

The Dee

Pirkei Avot Project

**רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב, וְהִסְתַּלַּק מִן הַסִּפֵּק,
וְאַל תִּרְבֶּה לְעֵשֶׂר אֲמָדוֹת:**

Rabban Gamaliel used to say: appoint for thyself a teacher, avoid doubt, and do not make a habit of tithing by guesswork.

In Judaism, if a person is ever in doubt as to whether something is halachic or not, they should always consult a Rabbi. But, why do we need to consult on everything? Does this statement apply to non-halachic queries? Psychological studies have proved that the human's ability to 'guesstimate' can be impacted by a wide variety of influences - emotions and vocabulary used as well as snap-judgements that people make around a situation. Therefore, we should be appointing ourselves a teacher (a Rabbi) to help us with these doubtful situations.

Mishnah 1:6 also tells us to appoint a teacher for ourselves. Why the repetition? Rambam suggests that the previous Mishnah teaches us the importance of having a teacher to learn from whereas this Mishnah is telling us to have someone to make halachic decisions for us, thereby allowing the 'avoidance of doubt'. Discussing our ideas with someone adds important value and therefore by reviewing any doubt with a Rabbi, we will come to a halachic conclusion.

In the Torah, tithes were akin to taxes for the Jewish people and the crops grown were used to give to the Levites and support the poor. Nowadays, tithes are defined as 10 percent of your earnings, commonly used to give tzedakah. Sometimes, we're not entirely sure what 10% may be and again, we guess. However, we need to be exact as in the Torah, overestimating produced a problem as it forbade the Levites from eating the produce.

To conclude, appointing ourselves a Rabbi is important for our questions that may arise. However, many sources have suggested that instead of finding ourselves a teacher, we become our own teacher. By doing this, we will be able to clarify our own thoughts.

Discussion Points:

What aspects of my life could benefit from less doubt and the guidance of a teacher or Rabbi?
Have I ever made a decision based on guesswork rather than knowledge?
Do I strike the correct balance between relying on myself and relying on a Rabbi or teacher?

Idea by Nicole Ashton, London

לעילוי נשמת:

לאה בת רפאל הכהן וציפורה

מאיה אסתר בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

רינה מרים בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה



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