



Lots of Torah

The *Mishnah* (2:8) records that *R' Yochanan ben Zakai* would say, if you learnt a lot of *Torah*, do not credit yourself (*al tachzik tova le'atzmecha*), for that is why you were created (*le'kach notzarta*).

The way we have translated *al tachzik tova le'atzmecha* accords with the *Bartenura* who explains that one should not say to themselves, I have learnt lots of *Torah*. *R' Yonah* explains that that is because the depth and breadth of *Torah* is almost limitless, with an endpoint that the human intellect cannot reach.

The *Tosfot Yom Tov* continues citing *Rashi*, who explains that *le'kach notzarta* means that when the world was created, its existence hinged on the study of *Torah*. Consequently, there is an obligation placed upon us for its continued study. *R' Yonah* explains that this is similar to one who pays off his loan. Taking credit would seem strange in that context and that is how this obligation should be perceived.

R' Yonah continues that this understanding would apply equally to the world of *mitzvot*; we were created for the fulfillment of *mitzvah*. Indeed some *Rishonim* have a different reading of the *Mishnah* that supports this understanding. Instead of "if you learnt a lot of *Torah*" they have "if you made your *Torah* plenty", which the *Abarbanel* explains to mean that you translated your study of *Torah* into much action.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* explains similarly that one should not assume to take full credit for their success. He however explains that *le'kach notzarta* to mean that this is because your excellence relative to your peers

may not be due to your effort. Instead, a large part of your success may be due to your sharp intellect or powerful memory that you were blessed with. It is possible that a peer that was not granted those talents, nevertheless applied himself more than you, despite his "achievements" paling in comparison. In such a case, his rewards will far exceed yours.

A related explanation is found in the *Chasdei Avot*. He cites *R' Chaim Sargusi* who explains that "*le'kach notzarta*" is part of what one should not say. In other words, that *Mishnah* is warning that if you have achieved a lot, do not be comfortable and assumed that you have done all that *Hashem* has required of you. He continues citing the *Rambam* who responded to a person that was confident he had not sinned and asked whether he should "lie" on *Yom Kippur* and say *vidui*. The *Rambam* responded that we do not appreciate the extent and demands that *Hashem* placed on us. Furthermore, each person is judged according to his wisdom. The *Rambam* responded that if he could appreciate it, *vidui* would be extremely relevant.

The *Midrash Shmuel* however gives a different explanation of *al tachzik tova le'atzmecha*. He explains that if you have learnt a lot of *Torah*, do not keep that good to yourself. Rather, you were formed to share and teach what you have learnt. The *Lev Avot* adds, that to learn and not teach cannot be why you were created. The proof is that one is taught the entirety of *Torah* before they are born. Rather we were placed here to share that with others.

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Revision Questions

אבות ב' ו' – ג' ג'

- What did *Hillel* say when he saw a skull floating in the water? (ב' ו') (ב' ו')
- Complete the following statements? (ב' ו')
 - מרבה בשר מרבה _____, מרבה נכסים מרבה _____;
 - מרבה עבדים מרבה _____, מרבה שפחות מרבה _____;
 - מרבה נשים מרבה _____. מרבה תורה מרבה _____,
 - מרבה ישיבה מרבה _____.
 - קנה שם טוב, קנה _____;
 - קנה דברי תורה, קנה _____.
- Complete the following statement of *R' Yochanan ben Zakkai*: (ב' ו')
 - אם למדת תורה הרבה _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
- Who were the five student of *R' Yochanan ben Zakkai* and how did he describe each of them? (ה' ו')
- What did each of them think is the "straight path" to which one should attach themselves and with who did *R' Yochanan ben Zakkai* agree? (ה' ו')
- What did each of them think is the "evil path" which one should avoid and with who did *R' Yochanan ben Zakkai* agree? (ה' ו')
- What were the "three" statements of *R' Eliezer ben Hurkanus*? (ב' ו')
- According to *R' Yehoshua* what three things "remove a person from the world"? (ב' ו')
- What are the three statements of *R' Yosi*? (ב' ו')
- What three things did *R' Shimon* say regarding *tefillah*? (ב' ו')
- What three things did *R' Elazar* say regarding learning? (ב' ו')
- Complete the following statement of *R' Tarfon*: (ב' ו')
 - היום _____, והמלאכה _____, והפועלים _____,
 - והשכר _____, ובעל הבית _____.
- What else did *R' Tarfon* say regarding work? (ב' ו')
- What three things does *R' Tarfon* say regarding the reward for learning? (ב' ו')
- According to *Akavya ben Mehalalel* if one looks at what three things will he not sin? (ג' ו')
- Why does *Channinah segan Ha'Kohanim* say that one should pray for the welfare of the government? (ג' ו')
- What does *Chananya ben Tardyon* say regarding two people that sit and do not converse in words of *Torah*? (ג' ו')
- What does he say regarding those that do? (ג' ו')
- What does *R' Shimon* say regarding three people eating together and do not share in words of *Torah*? (ג' ו')
- What does he say regarding those that do? (ג' ו')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
1 June ה' סיון	2 June ו' סיון	3 June ז' סיון	4 June ח' סיון	5 June ט' סיון	6 June י' סיון	7 June יא' סיון
Avot 3:4-5	Avot 3:6-7	Avot 3:8-9	Avot 3:10-11	Avot 3:12-13	Avot 3:14-15	Avot 3:16-17

