

# The motivations of the Avoth- the true and real meaning of Lishmah

The gemarah in Bava Bathra 17: writes that: “Three (people) had, (while they were yet alive), *Me'ein Olam Habah*- Like Olam Habah - Avraham Yitzchak and Ya'akov. ... “

It continues “Three – the Yetzer Harah didn't have control over them - Avrah Yitzchak and Yaakov. ... And there are those who say, even David. “

Thereupon Tosfoth poses a question, that if they( the *Avoth* ) had no force working on them to defy HaShem, then how could they get *Agrah*- reward?

There is a famous saying that “*Eino domeh mi shmetzaveh ve'oseh, lemi she eino mestsaveh ve'oseh*. The person who is commanded to do something, and actually does it, is not the same as the one who is not commanded to do so and does it anyway.

Generally this is applied to the difference of reward that goes to a man or a lady who does mitzvah that ladies are not obligated to do. The men get more reward than the ladies.

On the surface, this seems to defy logic. If you DON'T have to keep a commandment and you do so anyway, you would think that you should get more of a reward!

So the Chachamim explain that when you are told to do something, automatically, the *yetzer harah* will start working on you to prevent you from doing so. So in order to accomplish your given task you need to overcome numerous obstacles in order to succeed. All of that extra effort earns you more reward!

So now, we can better understand *Tosfoth's* question. If the *avoth* had no *yetzer harah* working on preventing them from doing mitzvah, then how could they get any *Agrah* ?

Actually, if we think about it deeper, we can gain an even clearer understanding of the level of *Lishmah* that the *avoth* had.

People who firmly believe in *HaShem* and that he is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and fully involved in all of the day to day goings on of the world, often think like Spiritual Businessmen. They make spiritual calculations as to what mitzvah and actions will bring them the biggest reward in the world to come.

They scourge the writings of our rabbis, to glean what mitzvah gets how much reward, etc. They then devote their time and efforts to accomplishing mostly/only those mitzvah, in order to maximize their ‘Spiritual Profits’.

Ones who are very “enterprising and cunning”, learn from what others are doing to ‘successfully reap spiritual profits’, and will, in their zeal to ‘earn higher profits’, copy and compete against their ‘spiritual competitors, in order to increase their own ‘share of the market’.

Considerations of whether what they are doing and how they are acting, are actually **GOOD FOR THE KLAL; bring people together , or push them apart; bring about *achduth* with the rest of klal Yisrael, HaShem and within creation, or the opposite** , are not part of their business calculations.

It would seem, though, that if they were to really delve into understanding this Gemara and the actions of our holy *Avoth*- you would see that these *Spiritual Businessmen*, are far from emulating their actions and motivations.

If you think about, if we are meant to, set as our goal in life, the achievement of a bigger share in the *Olam Habah/Gan Eden*, then the *Avoth* had reason to discontinue trying so hard to keep the mitzvoth and going higher and higher.

- A- They were not commanded to do so, and as such are not ‘entitled’ to get the full reward that goes to one who is commanded to do so.
- B- If they already got their share of the *Olam Habah*, then they could retire, and stop trying so hard to do mitzvoth.
- C- If they no longer have a *yetzer harah* working against them, then they again, don’t get the full reward.  
( *Tostfoth* asked how they can get (any) reward. And he answers that being that they pushed themselves so hard, to distance themselves from *aveirah*, that HaShem helped them that the *Yetzer Harah* should not have control over them. So HaShem got the *Yetzer Harah* ‘off their back’, but from a spiritual profitability viewpoint, they just ‘lost’ so much!)
- D- One should also contemplate, that not only were the *avoth* not commanded to do the mitzvoth, but they in fact had no written or *Mesorah* source to tell them what they were. The Chachamim teach us, that Avraham *Aveinu*’s kidneys taught him the mitzvoth. So really- the *avoth*, and Avraham *Avienu* in particular, went to extreme lengths to do mitzvoth- even though their ‘profits’ were seemingly much less than what you or I would get .

But the *Avoth* DID figure out the *mitzvoth* on their own, and did pursue them , even when they were not commanded to do so, and they continued to do so, even when they could have retired because they already got their reward, and they had reached a level where they would no longer be ‘eligible’ for ‘full compensation’.

So one could ask, why! What was motivating them to work so hard, in the face of a hostile world, etc and a ‘diminished ‘return on investment’

The answer is, that the *Avoth* understood the overwhelming level of benevolence that HaShem had exercised when creating the world. That each person, who hasn’t cut himself off, has a *Chelek Leolam Habah*, that the world is waiting for him to complete. In fact, a Tzadik, often get’s portions of other people’s *olam habah* to work on ( *Chafetz Chaim* on the meaning of *Seem Chelkeinu Imahem*, in the Amidah) .

They were true servants of HaShem “who serve their master not for the sake of getting a prize” (Pirkei Avoth).

They just want to get the job done and reach the *Sheleimuth* of the world that HaShem desires it to reach.

For this, the *chachamim* state that the *avoth* became the ‘legs of the *Kiseh Hamerkavah*’ and David *Hamelech* stabilized it further by becoming its fourth leg. The *Kiseh Hamerkavah* here means *the throne of HaShem*. Only Lishmah at this level, truly makes/acknowledges, HaShem as the KING.

And this is what we mean when we say mention in the first *Berachah* of the *Amidah* – that *Hashem* “*Zocher Chasdei Avoth*”. He remembers how the *Avoth* figured out, kept and zealously pursued the mitzvoth, even though they were not taught them , even though they were not commanded to do them,

even though they already achieved their *Olam Habah*, and even though they had no *yetzer harah* to ‘maximize the profitability’ of doing so.

Some might think to argue, that the *avoth* served *HaShem* at this top level of *Lishmah* because they had it so easy in life, and they had so much wealth and leisure. (After all, one might think to argue, Avraham *Aveinu* only had 10 tests.)

This is where David *Hamelech* comes along and really stabilizes the *Kisseh Hamerkava* . A three legged stool can stand on its own, but it is not as stable ( on uneven ground) as a four legged chair.

His life was a series of difficulties that would have probably broken a lesser man multiple times.

- His brothers shunned him because they thought he was illegitimate.
- His herd was attacked by ferocious wild animals, which he had to fend off by himself.
- He faced the terrible/fear inspiring Goliath on his own.
- His father in law hated him.
- And wanted to kill him.
- His wife was taken away from him.
- His wife berated him when he showed his joy at being able to bring the aaron back home.
- His son led a rebellion against him.
- His son was killed.
- He had to pull his son out of *gehinam*.
- His son had a terrible infatuation with his half sister.
- He had a strange sickness where he could not feel warm anymore.
- Another one of his sons tried to usurp his power.
- Chachamim tell us that he barely slept.
- He cried throughout the night for his sins, and then drank his own tears.
- He did not eat the foods of a king in private.
- He was not allowed to build the Beith Hamikdash because he had blood on his hands. But he only had blood on his hands because he needed to defend himself, am Yisrael, or because the *Chachamim* had suggested it to him.
- Etc..etc.etc.

And yet he persevered and was constantly looking for ways to serve his King.

This is the kind of man that *HaShem* rewards with *Sherara/Lordship* over the population, because he knows that he can trust him to always do what is Right in the eyes of *HaShem* and is in the Best Interest of the *Klal*, and not himself.

Such a man is the one that stabilized the throne of *HaShem*!

May we all figure it out, that pursuing *mitzvot* in an effort to maximize our own personal gain- even though it’s a spiritual one, is not the level of *Lishmah* that *HaShem* got from the *avoth*. This is not the level of *Lishmah* that is needed to bring the creation together and to reach *Achduth* and *Sheleimuth*, and finally raise creation to the next level, that *HaShem* has been waiting for, for millennia.

Can we all please think of *HaShem* at a higher level please?