



# MISHNAS CHAYIM

# משנת היום

## MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

A project of CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH • Parshas Ki Sisa 5768

Picture the following scenario:

A certain individual—let’s call him Dave—has had an eventful day. In the course of one day, he has lost thousands of dollars in bad investments, gotten into a car accident which will cost him a fortune in repairs and doctor bills, lost his job, and, to top it all off, slipped on the sidewalk and broke his leg.

When Dave finally arrives home, his wife asks him how his day was.

“I had a great day!” Dave replies.

What would we think of such a person? Most probably, we would suspect that he is slightly unhinged, at the very least.

Chazal, however, teach us that Dave is actually correct.

The Gemara in *Kiddushin* (39b) discusses the question of whether a person receives reward for a *mitzvah* in this world or the Next. (Although it is well beyond the scope of this forum to adequately deal with this monumental issue, we can extract a basic point from the greater whole.) The Mishnah (ibid) states:

כָּל הַעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אַחַת, מְטִיבִין לוֹ... וְנוֹחַל אֶת הָאָרֶץ. וְכָל שֹׂאֵינוּ עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אַחַת, אֵין מְטִיבִין לוֹ... וְנֹחַל אֶת הָאָרֶץ.

“Whoever performs a single *mitzvah* is treated benevolently...and inherits a portion in the World to Come. Whoever neglects to perform a *mitzva* is treated malevolently and does not attain a portion in the World to Come.”

Although the Mishnah seems to be talking about someone who fulfills just one *mitzvah*, the Gemara clarifies that this is not the case. Rather, the Mishnah describes a person whose overall

tally of *mitzvos* and *aveiros* is equal. He then goes on to perform one more *mitzvah*, tipping the count in favor of the merits. The Mishnah teaches that if *mitzvos* comprise a majority of one’s deeds, he is treated ‘benevolently’. However, if the subject passes up a *mitzvah* opportunity, leaving his deeds evenly split between virtues and sins, he is treated with ‘malevolence’.

Rashi explains that this show of benevolence (or otherwise) occurs in this world. Simply put, the implication of the Mishnah is that if a person possesses more merits than failings, he is already rewarded in this world. In the case of a ‘tie’, one is punished for his *aveiros* in this world.

The Gemara provides further clarification of the Mishnah, beyond the superficial meaning. It is apparent from a B’raysa that a meritorious person generally does *not* receive reward in this world. On the contrary; the *tzaddik* only receives payment for his *aveiros* in this world. Recompense for the *tzaddik*’s *mitzvos* occurs solely in the World to Come. Consequently, the Mishnah’s statement of benevolence in this world needs to be reevaluated.

The Gemara’s interpretation shows that the Mishnah *is* in synch with the B’raysa. As the Gemara states, the Mishnah’s declaration that a meritorious person is treated with benevolence in this world actually means that he is *punished* in this world. Furthermore, when the Mishnah says that a *rasha* is treated harshly in this world, it means that he receives reward in this world.

You may be wondering why the Mishnah seems to mean the opposite of what it says. Come to think of it, you may be wondering why *tzaddikim* are punished while *reshaim* are rewarded.

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a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.



**MISHNAS  
CHAYIM**

# משנת היום

Rashi explains that obviously, Hashem's intention is pure and just. Retribution is infinitely more severe when meted out in the Next World. Therefore, punishment in this world is actually to the recipient's benefit. Through his suffering in this world, the *tzaddik* receives a substantially lighter penalty, and finishes his temporary sojourn in this world with a clean slate. Consequently, he can proceed to eternal bliss in the Afterlife without any purgatorial detours.

The sinner, on the other hand, is headed for serious trouble. Hashem grants sinners their due reward for their meager merits in this world. Since nothing in this world can compare to a scintilla of enjoyment in the World to Come, this reward is really to the sinner's detriment. He completes his stay in this world with his *mitzvah* account depleted, and then proceeds to the next world with nothing to look forward to but severe retribution.

The Gemara uses the term יום טוב to describe this arrangement: a great, festive day. Although the *tzaddik* who undergoes suffering in this world may find it understandably difficult to bear, the experience is really for his ultimate benefit. For this reason, Chazal consider him to be treated 'benevolently' in this world. It is a true Yom Tov for him.

In a very esoteric section of this week's *parsha*, Moshe Rabbeinu beseeches Hashem to reveal His Essence to him. Hashem replies:

וְרָאִיתָ אֶת אַחֲרַי וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרְאוּ (שמות לג, כג).  
"I will let you see My 'Back', but My 'Front' you shall not see," (*Shemos*, 33:23).

Although it is nearly impossible to fully comprehend these cryptic words, R' Moshe Shternbuch (*Ta'am V'Daas, Ki Sisa*) offers the following more palatable homiletic interpretation:

It is beyond our mortal capabilities to completely fathom Hashem's ways. We cannot always

correctly interpret the events of our personal and communal lives. For the time being, we must strive to remain firm in our belief that Hashem's every action is just and calculated.

In the future, when *Moshiach* arrives to usher in a new era, Hashem will reveal His master plan to all. At that point, we will be able to look back and see how every detail of history was precisely calculated for our ultimate benefit. In hindsight—'My Back'—we will be able to see and understand Hashem's ways. From a perspective of the present, however—'My Front'—Hashem's ways appear hidden.

Understandably, most people find it difficult to bear the vicissitudes of life. In the future, however, we will be able to see and appreciate what Chazal assure us: that all of our days of pain and difficulty were truly 'great days.'

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