



## Three Things

This week we begin *masechet Avot*. The first *Mishnah* opens:

*Moshe* received the *Torah* from *Sinai* and passed it to *Yehoshua*; and *Yehoshua* to the *zekeinim* (elders); and the *zekeinim* to the prophets; and the prophets passed it on to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: be deliberate in judgement, establish many students and make a fence for the *Torah*.

Previously (10(41)) we addressed the opening of the *Mishnah*. In this article we shall look at the substance of their teaching.

*Pirkei Avot* include teachings of the *Chachamim*, and generally begin with "[he] used to say". It is understood that these great Rabbis taught much more than that which was contained in the individual *Mishnah*. Nevertheless, these teaching were the motto or central message of these Rabbis<sup>1</sup>. How does this understanding of *Pirkei Avot* help us with this *Mishnah*, which appear to be the teaching of a group of people?

We shall present two explanations that understand that the message of this *Mishnah* was critical in the historical context in which it was taught.

The *Ruach Chaim* (second answer) explains that the capacity to retain the Oral laws was beginning to wane, threatening its transmission. It was only two generations later that the first irresolvable halachic question arose (*Chaggigah* 16a). Consequently, the first call to the people was "*havei metunim be'din*". Following *Rashi's* explanation of "*metunim*", the Men of the Great Assembly were instructing everyone to learn the *Torah* - the *denim* - thoroughly. They understood however that for the learning to be clear and fault-free, it needed to be

vocalised. The best way to know something thoroughly is when one is forced to teach it. Consequently, the second directive of establishing many students was part of the solving this problem. Finally, despite learning fastidiously, fences still need to be erected to prevent transgressing any sins.

The *Ruach Chaim* summarise that to deal with the threat of the day, the Men of the Great Assembly demanded a three-pronged attack – thought, speech and action. Thought in its clear study; speech in its teaching and action, by establishing a structure to guide one on the path of the *Torah*.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* also explains that these teachings were relevant to the generation in which they were taught. The *Tifferet Yisrael* however explains that these were three different teachings taught in three different generations.

*Yehoshua* witnessed how three thousand *halachot* were forgotten during the days of mourning *Moshe*. Consequently, he was warning the judge to be extra cautious when passing judgements. While it is true that doubts regarding biblical laws are resolved by ruling stringently, for monetary disputes, a stringency for one party results in a leniency for the other. The *zekeinim* who saw the end of prophecy, expressed the urgency to increase the number of students, so through the study they may find something of a prophetic nature. Finally, the prophets, who saw that *Bnei Yisrael* were to be scattered amongst the nations, prepared them to weather the external influences by constructing fences - the rabbinic enactments that stand to ensure the keeping of all *mitvot*.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ethics from Sinai 1:2.

**Revision Questions**

עבודה זרה די' ייב – ה' ייב

- What was the *ma'aseh* that occurred in *Beit She'an* with the someone who was *metaher* the wine of a *nochri*? (די' ייב) (ה' א')
- If one was hired to produce *yayin nesech* what is the status of his salary? (ה' א')
- In what situation would the income received from hiring out a donkey be forbidden? (ה' א')
- How much *yayin nesech* must fall on dates and figs to make them *assur*? (ה' ב')
- Explain the *machloket* between *Tana Kama* and *R' Shimon ben Gamliel* regarding a *nochri* who is transporting jars of wine without a Jew being present. (ה' ג')
- If one leaves his jug of wine with a *nochri* in his store and is not present at all times is that wine *mutar*? (ה' ד')
- If one was eating with a *nochri* at a table, in what instance would the wine that is placed on the *dulbaki* (side table): (ה' ה')
  - *Assur*?
  - *Mutar*?
- If a troop of *goyim* enter a city at a time of peace which barrels of wine are forbidden? (ה' ו')
- Is a Jewish professional allowed to collect his *sechar* from barrels of *yayin nesech*? (ה' ז')
- If one is pouring *yayin nesech* from *kli* to *kli* what is the status of the *kli*: (ה' ח')
  - being poured out?
  - being poured into?
- What is the *shiur* of *yayin nesech* needed to make a mixture of *yayin nesech* and another liquid *assur*? (ה' ט')
- Name five items that are *assur bekol shehu*? (ה' י')
- How would *R' Shimon Ben Gamliel* permit the use of *yayin nesech* that fell into a *bor*? (ה' יא')
- What are the three methods of *kashering keilim* purchased from a *goi* and when do they apply? (ה' יב)
- How does one *kasher* a skewer? (ה' יג)
- How does one *kasher* a knife? (ה' יד)

אבות א' א'

- Describe the *mesorah* chain from *Moshe* to the *Anshei Knesset Ha'Gedolah*? (א' א')
- What three things did the *Anshei Knesset Ha'Gedolah* teach? (א' א')

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10 minutes before *Mincha*  
Mizrachi Shul  
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**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
18 August י"ז אב	19 August י"ח אב	20 August י"ט אב	21 August כ' אב	22 August כ"א אב	23 August כ"ב אב	24 August כ"ג אב
Avot 1:2-3	Avot 1:4-5	Avot 1:6-7	Avot 1:8-9	Avot 1:10-11	Avot 1:12-13	Avot 1:14-15

