

Pirkei Avot Community Learning Study Resource

Chapter 2: Mishnayot 1-4

Questions to Consider

Mishna 1.

What are ways in which you bring harmony into your life and into the lives of others? Do they ever overlap? What are ways you bring the opposite? Can you recall a time you made a friendship difficult because of your actions or words?

What can we learn from the open ended, non-specific phrasing of Rabbi Yehudah's answer? Do you think that Rabbi Yehudah is encouraging people to seek personal ways in fulfilling this teaching, or is there only one way?

Do you think it is clear what is even considered a minor or major commandment?

Mishna 2.

How does Torah study and the way of the world balance each other? How can we be lacking if we don't have both in our life? What do we learn about community and the importance of remembering those who came before us?

Mishna 3.

How can we develop healthy relationships with others who do have power? Is power always a bad quality?

Mishna 4.

What do you think is the "will of God?" What is challenging about aligning oneself with the Divine will?

Commentary

RAMBAM on 2:2: And afterwards, he said that he needs to be careful with a commandment that he thinks is light - like rejoicing in the holiday, and study of the Holy Tongue - as with a commandment the great weightiness of which is clear to you - like circumcision and tsitsit (fringes) and slaughtering of the Pesach sacrifice.

RAMBAM on 2:2: Rambam - "and all who toil for the community.." - this is the word of God directed towards those who toil for the public. For sometimes they are prevented from doing a mitzva while toiling for the needs of the public. He said that Hash-em will consider it for them as if they did the mitzva, even though they did not do it, since they are toiling l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven).

Bartenura on Pirkei Avot 2:4

"Do not separate yourself from the congregation": but rather share in their troubles. As anyone who separates from the congregation will not [live to] see the consolation of the congregation (Taanit 11a).