

# Toldot Shimshon

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## Chapter V – Mishnah 13

אַרבע מדות בְּהוֹלְכֵי לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ. הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שָׂכָר הַלִּיכָה בְּיָדוֹ. עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שָׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה בְּיָדוֹ. הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֶסֶד. לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע.

[There are] four types among those who go to the study-house: (1) One who goes but does not act, the reward for his going is in his hand. (2) One who acts but does not go, the reward for his action is in his hand. (3) One who goes and acts is pious. (4) One who doesn't go and doesn't act is wicked.

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"הֵן רַבִּים עִתָּה עִם הָאָרֶץ" בְּעוֹנוֹת הַרְבִּים, שְׂאֵינָם הוֹלְכִים וְאֵינָם עוֹשִׂים, וְאֵין סִבְרָא לומר שִׁיְהִיו כּוֹלָם נִקְרָאִים רָשָׁעִים, כֹּל שְׂאֵינָם עוֹבְרִים עֲבִירוֹת, וְאֵיךְ פְּסִיק וְתַנִּי בְּסִיפָא, לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע. וְעוֹד, דְּהַפֵּךְ הַרְשָׁע שְׂיִיךְ לומר "הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה צְדִיק", וְלֹא חֶסֶד. וְעוֹד, דְּסִיפָא לֹא אֶהְדַּר לְרִישָׁא, דְּתַנִּי "אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי", זֶה "אֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ". וְקָשָׁה נְמִי אֲמַצְעִיתָא.

Question 1 addresses the fourth type listed: **“The ignorant public [*am ha'aretz*] are already so numerous,”<sup>1</sup> with the public’s *avonot*, intentional acts that arise out of their inability to control their desires, and we see that they don’t go to the study-house and they don’t act. But it’s unreasonable to say that they will all be called “wicked,” all of the public who don’t violate *aveirot*, a wrongdoing in which someone morally “passes over” his thoughts in order to not focus on his bad deeds. I.e., the population includes many ignoramuses who don’t go to the study-house, as they either don’t understand the importance of learning, or simply lack the education to learn Torah. But when they commit sins, it’s not out of rebellion against G-d, but because they can’t control their desires. They are aware they are sinning, and they don’t morally pass over their thoughts. Such a large group of people shouldn’t be called wicked. Thus, the Mishnah must be talking about someone else. How then, do you distinguish the numerous public from those that the Tanna is discussing and teach the ending of this Mishnah, “one who doesn’t go and doesn’t act is wicked”?**

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 5:5. “*Am ha'aretz*” literally translates to “people of the land,” but is taken as a euphemism for ignoramuses.

Question 2 addresses the third type listed: **Also**, in giving **the opposite of “wicked,”** the Tanna **needs to say “one who goes and acts is righteous,”** and not **“pious.”** Why does he instead say “pious”?

Question 3: **Also, the end of the Mishnah doesn’t follow the beginning, for** the beginning states “[There] are **four types among those who go to the study-house,**” but the Mishnah then only lists the first and third type as going, whereas the second and fourth are each **one who “does not go.”**

Question 4: **Also, the middle clause is difficult?** This apparently refers to the second type, “One who acts but does not go, the reward is in his hand.”

Question 5: What does the word “act” refer to? It can’t be related to behavior at the study-house, as the second and fourth cases involve men who do not go to the study-house. Is it related to learning in general, which can be done either at the study-house or at home? If so, how do we understand the first case, for if someone goes to the study-house, but instead of learning he spends his time daydreaming or gossiping, why should he receive a reward?

וְנִרְאָה לֹזֶמֶר, שֶׁהַתַּנָּא מֵיִירֵי בְּמִי שֶׁכָּבַר הַחֲזִיק בְּדֶרֶךְ כְּדֵי לֵילֵךְ לְבֵית הַמְדֻרָשׁ, וְהוּא רָאוּי לְקָדוֹ, וּבְאִמְצַע הַדֶּרֶךְ בָּאָה מִצְוָה לִידוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּוָקָא בְּזִמְן הַלִּיכְתּוֹ, שְׂאֵם יַעֲשֶׂנָה תְּבַטֵּל מִלֵּילָה לְבֵית הַמְדֻרָשׁ.

**[The Mishnah] appears to say, that the Tanna of our Mishnah is speaking of one who is already on his way to the study-house, and he deserves [a reward if he were to fulfill his objective and arrive at the study-house]. But in the middle of his trip, a mitzvah comes his way to perform, specifically at the time he is going to study, that if he does it, it will prevent him from going to the study-hall.** Thus, the answer to question 3 is that the Mishnah is listing four types of situations where a person sets out to go to the study-house, but while he arrives there in the first and third cases, he does not arrive there in the second and fourth cases. The answer to question 5 is that the “act” refers to the performance of the mitzvah that threatens to interrupt the man who has already set out on the way to the study-house.

וְהַשְּׁלֵטוֹן עָרוּף בְּיֹרְהָ דַעָה סִימָן רמ"ו פֶּסֶק בְּסַעֲיָר י"ח, וְזֶה לְשׁוֹנוֹ, תְּלַמּוּד תּוֹרָה שְׂקוּל כְּנִגְדָּ כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת, הִנֵּה לְפָנָיו עֲשִׂיית מִצְוָה וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, אִם אֶפְשָׁר לְמַצְוָה לְהַעֲשׂוֹת עַל יְדֵי אֲחֵרִים, לֹא יִפְסִיק תְּלַמּוּדוֹ. וְאִם לֹא, יַעֲשֶׂה הַמִּצְוָה, וְיִחְזֹר לְתוֹרָתוֹ. עב"ל.

**The Shulchan Aruch, in Yoreh Deah, siman 246, rules in se’if 18, and this is its language: “Studying Torah is equal to all the mitzvot. If one has before him the choice of doing a mitzvah and studying Torah, if it’s possible for the mitzvah to be done by others, he shouldn’t interrupt his study. But if not, he should do the mitzvah, and then return to his study.”**

וּלְזֶה אָמַר הַתַּנָּא, הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שְׂלֵא דָק שְׁפִיר אִם אַחֲרִים יַעֲשׂוּהָ אוֹ לֹא, וְהוּא הֵיךְ סוֹבֵר שְׂיַעֲשׂוּהָ אַחֲרִים, וְלֹא עֲשָׂאוּהָ. הַגַּם שְׂהַמְצָנָה לֹא נַעֲשִׂית, בְּשִׁבִיל הַלִּיכְתּוֹ, עִם כָּל זֶה, "שְׂכָר הַלִּיכָה בְּיָדוֹ", שְׂמַקְבֵּל שְׂכָר שְׁלָם, אֲפִילוּ עַל זְמַן הַהִלִּיכָה, אִף עַל פִּי שְׂבִאוֹתוֹ הַזְּמַן דְּנֻקָא נִתְבַּטְּלָה הַמְצָנָה. וּמְכַל שְׂכָן עַל הַלִּימוּד שְׂיַעֲשׂוּהָ אַחֵר כְּדֵי, שְׂאֵינוֹ עוֹד בְּזְמַן אוֹתָהּ הַמְצָנָה, שְׂפָכֵר עֵבֶר זְמַנָּה. וְעוֹד, שְׂשִׁקוּל נִגְד כָּל הַמְצוֹת.

**To this, the Tanna said, “(1) One who goes but does not act, the reward for his going is in his hand.” It’s not certain if others will do [the mitzvah] or not, but he is of the opinion that others will do it, and that he should not do it, even if the mitzvah is not done.**

**Because of his going to the study-hall, despite this fact that the mitzvah may not be done, “the reward for his going is in his hand.” That is, he will receive a complete reward, even for the time of his going, and even if during the same time the performance of the mitzvah is prevented, because he didn’t do it and others didn’t materialize to do it. Nevertheless, regarding the learning that he will do after passing on the mitzvah, which is after and not at the same time for which the mitzvah could have been performed, for the time has passed, that [learning of Torah] is equivalent to all the mitzvot.**

עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֶׂה בְּיָדוֹ. מִי שְׂעוֹשֶׂה הַמְצָנָה לְפִי שְׂסוֹבֵר שְׂאַחֲרִים לֹא יַעֲשׂוּהָ, וּבְשִׁבִיל זֶה אֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ לְבֵית הַמְדָרָשׁ, אֲפִילוּ הֵכִי, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֶׂה הַגְּדוֹל מִהַתְלַמּוּד בְּיָדוֹ. אִף עַל פִּי שְׂאִם הֵיךְ דְּנִיֵּק שְׂפִיר, הֵיךְ רוֹאֶה שְׂאַחֲרִים הִיוּ מְקַיְמִין אוֹתָהּ, וְהוּא הֵיךְ זְכוּל לִילֵךְ לְבֵית הַמְדָרָשׁ.

Question 4 found the second type to be difficult: “(2) **One who acts but doesn’t go, the reward for his action is in his hand.**” This is referring to **one who performs the mitzvah because his opinion is that others won’t do it, and because of this he doesn’t go to the study-house. Nevertheless, the reward for action that is greater than learning is in his hand.** But we just discussed above, for the first type, that learning Torah is equivalent to all the mitzvot. So how can one be rewarded for acting to perform the intervening mitzvah, when he foregoes Torah learning?

The rabbis have debated whether Torah study is greater or action is greater. Rabbi Tarfon said that action is greater. Rabbi Akiva said that Torah study is greater. The other sages present answered that Torah study is greater, [not on it’s own, but] because it leads to action.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there is a basis to argue one way or the other.

**Even though this was a good deduction on the man’s part, that he had to do the mitzvah himself, he should have seen that others would have performed [the mitzvah], and he would have been able to go to the study-house.**

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<sup>2</sup> Kiddushin 40b. See also Pirkei Avot 1:17, “Shimon, son [of Rabban Gamliel], used to say: ‘. . . Study is not the most important thing, but actions.’”

הולך ועושה, חסיד. דק שפיר ונזדרז לעשות שתיהן, נקרא חסיד, בשביל הדיוק ובשביל הגירוז. אי נמי, שלא הנה נמצא מי שיעשה אותה המצוה, והוא הנה צריך להתבטל מלמוד תורה כדי לעשותה, וטרח למצוא מי שיעשנה, כדי לילך לדרכו לבית המדרש כדי שלא להפסיד תורתו, ולקד נקרא חסיד.

Question 2 addressed the third type: “(3) **One who goes and acts is pious.**” This is very fine, for he hurries and does both the mitzvah and goes to the study-house. He is called pious, because of his exactness and because of his alacrity.

Alternatively, it could mean that a man was headed to the study-house and the opportunity arose to do a mitzvah. He didn’t immediately find one who would do this mitzvah, and he considered doing it himself, but realized that he couldn’t do both, so he would need to prevent his Torah study in order to do [the mitzvah]. Instead, he troubled himself to find someone who would do it, in order to go on his way to the study-house, in order that he shouldn’t lose his Torah. Therefore, he is called pious. I.e., he gets credit for the performance of the mitzvah, because he went out of his way to find someone to do it, and yet it was only a slight delay for him, so he was still able to go to the study-house, and he also gets credit for that.

לא הולך ולא עושה, רשע. מניח ההליכה בשביל לעשות המצוה, ואחר כך נתעצל ולא קיים המצוה, זה נקרא רשע, שפיון שהתחיל במצות הליכה לבית המדרש, ונזר כדי לעשות המצוה, ונתעצל ולא עשה, נקרא מזלזל בתלמוד ובמעשה, ולכן נקרא רשע, שאינו דומה לעם הארץ שאינו מתחיל כלל.

Finally question 1 addressed the fourth type: “(4) **One who doesn’t go and doesn’t act is wicked.**” He starts out heading to the study-house, but then the opportunity to do a mitzvah interrupts him. He takes a break from his walk to the study-house in order to do the mitzvah, but afterwards he becomes lazy and doesn’t do the mitzvah. This one is called “wicked,” for he began the mitzvah of walking to the study-house, but then turned from that to do the mitzvah, and then became lazy and didn’t do [the mitzvah]! He is considered one who wasted time both in learning and in action, and therefore he is called “wicked.”

He is not similar to the ignoramus (*am ha'aretz*), who did not even begin going to the study-house at all. He is worse than them, because he knew better. He knew the importance of learning Torah, and he had the capability to learn Torah in the study hall, but he failed to do so. In contrast, the ignoramus does not understand the importance of learning Torah, or is incapable of learning, and so he is not condemned for not going to the study hall.

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