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S. O. Y. Literary Journal

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Puel class

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הרב נחום לאם

Rabbi Norman Lamm

1255 CARROLL STREET

Puel class for August 4,1851

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הרב נחום לאם

Rabbi Norman Lamm

1255 CARROLL STREET

PRESIDENT 8-5008

OUTLINE OF SAT. AFTERNOON CLASS ON ABOTH, PEREK II MISHNA 2

July 21, 1951

10 11 MICH PALIS NID ASITE ANA WHENKY)

1) ? means worldly ways, mundane matters, prosaic aspects of everyday life. Certain of these acts are not covered by specific mitzvoth. Eating your breakfast cereal after the (1) (1) and before / (1) is a normal act undirected by specific halachoth. The tanna tells us that all these mundame matters too shall be impregnated with the meaningfulness of Torah. If you eat because youare hungry, or because you want your daily fill of vitamins - there is nothing wrong with it, but you have not exploited your eating to the fullest extent. The point is - to eat so as to be healthy, so as to be able thus to serve G-d better. Drink to quench your thirst thus to be able to free your mind for the better performance of your duties to G-d and Man. And this lifting-up of the commonplace to the sublime is not an act of isolation, of becoming a hermit or recluse, but rather a new and pure way of enjoying life to the utmost. When the glutton eats a steak, he enjoys it only while eating, and he does not feel the satisfaction of having benefited others by his Nin with his Six 217, experiences more eating. The Jew, however, who combines than an ephemeral pleasure, for this act of eating for a great purpose inspires him to noble living and acting after he has done with his meal, and the consequences of this new and fresh attitude of dedication are apparent in the new gusto and zest with which he approaches ethival and social and religious life. In a word, this combination of the sacred and profane adds the element of joy. It gives one a new slant on life, the slant of a pleasant smile. And this is the secret of Hassidism. All your actions, no matter how mundame they may seem to you, become inspired verses in the prayer of your life. Eating and drinking rank with fervent prayer, and dancing becomes a religious rite. The most intimate marital acts, when endowed with this new meaningfulness, are, in the language of the Talmud, blessed with the Divine Presence. All of life, nothing excluded, becomes part and parcel of the Service of G-d. Indeed, it is told of a famous Hassidic leader that he traveled many weary days to visit his Master, and he felt elated because he was priveleged to learn one great secret from him. When he was pressed to explain himself, he said, "I did not even speak to him, but G-d granted me the opportunity of seeing him get dressed in the morning and I witnessed him tying his shoe-laces!" A secret? Most certainly. One must know how to tie his shoes so that this too becomes an act of dedication.

And when you have succeeded in integrating this Torag-attitude in your daily life, you have obviated sin. Not that you only don't sin, but that you haven't given him a fighting chance. How can one eat non-kosher food when the whole purpose of his eating in the first place is a holy one? Or how can one be dishonest in business if he sincerely dedicates all his dealings to the purpose of supporting himself comfortably so that he may thereby be able to have more time and undisturbed peace of mind to devote himself to the Divine functions of his existence? Not only haven't you sinnes, but the striving for the accomplishment of this rare combination of himself to the divine functions of the purpose of himself to the Divine functions of his existence? Not only haven't you sinnes, but the striving for the accomplishment of this rare combination of himself to the divine functions of the forgotten - no time to even think of it.

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Aboth, II, 2.

describes this type:

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The normal exposition of this Mishna is that what we spoke of before is a two-way relationship, a reversible reaction; like the chemist who writes an equation of formulae and in middle he puts two arrows facing in opposite directions. Just as one should put Torah into his Derech Eretz, so one should study Torah with the complement of Derech Eretz. One may have an agile mind, a facile understanding and an excellent memory and therefore have to exert himself very little to become a Torah-scholar. Good, but he has failed to combine Derech-eretz with his Torah. There is a Law in physics which states that the output is never greater than the input. What is easily gained is easily lost. But there is something even more profound in this statement) / (~ is a word which denotes a very specific type of "work", of Rabban Gamaliel. and that is - creative work. (Give example from Shabbos). And do you know what creative work implies? It implies an inside-to-outside transfer, not only absorbing but emitting, not only getting but giving. You may become convinced of the necessity of putting on Tefillin, and you do so. Good. But this is not yet creative. Until you have convinced your next-door neighbor that he too should put on Tefillin, you have not put into your And . You may firmly believe in the worthfulness of the UJA, and you may give handsomely, but until you have solicited the help of your friends you have not been creative. The "Taz" remarks that the daily morning blessing reads," (">) " N'w/ '/2 37 M 1242 7/07/", and Essek implies involvement, intertwining your whole personality in Torah, and then transmitting it to the outside world. One can serve G-d by becoming a recluse and disregarding the rest of the world, or he can serve G-d by living in Society. Which is preferrable? Chanoch, the Bible tells us, lived with G-d. P. 7/// 1 1/2 2/1/ 2/1/1 . The term used is reflexive, denoting not only walking, but living a way of life with G-d, to the exclusion of others. We know of no great social accomplishments by Chanoch. What happens after a man of this sort leaves the world? P')
I/(IAI): A) (I) (I) he simply is no longer here, he has
left no blessing, he has not changed the world one iota because he did not care about 1) gone and forgotten, his soul went back to G-d and none of it remained with humanity. Compare with him another great Biblical personality. A man whose fame rests precisely on his social qualities. Abraham is known as historytes most hospitable ANA 6 . 13 4 . He was the first great proselytizer, going among the man, the great people and spreading the knowledge of G-d among them. Did the world miss him when he ניאוץ לו לפתין השנה בו בו בו בו בו ושרה ניאם לו לה אין דאייו died? Is he remembered for his life? Listen: 1)J.101, that he just disappeared, but I'MY [Sok) , he was gathered to his people, a wonderful idiom which states the case exactly. A man who lives for his people is , after death, gathered unto these very people, he becomes part of their proud heritage, he leaves his blessings to eternity, and after his death his personality begins to unfold in the dynamic history of his people. His fellows and descendants first begin to discover and rediscover his greatness after his death. ("NY /n (on"), back to his people. A Yiddish phrase / 11/11 , but

telling of the sort of saintly but unsocial, uncreative life led by a man like Chanoch he says; ('Y A))() \ \(\times\) \ \(\times\) \ \(\times\) o, with his passing, his Torah passes, and people who witness this sort of tragedy are prone to ask 5,50 11/5/ 51/ 51/5?

The next step is frustration and keen disappointment, and thence - sin.

הרב נחום לאם

Rabbi Norman Lamm

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Aboth, II, 2.

Having the developed the theme of the necessity for sociability, the imperative that Torah be transmitted from one's self to others, the Tanna now warns us not to overload the wrong end of the balance. There are people, he tells us, and well do we know it, who socialize and institutionalize to the complete exclusion of purpose. Especially in our own day have we noticed that the leaders of our community organizations are professional social workers whose performances are perfunctory and who lack the burning zeal of men dedicated to high and honest ideals. There work with Tsibur is devoid of religious or ethical content, and . In one succint phrase, it is public-welfare work 136 without it is , for the sake of Heaven. This sort is A JUST BUIL which is not dedicated much worse than the selfish recluse we discussed before. The Chanoch-type can certainly harm no one, except by the method of causing disappointment in people. This socialite type who has no principles is dangerous. It is open territory for scoundrels and rascals of all sorts and shades. Is it, however, difficult to rectify a deteriorating situation of this sort? It depends. Almost all of public life suffers from some sort of corruption. The reformer, if he is to be successful, must know beforehand that there is some tradition this public has inherited which clamors for honesty. Otherwise his task is close to super-human. It is going to be a tough job reforming the life of Nationalist China's public officialdom. Ditto for almost all of South America. With our country it is different. Our founding fatherswere reputedly honest men. If so, if America has a tradition of honesty in its public life, them the contemporary phenomenon of corruption is only a passing fad if our reformers in the government and without will apply themselves to the problem properly. With us Jews, there is no doubt. We are not strangers in the field of public welfare and administration. Since Abraham, who founded the first Traveler's Aid Society, we Jews have specialized in this sort of work on through the Kehilla system until the UJA. And our tradition of public life is one of terrific honesty. It is this tradition of honesty and justice and dedication pine all which serves as apowerful and PU12/6 4135 sure guiding and steadying hand on our public and community life. PY A) NIY RAPP] / MY"6N ., the traditions of our fathers encourage us, and

py(A) m(Y A)) / MY"6 w., the traditions of our fathers encourage us, and their justice and honesty are an inspiration for us. And, says G-d to His people srael, as long as you just keep up that proud tradition, I will consider as if you had actually yourselves founded it:

yourselves founded it: