, i.e., not only to learn in order to practice, but also to be able to teach and observe?

Also, what is it that the commentators of blessed memory noted, and see their words.³

וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר, דְּבִסוּף פְּרָק קָמָא דְּבָבָא קָמָא אַמְרִינוּ, קַיִים אַמְרִינוּ, לִימֵד לֹא אַמְרִינוּ. וּפְרִיךְ, וְהָא אָמַר מַר, גְּדוּל תְּלַמּוּד, שֶׁהַתְּלַמּוּד מְבִיא לִידֵי מַעֲשֶׂה. וְתִירֵץ, הָא לְמַגְמַר, הָא לְאַגְמוּרֵי. וּפְרַשׁ רַש"י, וְהָא אָמַר מַר וְכוּ', אֵלְמָא מַעֲשֶׂה עֲדִיף.

It can be said, that at the end of the first chapter of tractate Bava Kamma, it is said:

Regarding an ordinary Torah scholar, **we say: He fulfilled** [the Torah]. But **we do not say: He taught** [the Torah, which was a unique honor only said at the eulogy of King Hezekiah].

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¹ I.e., the son of Rabbi Yohanan ben Berokah.

² Eccl. 2:12.

³ E.g., Gershon Shaul Yom-Tov Lipmann ben Nathan ha-Levi Heller (c. 1579–1654), Bohemian rabbi and Talmudist, *Tosefet Yom-Tov* (1614–1617); and Rabbi Binyamin HaKohen (“Rabach”), *Avot Olam* (Venice, 1719).

[The Gemara] contradicted: **Didn't the Master say: Torah study is great because learning [Torah] leads to action [i.e., performance of mitzvot]?**

The solution is: This [statement] is about learning [the Torah for one's own sake, and] that [praise given to Hezekiah was] about teaching [others].

- Bava Kamma 17a

Rashi explained: “ ‘Didn't the Master say: [Torah study is great because learning leads to action]?’ [The intent of this question is:] That action is preferable.”

והקשו בתוספות, דבסוף פרק קמא דקידושין וכו', ואומר רבינו תם וכו' ומשני, הוה למגמר, הוה לאגמורי, דלימד לא אמרינו, דהוה נדאי עדיף, שמיביא את הרבים לידי מעשה כשמלמד. ועוד הביאו, שהשאלות לש להם גרסא אחרת ב"ש, ומשום הכי מפרשים, דליגמר נפשיה, תלמוד גדול, שמיביא לידי מעשה. אבל לאגמורי לאחרים, לא עדיף. עכ"ל. נמצא שלפי גרסת רבינו תם, הלימוד לאחרים עדיף מהמעשה. ולפי גרסת השאלות, המעשה יותר גדול מהלימוד לאחרים.

But the Tosafists question this understanding of Rashi:

Rabbeinu Tam⁴ asks **that at the end of the first chapter of tractate Kiddushin (40b & 41a), we extrapolate that learning is greater than action. . . .**

Rabbeinu Tam therefore explains as follows: “Didn't the Master say that learning leads to action? And since we say ‘he fulfilled,’ we are saying that he learned, because if he had not learned, how could he have fulfilled, as ‘learning leads to action? It has not yet occurred [to the Gemara] to distinguish between learning and teaching. **And [the Gemara] answers ‘that [unique praise given to King Hezekiah was] about teaching [the Torah to others]’** –[that ‘teaching’] is definitely not said [as a eulogy], as [teaching] is definitely preferable [to action], as it leads many people to action, when one teaches them.”

[Also, the Tosafists] bring that the *She'iltot* have a different reading of the Gemara, [not having, ‘We say [this one] fulfilled, [but] we do not say: He taught’]. Because of that [missing text], [the *She'iltot*] interprets [the Gemara] that for oneself, learning is great, because it leads to action [i.e., action is greater than learning], but teaching to others is not preferable [to action].⁵

- Tosafot for Bava Kamma 17a

Thus, we find that according to the text of Rabbeinu Tam, teaching others is preferable to action, but according to the text of the *She'iltot*, action is greater than teaching others.

⁴ Jacob ben Meir (1100–71) (“Rabbeinu Tam”), one of leading French Tosafists, and a grandson of Rashi.

⁵ Achai Gaon (8th century, Babylon and Israel), *Sheiltot d'Rav Achai*, Lech Lecha, sheilta 7.

ויבנה המשנה מבארת, הלמד על מנת ללמד, דסבירא ליה כרבינו תם, דלימוד לאחרים הוא יותר עדיף מהמעשה, והולך ללמוד כדי להגיע אל מדה זו, ללמד לאחרים שהוא יותר חשוב ועדיף, על דרך, תחלת המעשה, סוף המעשה. מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, ומכל שכן שיזכה לשמור ולעשות, שהוא פחות מללמד לאחרים. ומאן דסבירא ליה פשאלתות, דמעשה יותר עדיף מללמד לאחרים, והולך ללמוד כדי להגיע אל מדה זו להיות יודע לעשות, שאין בור ירא חטא וכו', מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, שהוא היותר פחות, ואחר כך יזכה גם לשמור ולעשות, שהוא היותר חשוב לפי סברתו.

By this, the Mishnah is explained: The first clause, “One who learned in order to teach,” is one whose opinion is like Rabbeinu Tam, that teaching others is more preferable than action. He goes to learn in order to achieve this level, to teach others, which in his view is more important and preferable, in the way “that which came first in planning was the last to be carried out.”⁶ It is granted to him to learn and to teach. Even more so, he will merit to observe and to practice, but it’s not mentioned, as he feels it is less crucial than to teach others.

The second clause is one who holds what the *She'iltot* held, that action is more preferable than to teach others. He goes to learn in order to arrive at this level to know how to act. That is, as Hillel said, “a fool does not fear sin, nor is an ignorant person pious.”⁷ It is granted to him to learn and to teach, which in his view is less important than action. Afterward, he will merit by them to observe and to practice, which is explicitly mentioned for his case, as it is more important according to his opinion.

ולפי שסברת רבינו תם מסתברא טפי, משום הכי לא קאמר המנא בבבא דרישא היפוכא דסיפא, מספיקין בידו לשמור ולעשות ללמוד [ו] ללמד, לפי שהדבר מבואר מעצמו, ואקדמיה נמי לסברא זו ברישא, והדר קתני אף הסברא של השאלות. משום דאי איכא מאן דסבירא ליה הכי, הואיל וכוונתו לטובה, משום הכי מספיקין בידו וכו', דרתמנא לבא בעי. אבל אין הכי נמי, שסברת רבינו תם היא עיקר, וכמו שפיתב הבית יוסף אורח חיים סימן ע', בשם הרא"ש ורבינו ירוקם.

As the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam is more reasonable, because of this, the Tanna of our Mishnah didn't state the first section as the opposite of the end, viz, he didn't say for the one who learns in order to teach, that “he is granted to observe and to practice, to learn and to teach.” That is because the matter is self-evident that he is granted to observe and to practice.

He also advanced this opinion of Rabbeinu Tam in the beginning of the Mishnah and then taught even the opinion of the *She'iltot*. Because if there is one who has this opinion, since his intent is for good, because of this, he is granted etc., for “the Merciful One desires the heart of man.”⁸ I.e., the Tanna wanted to cover both opinions.

But it is indeed so, that the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam is the fundamental law, as Rabbi Karo wrote in the Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim, siman 70:5, in the name of the Rosh⁹ and Rabbeinu Yerucham.¹⁰

⁶ Rabbeinu Gershon on Keritot 22b; Judah Halevi, Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet, *Kuzari* (1139-40) 3:73.

⁷ Pirkei Avot 2:6.

⁸ Zohar III:281b (Ki Tetzei 22:108).

⁹ Asher ben Jehiel (c. 1250–1327) (“the Rosh”).

¹⁰ Yerucham ben Meshullam (1290–1350) (“Rabbeinu Yerucham”).

ועוד יש לומר, דברישא דמספיקין בגידו ללמוד וללמד, לא איצטריך למתני "לשמור ולעשות", שְהרי הדבר מוכן מעצמו, שְפשהוּא מלמד לאחרים, בגדאי שְהוּא שומר ועושה. דאי לאו הכי, לא הִיהָ יָכוֹל ללמד, דקנימא לן אם הרב דומה למלאך ה' צבאות, יבקשו תורה מפיהו. ואם לאו, אל יבקשו תורה מפיהו. אַמְנָם בְּסִיפָא אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיִהְיֶה שומר ועושה, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לוֹ זְכוּת ללמד, ומשום הַכִּי תְנִי, מְסַפִּיקִין בְּגִדוֹ ללמוד וללמד לְשֹׁמֵר וְלַעֲשׂוֹת.

Also, it can be said, that at the beginning that he is granted to learn and to teach, it didn't need to teach "to observe and to practice," for the thing is self-evident, that when he teaches others, it is certain that he observes and practices. If this is not the case, he would not have been able to learn, for we hold, "If the rabbi is similar to an angel of the Lord of hosts, [perfect in his ways,] they should seek Torah from his mouth; but if not, they should not seek Torah from his mouth."¹¹ Indeed, at the end, it is possible that he would observe and to practice, and he would not have the merit to teach, and because of this it is taught, he is granted to learn and to teach, to observe and to practice.

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¹¹ Chagigah 15b.