

PIRKEI AVOS CHAPTER 4 MISHNAH 6

רבי צדוק אומר, אל תעשם עטרה להתגדל בהם, ולא קרדם לחפור בהם. וכך היה הלל אומר, ודאשתמש בתגא, חלף. הא למדת, כל הנהנה מדברי תורה, נוטל חייו מן העולם:

Rabbi Tzadok said: do not make them a crown for self-exaltation, nor a spade with which to dig. Hillel also used to say, "And he that puts the crown to his own use shall perish." Thus, you have learned, anyone who derives worldly benefit from the words of the Torah, removes his life from the world.

R' Tzadok warns against using the Torah as a crown or a spade for personal gain. This makes sense from the perspective that one should never derive personal benefit from sacred items. Using sacred items for personal use or gain cheapens them and demonstrates disrespect for the sacred object. The difficulty with the *mishnah*, however, is that it seems to be inconsistent with a well-known *gemara*. The *gemara* in Pesachim (50b) teaches that one should always study torah, even *shelo lishmah* – out of ulterior motives, since *mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah* – if one studies Torah, even with ulterior motives, it will lead one to eventually study Torah with pure intentions and without a personal agenda. Seemingly, this *gemara* not only permits but even advocates studying Torah with a personal agenda in mind. Which approach is correct?

One approach that commentators propose is to differentiate between the time when one begins to study and when one is already an experienced student of Torah. When someone first studies Torah, it is often challenging and difficult. Therefore, to keep one motivated and engaged, the *gemara* recommends studying for ulterior motives. External rewards will allow the person to remain engaged so that he will gain the necessary experience and become more self-sufficient in his studies. At that point, he will no longer need the external motivation and will be driven to study with the proper motivation. Once he reaches that point, R' Tzadok's directive that one should not use the Torah as a crown or a spade with which to dig applies. Once one has tasted the sweetness of Torah and feels connected to Hashem, he should put aside the external motivators and focus on learning with the proper motivation, which is to connect to Hashem. At that point, he may no longer use the Torah as a crown or a spade for his personal benefit.

A second explanation relates to a slight nuanced difference between the two sources. The *gemara* talks about learning Torah *shelo lishma*, whereas our *mishnah* talks about using the Torah as a crown or a spade. The *gemara* talks about the **attitude** that one has whereas our *mishnah* talks about actively **using** the Torah as a tool to accomplish your goals. If a person wants to study Torah but is struggling, it is permitted to study with an

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ulterior motive. In this regard the external reward is what one uses to study greater motivation to study Torah. That is a good thing because it will eventually lead to studying with the correct motivation. What our *mishnah* restricts is actively using Torah as a tool for personal gain. The *mishnah* warns against using the Torah to enrich one's self because it is not leading to greater devotion to Torah, it is self-serving and that is a bad thing.

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