

משנה נשמה

לימוד משניות לזכות האשה החשובה והיקרה מרת שרה בת ר' יקותיאל יהודה ע"ה
Study of Mishnah for Sarah bat R. Yekusiel Yehudah 'Rohr ע"ה

The *Mishnah* is the text that is the foundation of our oral tradition.

Because the four Hebrew letters that spell the word *Mishnah* (משנה) can be transposed to spell the word *Neshamah* (נשמה), *soul*, it is traditional to study *Mishnah* in memory of the departed.

MRS. CHARLOTTE ROHR was the wife of Mr. Sami Rohr and mother of Mr. George Rohr, Mrs. Evelyn Katz, and Mrs. Lillian Tabacinic. A true woman of valor, she survived the ashes of the Holocaust and built a Jewish home of stature imbued with the spirit of Torah and loving-kindness. The Rohr family has taken a lead in promoting Jewish education and serves as a pillar of Jewish pride in countless Jewish communities around the world, working tirelessly to ensure a rich Jewish future.

The course you are currently attending, *The Land and the Spirit*, launches in 260 communities around the world during the week-long *Shivah* mourning period for Mrs. Charlotte Rohr. Mr. George Rohr is the inspiration and founding patron of the **Rohr Jewish Learning Institute**. It is therefore appropriate for us to open the course this week and the subsequent weeks of the *Sheloshim*, the thirty day-period of mourning, by studying a section of the *Mishnah* together in her memory.

The initial Hebrew letters of these *Mishnahs* spell out Mrs. Rohr's Hebrew name, *Sarah*.

May the merit of the Mishnah and Torah studied by the 10,000 students attending this course accompany her soul in the world of everlasting life. 🕯️





מַאי אֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קְבֵעַ

אָמוֹר מְעַט וְעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה
וְהוּי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר פָּנִים יְפוֹת

אבות א, טו

SHAMAI SAID: "MAKE YOUR TORAH STUDY SET
say little and do much
and receive every person with a pleasant countenance"

AVOT 1:15

This *Mishnah* relates a characteristic teaching of Shamai, who along with Hillel led the Jewish people a little more than 2,000 years ago. He was a man of great strength of character and with exacting expectations that the Jewish people could and would live up to their fullest potential. Because he saw that potential as already present, The *Zohar* teaches that the law will follow his opinion in the time of the *Moshiach*, when our potential for the good is fully actualized.

This *Mishnah* begins by telling us to make our study of Torah something permanent—its study should be essential to our lives. Even if we are so busy that we have little time free for study, nonetheless, those moments that we do set aside each day are never to be moved. Even more—we establish those times as the center of our day, realizing that the purpose we find in the Torah will set the worth of everything we do.



בִּי נְחוּנְיָא בֶּן הַקָּנָה הָיָה מִתְפַּלֵּל
בְּכְנִיסָתוֹ לְבֵית הַמְדֻרָּשׁ וּבִיצִיאָתוֹ תְּפִלָּה קְצֵרָה
אָמְרוּ לוֹ: "מַה מְקוֹם לְתַפְּלָה זוֹ?"
אָמַר לָהֶם: בְּכְנִיסָתִי אֲנִי מִתְפַּלֵּל שְׁלֵא תִּאָּרַע תִּקְלָה עַל יָדֵי
וּבִיצִיאָתִי אֲנִי נוֹתֵן הוֹדָיָה עַל חֶלְקִי
בְּרֻכּוֹת ד,ב

RABBI NECHUNIAH BEN HAKANAH
would pray a short prayer
on entering the House of Study
and on leaving the House of Study
They asked him: "What place is there for this prayer?"
He said to them: "When I enter I pray
that a [legal] mishap not happen because of me
and when I leave I give thanks for my lot".

BERACHOT 4:2

The Torah teaches that the nature of what we think, what we say and what we do are tightly interwoven. The thoughts we think become the words we say; the things we talk about become the things we do.

Life is filled with opportunities for teaching and learning, whether in the formal classroom or in the informal classroom of the workplace, the street or our homes. We teach most by the example of our lives. This *Mishnah* instructs us from the example of Rabbi Nechuniah that we should take our task seriously enough to pray about it, and never think that we could never make a mistake or that our errors don't matter.



יְהִי רוֹכֵב עַל הַחֲמֹר, יֵרֵד
וְאִם אֵינוּ יָכוֹל לֵירֵד, יַחְזִיר אֶת פְּנָיו
וְאִם אֵינוּ יָכוֹל לְהַחְזִיר אֶת פְּנָיו
יִכּוֹן אֶת לְבוֹ כְּנֹגֵד בַּיִת קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוּשִׁים

ברכות ד,ה

IF HE WERE RIDING ON A DONKEY
[and the time for prayer arrived], he should dismount
and if he cannot dismount, he should turn his face
and if he cannot turn his face
he should direct his heart
towards the Holy of Holies [in the Temple]

BERACHOT 4:5

Judaism realizes prayer's great value, and spends a great deal of time establishing the structures of the prayers that mark the cycle of our days and years.

But life is often rough and messy, and doesn't always allow us ready opportunities to pray in the ideal way the rabbis describe. What then? Do we give up and say that we are mastered by conditions beyond our control. This *Mishnah* tells us—not necessarily.

Ideally, we should stand and face Jerusalem and the place of the Holy of Holies when we pray. But if that proves impossible, we can still direct our hearts to that same holy meeting place of heaven and earth, and our prayers will still connect.