



Calculated Good Deeds

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel provided four different instructions in the *Mishnah* (4:18). Do not try to appease your friend when he is angry¹; do not comfort a person if he has lost a close relative and they are yet to be buried; do not attempt to undo a person's *neder* at the time he makes a *neder*; and do attempt to see a person at the time of his sin.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* first explains the technical reason for each of the statements. Appeasing a person when they are angry is likely to exacerbate their anger. At a moment of loss, if a person senses that others do not feel their pain it will cause further pain. Indeed, the *Midrash Shmuel* writes that at that time a person does not want comfort. Instead, they want others to feel the pain with him. Regarding the thirds case, when a person makes a *neder*, they generally want that *neder* to be in place. The *Markevet Mishnah* adds that people generally make *nedarim* in anger. Any challenge at the moment, is likely to close off avenues of potential regret that could be used to undo the *neder* when he calms down. Finally, when a person stumbles and acts inappropriately, your presence will not help, but only magnify the shame.²

The *Tifferet Yisrael* continues explaining that the *Mishnah* recorded four cases of burning emotions. He continues that this advice is not limited to these four situations. Rather any time where people are out of control or overcome by an emotion, is not the time to challenge them. He provides several examples. The

first is that arguing with a passionate heretic is more likely to cause him to dig in and assert his position even more radically. He also adds that on *Simchat Torah*, *Purim* or at a wedding, when people are carried away with acting like clowns, it is not the time to attempt to rebuke them. Finally, if someone is in the process of heaping praise on his child or relative and asks your opinion, it is not the time to provide any critical insights. The invitation was simply to add more praise

Irving Bunim explains that having learnt in the previous *Mishnah* the need to do good in the world, this *Mishnah* was necessary to temper one's eagerness to do so, so that they do not cause damage despite their good intentions. Similarly, the *Yaavetz* explains that *R' Yaakov* had taught that one must pursue good deeds. The *Mishnah* is necessary to teach that some deeds need to be pursued in a more controlled way.

The *Lev Avot* (Rabbi Haber) explains that it is appropriate the *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* is the one that taught this *Mishnah*. *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* was a student of *R' Meir* who taught, "do not look at the jug, but rather its contents..." The *Lev Avot* explains that all the matters in the *Mishnah* are situations where you are not seeing the real person, but rather the outer "jug". They are situations where the person is overcome by emotion. *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* warns that this is not the time to engage with the person, for they are not their true selves.

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¹ The *Ruach Chaim* derives this from the fact that the *chatat* (sin-offering) is offered before the *olah*. Before the "gift" of the *olah* can be offered, one must bring a *chatat* and do *teshuva* to remove the cause of anger first.

² The *Pirkei Moshe* is particular with the words of the *Mishnah*. The issue is with you coming to "see" him. Just coming to see him, may lead him to suspect that you just want to see him in his fallen state. Nonetheless, one should still attempt to support and console him in his difficult time.

Revision Questions

אבות ד': י"ד – ה': ה'

- What does *R' Nehorai* say when *Torah* learning is not found in one's locale? (ד': י"ד)
- Complete the following statement of *R' Yanai*: (ד': ט"ו)
 _____ ואף לא _____ אין בידינו לא
- Complete the following statement of *R' Matya ben Charash*: (ד': ט"ו)
 הוי _____ כל אדם
 והוי _____ לאריות ואל תהי _____ לשועלים
- To what does *R' Ya'akov* compare this world? (ד': ט"ז)
- According to *R' Ya'akov* what two things are better than the entire *Olam HaBah*? (ד': י"ז)
- According to *R' Ya'akov* what is better than the entire *Olam HaZeh*? (ד': י"ז)
- According to *R' Shimon ben Elazar* what are the four times when one should not confront/see his friend? (ד': י"ח)
- What *pasuk* is central to the *Mishnah* in the name of *Shmuel Ha'Katan*? (ד': י"ט)
- To what does *Elisha ben Avuya* compare one that learns when he is young? (ד': כ')
- To what does *R' Yosi bar Yehuda ish Kfar HaBavli* compare learning from an elderly sage? (ד': כ')
- Who argues with *R' Yosi bar Yehuda* and what is his rationale? (ד': כ')
- According to *R' Eliezer* what three things remove a person from the world? (ד': כ"א)
- What eight "roles" of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* should one be conscious of and inform others about? (ד': כ"ב)
- What five events occurred and will occur against our will? (ד': כ"ב)
- Why was the world created with ten utterances? (ה': א')
- Why were there ten generation from: (ה': ב')
 - *Adam to Noach*?
 - *Noach to Avraham*?
- Who bore ten trials? (Two people.) (ה': ג-ד')
- What four things numbered ten as *Yisrael* was taken out of *Mitzrayim*? (ה': ד')
- What were the ten miracles in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*? (ה': ה')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
22 June כ"ו סיון	23 June כ"ז סיון	24 June כ"ח סיון	25 June כ"ט סיון	26 June ל' סיון	27 June א' תמוז	28 June ב' תמוז
Avot 5:6-7	Avot 5:8-9	Avot 5:10-11	Avot 5:12-13	Avot 5:14-15	Avot 5:16-17	Avot 5:18-19

