



## Do Not Scorn Anyone

The *Mishnah* (4:3) teaches:

[Ben Azai] used to say: Do not scorn (*baz*) anyone, and do not dismiss anything; for there is no individual who does not have his hour, and there is no thing that does not have its place.

Deriding any individual is contemptible. This point is made clear in *Mishlei* (14:21): "He who despises his friend is a sinner, but who favours the humble – fortunate is he." However, the *Mishnah* then following with "for there is no individual who has not his hour" give us pause for thought.

The *Rashbatz* warns that even if an individual appears powerless do not underestimate him and ensure you cause him no harm. He cites the *Midrash* (*Midrash Raba Toldot* 63:8) to reinforce this point. The story is told of *Dicloyatinos* (Diocletian?) who, in his early years herded pigs in *Tiveria*. When he would come close to the *Beit Midrash* of *Rebbi*, children would harass him. Time passed and he became Caesar. Remembering his past, he placed a demand on the Rabbis that was impossible to fulfil. Nevertheless, due to several miracles, they succeeded. *Dicloyatinos* then rebuke them, asking that since your G-d performs miracle, you think it is fine to deride a king. The *Chachamim* responded that we derided *Dicloyatinos* the sheep herder, yet we serve *Dicloyatinos* the king. He nonetheless admonished them that they should still never degrade anyone, even of small stature.

One may however ask, deriding anyone is bad. Pointing to the potential repercussions that might occur when they "have their hour" appears unnecessary.

The *Bartenura* explains the *Mishnah* slightly differently, "do not belittle anyone thinking, how can they harm me?" This appears consistent with the *Meiri* who explains that,

do not treat another's hatred toward you lightly for they may have the opportunity to harm you. The difference here is that the *Mishnah* is not providing a reason not harm another, for that is obvious. It is rather not to underestimate the danger of animosity.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* however explains the *Mishnah* in a different manner. The *Mishnah* is teaching that one should not belittle the importance of anyone in this world, irrespective of their stature or even wickedness. This approach fits in with the rest of the *Mishnah* that appears to provide the same lesson regarding any object in this world. The commentators cite the famous *Midrash* where *David HaMelech* questioned the necessity of three things that he felt had no purpose in the world, yet eventually relied on them to save his own life. The *Tifferet Yisrael* explains similarly that when it comes to people, questioning their importance is tantamount to questioning *Hashem's* wisdom. The fact that *Hashem* has given them space to exist, means that He believes that they have a purpose to be here.

*R' Kluger* explains that the *Mishnah* can be understood to mean, "do not degrade yourself before any person". He explains that it is forbidden for a *talmid chacham* degrade himself before one that is unlearned, even out of humility.

Combining *R' Kluger* with the *Tifferet Yisrael* we can arrive at new understanding of the *Mishnah*. The *Mishnah* may be teaching that do not consider yourself as irrelevant before others. The fact that you exist means that you have a purpose, an important job to be done here in this world. In other words, citing the famous quote of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, "The day you were born, *Hashem* decided that the world could not exist without you."

**Revision Questions**

אבות ג' י' – ד' ה'

- When does *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* get “*nachas*” from a person? (ג' י')
- According to *R' Dosa ben Harkinas* what four things remove a person from the world? (ג' י')
- According to *R' Elazar HaModa'i*, which five people have no share in the world to come? (ג' י"א)
- Complete the following statement of *R' Yishmael*: (ג' י"ב)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, והוי מקבל כל האדם \_\_\_\_\_, ונוח \_\_\_\_\_, הוי קל \_\_\_\_\_
- According to *R' Akiva*, what is an aide for: (ג' י"ג)
  - *Torah*?
  - Wealth?
  - *Prishut*?
  - Wisdom?
- Why is Man “dear”? (ג' י"ד)
- Why is *Yisrael* “dear”? (Provide two reasons) (ג' י"ד)
- Complete the following statement: (ג' ט"ו)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, והכל לפי \_\_\_\_\_, נתונה \_\_\_\_\_, ובטוב העולם \_\_\_\_\_, הכל \_\_\_\_\_
- What *mashal* does *R' Akiva* provide for the previous *Mishnah*? (ג' ט"ז)
- Complete the following statement of *R' Elazar ben Azarya*: (ג' י"ז)  
 אם אין תורה אין \_\_\_\_\_ אם \_\_\_\_\_, אם אין חכמה \_\_\_\_\_
- What *mashal* is provided for one whose wisdom exceeds his actions? (ג' י"ז)
- According to *R' Elazar Chisma* which laws are “*gufei halachot*”? (ג' י"ח)
- What are the *parpr'ot chochma*? (ג' י"ח)
- According to *Ben Zoma* who is considered: (ד' א')
  - Wise?
  - Brave?
  - Wealthy?
  - Honoured?
- What advice does *Ben Azai* give regarding one’s relationship to *mitzvot* and *aveirot*? What two principles does he bring in support of this advice? (ד' ב')
- Why does *Ben Azai* say “Do not despise any man and do not deem anything unworthy”? (ד' ג')
- Why does *R' Levitas ish Yavneh* say that one should be very humble? (ד' ד')
- What does *R' Yochanan ben Bruka* say will happen to one that desecrates the name of *Hashem* in secret? (ד' ד')
- According to *R' Yishmael* what will happen to one who learns: (ד' ה')
  - For the purpose of learning and teaching?
  - For the purpose of learning and “doing”?
- Who does *R' Tzadok* cite when warning against using *Torah* for self aggrandisement? (ד' ה')

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**Next Week’s Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
15 September ט"ו אלול	16 September ט"ז אלול	17 September י"ז אלול	18 September י"ח אלול	19 September י"ט אלול	20 September כ' אלול	21 September כ"א אלול
Avot 4:6-7	Avot 4:8-9	Avot 4:10-11	Avot 4:12-13	Avot 4:14-15	Avot 4:16-17	Avot 4:18-19

