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'Iron sharpens iron, so a person sharpens the wit of their friend.'

Proverbs 27:17



Introduction

Welcome to the sixth and final week of the Alyth Chavruta Project course on Pirkei Avot. This week, we approach the sixth chapter of Pirkei Avot, which you can find (in abbreviated form) on pages 723-724 of the RJ prayer book. This chapter is now thought to have been added later, written in the style of the original five chapters of Pirkei Avot. We might speculate that this addition was made in order to have six chapters for the six Shabbat afternoons during the Omer on which it is traditionally read and studied. Many of the texts in chapter 6 have other versions found in rabbinic literature, suggesting that this is a compilation of other texts.

The text itself can be found here in both Hebrew only and Hebrew with translation. For those with some knowledge of Hebrew, we encourage you to attempt your own translation, but there is absolutely no expectation that you engage with the Hebrew. As usual, there is also no requirement to get to the end of the pack – we have provided more than you can get through in an hour of study, and we encourage you to focus on understanding a small amount rather than becoming confused by a greater amount.

Further resources and advice on how to get the most out of chavruta can be found in our [revised FAQs](#). We look forward to seeing you on Thursday to share our learning with each other.

As we will be studying during the Omer, we will include the blessing for counting the Omer at the beginning of each text pack, as well as the blessing for study as usual.

As this week bring us to the end of our period studying Pirkei Avot, you are invited to follow the custom of reciting *Hadran* (literally ‘We will return’) at the end of a period studying an entire tractate, which we have included at the end of this booklet (pages 10-12). If you would prefer not to read it on your own, you can wait until we all do so together on Thursday.

Blessing for Study

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, whose commandments make us holy, and who commands us to devote ourselves to the study of Torah.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu la-asok b'divrey Torah.

COUNTING THE OMER

The 49-day period from the second night of Pesach up to Shavuot is known as the Omer. Because of a longstanding dispute about when the Omer is supposed to begin, it became necessary to count the days out loud every night with a blessing. We have included the Hebrew and English formulae here so that you can count the Omer together with your partner when you meet. According to the Shulchan Aruch, it is possible to count the Omer at any time of day, though the blessing is only said between sunset and sunrise – if you count the Omer after this point then it is customary to do so without saying the blessing.

Blessed are You, our Living God,
Sovereign of the universe, whose
commandments make us holy and
who commands us to count the Omer.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלִךְ
הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר:

*Baruch attah Adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kidd'shanu b'mitsvotav
v'tsivanu al s'firat ha-omer.*

For Friday Evening/Shabbat

Today is day 35, making five weeks of
the Omer.

הַיּוֹם חֲמֵשֶׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שָׁהֶם
חֲמֵשֶׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר

For Saturday Evening/Sunday

Today is day 36, making five weeks and
one day of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם שֵׁשֶׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שָׁהֶם
חֲמֵשֶׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת יוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר

For Sunday Evening/Monday

Today is day 37, making five weeks and
two days of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שָׁהֶם
חֲמֵשֶׁה שְׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר



For Monday Evening/Tuesday

Today is day 38, making five weeks and three days of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שָׁהָם
חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר

For Tuesday Evening/Wednesday

Today is day 39, making five weeks and four days of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם תְּשַׁעָּה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שָׁהָם
חֲמִשָּׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר

For Wednesday Evening/Thursday

Today is day 40, making five weeks and five days of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שָׁהָם חֲמִשָּׁה
שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר

For Thursday Evening/Friday

Today is day 41, making five weeks and six days of the Omer.

הַיּוֹם אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שָׁהָם חֲמִשָּׁה
שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר

Selections from Pirkei Avot, Chapter 6, the Hebrew text
(translation begins on page 5)

ג הלומד מחברו פֶּרֶק אֶחָד או הִלְכָה אֶחָת או פְּסוּק אֶחָד או דְבוּר אֶחָד
או אֶפִּילוֹ אוֹת אֶחָת, צָרִיף לְנִהְגַּ בּוֹ כְבוֹד, שְׁכַן מְצִינּוֹ בְדוּד מְלֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל,
שְׁלֹא לְמַד מֵאַחִיתוֹפֵל אֶלָּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלִבָּד, קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפוֹ וּמִיָּדְעוּ,
שְׁנֵי אֲמָר (תהלים נה), וְאַתָּה אָנוּשׁ כְּעָרְכִי אֱלוֹפִי וּמִיָּדְעִי. וְהֵלֵא דְבָרִים קַל
וְחוֹמֵר, וּמָה דָּוִד מְלֵךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹא לְמַד מֵאַחִיתוֹפֵל אֶלָּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים
בְּלִבָּד קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפוֹ וּמִיָּדְעוּ, הִלּוּמִד מִחֲבֵרוֹ פֶּרֶק אֶחָד או הִלְכָה אֶחָת
או פְּסוּק אֶחָד או דְבוּר אֶחָד או אֶפִּילוֹ אוֹת אֶחָת עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה
שְׁצָרִיף לְנִהְגַּ בּוֹ כְבוֹד. וְאֵין כְבוֹד אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, שְׁנֵי אֲמָר (משלי ג), כְבוֹד
חֻקִּים יִנְחֵלוּ, (שם כח) וְתַמִּימִים יִנְחֵלוּ טוֹב, וְאֵין טוֹב אֶלָּא תוֹרָה
שְׁנֵי אֲמָר כִּי לְקַח טוֹב נִתְתִּי לָכֶם תוֹרָתִי אֵל תַּעֲזוּבוּ:

ד כֵּן הִיא דְרַכָּה שֶׁל תוֹרָה, פֶּת בְּמִלַּח תֹּאכֵל וּמִים בְּמִשׁוּרָה תִּשְׁתֶּה וְעַל
הָאָרֶץ תִּישָׁן וְחַיִּי צַעַר תַּחֲזִיחַ וּבִתְוֹרָה אַתָּה עֹמֵל, אִם אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה כֵּן,
(תהלים קכח) אֲשֶׁרִיף וְטוֹב לָךְ. אֲשֶׁרִיף בְּעוֹלָם הִזֵּה וְטוֹב לָךְ לְעוֹלָם
הַבָּא:



6:3

הַלּוֹמֵד מִחֵבְרוֹ פֶּרֶק אֶחָד אוֹ הִלְכָּה אֶחָת אוֹ פְּסוּק אֶחָד אוֹ דְבוּר אֶחָד אוֹ אִפְּיֵלוֹ אוֹת אֶחָת, צָרִיךְ לְנַהֵג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד,

שֶׁפֶן מְצִינּוֹ בְּדוֹד מִלֶּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁלֵא לְמַד מֵאַחִיתוֹפֵל אֶלָּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלָבָד, קָרְאוּ רַבּוֹ אֶלּוּפּוֹ וּמִיַּדְעוּ, שְׁנַאָמֵר, וְאַתָּה אֲנוֹשׁ כְּעַרְכִּי אֶלּוּפִי וּמִיַּדְעִי.

וְהֵלֵא דְבָרִים קָל וְחוֹמֵר, וּמָה דְּוֹד מִלֶּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֵא לְמַד מֵאַחִיתוֹפֵל אֶלָּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלָבָד קָרְאוּ רַבּוֹ אֶלּוּפּוֹ וּמִיַּדְעוּ, הַלּוֹמֵד מִחֵבְרוֹ פֶּרֶק אֶחָד אוֹ הִלְכָּה אֶחָת אוֹ פְּסוּק אֶחָד אוֹ דְבוּר אֶחָד אוֹ אִפְּיֵלוֹ אוֹת אֶחָת עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה שְׁצָרִיךְ לְנַהֵג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד.

וְאֵין כְּבוֹד אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, שְׁנַאָמֵר, כְּבוֹד חֻכְמִים וְנִחְלוֹ, וְתַמִּימִים וְנִחְלוֹ טוֹב, וְאֵין טוֹב אֶלָּא תוֹרָה שְׁנַאָמֵר כִּי לְקַח טוֹב נִתְתִּי לְכֶם תּוֹרָתִי אֵל תַּעֲזוּבוּ:

The one who learned from their fellow one chapter, or one *halachah*, or one verse, or one expression, or even one letter, it is necessary to treat them with honour.

For so we find with David, king of Israel, who learned just two things from Achitofel, yet called him his master, his companion, and his friend, as it is said, 'It is you, my equal, my companion and my friend' (Psalm 55:14).

Is this not a *kal vachomer*?¹ If David, king of Israel, who learned just two things from Achitofel, called him his master, his companion and his friend, the one who learns from their fellow one chapter, or one *halachah*, or one

¹ A *kal vachomer* is an argument from the lesser to the greater. This is a Talmudic form of argument that allows us to draw conclusions about a hard case (*chomer*) from a lighter one (*kal*).

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verse, or one expression, or even one letter, all the more so it is necessary to treat them with honour.

And there is no honour other than Torah, as it said, 'The wise shall inherit honour' (Proverbs 3:35) [and it says,] 'The perfect shall inherit the good' (Proverbs 28:10). And there is no good other than Torah, as it is said, 'For I have given you good instruction; do not forsake it' (Proverbs 4:2).

Questions

- What do you think is the overall purpose of this mishnah?
- Why do you think the author chose the example of Achitofel? Is he the best example of wisdom?
- Is wisdom always associated with honour?
- What do you think is the intention behind this whole mishnah?



6:4

כֹּף הִיא דְרֻכָּהּ שֶׁל תּוֹרָה, פֶּת בְּמִלַּח תֹּאכַל וּמַיִם בְּמִשׁוּנָה תִשְׁתֶּה וְעַל
הָאָרֶץ תִּישָׁן וְחַיֵּי צַעַר תַּחֲיֶה וּבַתּוֹרָה אַתָּה עֹמֵל, אִם אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה כֵן, אֲשַׁרְיֵךְ
וְטוֹב לָךְ. אֲשַׁרְיֵךְ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְטוֹב לָךְ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

This is the way of the Torah! Bread with salt you will eat, and a ration of water you will drink; on the earth you will lie and a life of hardship you will live; and in Torah you will toil. If you do so, 'you will be happy, and it will be good for you' (Psalm 128:2). 'You will be happy' – in this world; 'it will be good for you' – in the world to come.

Questions

- How does the eating of bread and the drinking of water relate to the Torah?
- Do you agree that Torah will always make one happy?

Rashi, commentary on Pirkei Avot 6:4

פֶת בְּמֶלֶח תֹאכֵל. לֹא עַל הָעֵשִׂיר הוּא אוֹמֵר שִׁיעֲמַד בְּחַיֵּי צַעַר כְּדֵי לְלַמֵּד
תּוֹרָה, אֲלֵא הֵכִי קֹאמֵר, אֲפֵלוּ אֵין לְאָדָם אֲלֵא פֶת בְּמֶלֶח וְכוּ' וְאֵין לוֹ כֹר
וְכֹסֶת לִישׁוֹן אֲלֵא עַל הָאָרֶץ, אֵל יִמְנַע מִלְעֶסֶק בָּהּ, דְּסוֹפוֹ לְלַמֵּד אוֹתָהּ
מֵעֶשֶׂר:

'Bread with salt you will eat' – This is not saying of a rich person that they should endure a life of hardship in order to learn Torah. Rather, it is saying: Even if a person has only bread with salt etc., and they do not have a pillow or a blanket to sleep on, but rather [have to sleep] on the earth, they should not refrain from being busy with it, as in the end they will study it in wealth.



A GUIDE TO THE SOURCES

The Mishnah is a Jewish legal code from approximately 200 CE, containing legal rulings and disputes of the sages which are written down there for the first time. It is the first part of what is called the 'Oral Law', which for traditional Jews is just as authoritative as the Written Law (the Tanach). The Mishnah is divided into six 'orders', and each order is divided into tractates. Pirkei Avot is included in *Seder Nezikin*, which deals with the laws of damages (tort law).

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) was a French scholar in the second half of the Eleventh Century. His seminal commentaries on both the Hebrew Bible and the Babylonian Talmud are still the primary explanatory tools used by those approaching these central Jewish texts today.

We shall return to you, Tractate Avot,
and you shall return to us.

Our thoughts are on you, Tractate
Avot, and your thoughts are on us.

We will not forget you, Tractate Avot,
and you will not forget us – neither in
this world, nor in the world to come.

הִדְרִין עֲלֶיךָ מִסְכַּת אָבוֹת וְהִדְרִין
עֲלֵנוּ.

דַּעְתּוֹן עֲלֶיךָ מִסְכַּת אָבוֹת וְדַעְתּוֹן
עֲלֵנוּ.

לֹא נִתְנָשִׁי מִנֶּךָ מִסְכַּת אָבוֹת וְלֹא
תִתְנָשִׁי מֵנוּ. לֹא בְעָלְמָא הֵדִין וְלֹא
בְעָלְמָא דְאַתִּי:

We shall not forget, nor fail to appreciate, the opportunity you have provided to engage with our tradition, with our ancestors, and with each other in our community. May the relationships we build through you be lasting and enriching. May our study of you be a source of strength for us as we endeavour to build meaningful and fruitful lives in the service of what is good. May our grappling with the aspects of you that we have found challenging be a wellspring for fresh thinking about ancient ideas. For you are part of a tree of life that continues to grow and renew.

Our Living God,
make the words of Your Torah
sweet in our mouths,
and in the mouths of Your people,
the family of Israel,
then we and our descendants,
and the descendants of Your people
the family of Israel,
shall all know Your name and study
Your Torah for its own sake.
Blessed are You God,
You teach Torah to your people Israel.

וְהִעֲרַבְנָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי
תּוֹרָתְךָ בְּפִינוּ.

וּבְפִי עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

וְנִהְיָ אֲנַחְנוּ וְצֹאצְאֵינוּ.

וְצֹאצְאֵי עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

כֻּלְנוּ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ.

וְלוֹמְדֵי תּוֹרָתְךָ לְשִׁמָּה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה.

הַמְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:



Kaddish deRabanan

יְתַגְדֵּל Let us magnify and
let us sanctify in this world
the great name of God
whose will created it.

May God's reign come in your lifetime,
and in your days,
and in the lifetime of the family of
Israel - quickly and speedily
may it come. Amen.

**May the greatness of God's being
be blessed from eternity to eternity.**

Let us bless and let us extol,
let us tell aloud and let us raise aloft,
let us set on high and let us honour, let
us exalt and

let us praise the Holy One,

whose name is blessed,

who is far beyond any blessing

or song, any honour

or any consolation

that can be spoken of in this world.

Amen.

For Israel and for the rabbis,
for their pupils,
and the pupils of their pupils,
who devote themselves
to the study of Torah,
in this place and every other place; let
there be for them and for you great
peace and favour,
love and mercy,
a life of fulfilment

יְתַגְדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא (אָמֵן)
בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי-בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ : וְיִמְלִיךָ
מַלְכוּתָהּ

בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ

וּבְחַיֵּי דִי-כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵגְלָא

וּבְזְמַן קָרִיב.

וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ

לְעַלְמֵס וּלְעַלְמֵי עֵלְמָיָא :

יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם

וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל

שְׁמֵהּ דִּי-קֻדְשָׁא.

בְּרִיךְ הוּא.

לְעֵלְא מִן-כָּל-בְּרַכְתָּא

וְשִׁירָתָא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא דִּי-

אֲמִירָן בְּעֵלְמָא.

וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל רַבָּנָן

וְעַל תַּלְמִידֵיהוֹן

וְעַל כָּל-תַּלְמִידֵי תַּלְמִידֵיהוֹן

וְעַל כָּל-אֲמִירָן דִּי עֲסָקִין בְּאוּרֵיתָא דִּי

בְּאַתְרָא קֻדְשָׁא

וְדִי בְּכָל-אַתְרָא וְאַתְרָא יְהֵא לְהוֹן

וּלְכוּן שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא חֲנָא וְחַסְדָּא

Alyth Chavruta Project

and of plenty, and redemption
from their father who is in heaven.

Amen.

May great peace from heaven
and the gift of life
be granted to us
and to all the family of Israel.

Amen.

May the Maker of peace
in the highest bring this peace
upon us and upon all Israel
and upon all the world.

Amen.

וְרַחֲמֵיךָ וְחַיֵּיךָ אֶרִיכֵן וּמְזוֹנָא
רוּיחָא וּפְרָקְנָא
מִן־קִדְּמָא אָבוּהוֹן דִּי בְּשָׁמְיָא.
וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא
וְחַיִּים טוֹבִים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל.
וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן :

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמֵי
הוּא בְּרַחֲמֵי יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעַל־כָּל־הָעוֹלָם.
וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן :

Yitgaddal v'yitkaddash sh'meih rabba (amen), b'alma di v'ra chiruteih, v'yamlich malchuteih, b'chayyeichon uv'yomeichon uv'chayyei di chol beit yisra'el, ba'agala u'vizman kariv, v'imru amen. Y'hei sh'meih rabba m'varach l'alam ul'almei almaya. Yitbarach v'yishtabbach v'yitpa'ar v'yitromam v'yitnassei, v'yit-haddar v'yit'alleh v'yit-hallal, sh'meih di kudsha, b'rich hu, l'eilla min kol birchata v'shirata, tushb'chata v'nechemata, di amiran b'alma, v'imru amen. Al yisra'el, v'al rabbanan, v'al talmideihon, v'al kol talmidei talmideihon, v'al kol man di askin b'orayta di b'atra hadein v'di b'chol atar v'atar, y'hei l'hon ul'chon, sh'lama rabba, chinna v'chisda, v'rachamin v'chayyin arichin, um'zona r'vicha ufarkana, min kodam avuhon di vishmaya, v'imru amen. Y'hei sh'lama rabba min sh'maya, v'chayyim tovim aleinu v'al kol yisra'el, v'imru amen. Oseh shalom bimromav, hu b'rachamav ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol yisra'el, v'al kol ha-olam, v'imru amen.