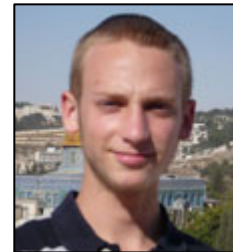




THE ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

by Josh Feigenbaum

I recently finished studying *Pirkei Avot*, which is a compilation of *mishnayot* from some of the greatest Rabbis in our history. When learning *Pirkei Avot*, one really gets different views on the meaning of Torah and life.



Chapter 2, *Mishna* 6 says: “In a place where there is no man, strive to be a man”. To me this means that everybody has an obligation to step up and become who they are meant to be. You should not try to live your life becoming somebody you are not. If you did not have a completely unique purpose in this world then you would not exist. Therefore, in a situation where no one can step up and fulfill what needs to be done, it may be a sign that you need to grab control of your life and lead by example, by being a man.

In the sixth chapter Rabbi Meir explains what it means to be a complete person. To him, a righteous person is one who loves *Torah* and *Hashem*. To be a *Tzaddik* means that people will call you “friend and beloved. You love the Omnipresent, you love all creatures, you gladden the Omnipresent and gladden all [His] creatures.” To be righteous you love people, and people love you. The best leaders in a community are those who are approachable and who people can feel comfortable with. Judaism wants us to go out into the world and help our neighbors instead of gossiping about them. It wants us to show kids who struggle with *Shabbat* to show them what it means to celebrate *Shabbat*; not to get angry with them. It wants us to embrace a fellow person for whoever he is, instead of calculating his net worth or social value. Most of all, it wants us to be truthful with ourselves, our lives, and our community; and not to follow blindly into what society tells us to be.

Therefore, my challenge to everyone is to become an even more lovable person. Befriend an enemy, talk to someone who really annoys you and ask them how they are doing, or invite someone who is not *shomer shabbat* to your house to celebrate at your dinner table. Spend at least 20 minutes a day thinking about how to become a better person. Try to disconnect from your computers, your cellphones, your emails, and your workload; and just spend time with friends or family appreciating nature or playing a board game. You will feel better about yourself, and can acquire a good name which is “the greatest thing you can do for yourself in this world”. So, love yourself, love *Hashem*, and love every creation; and you will be a good Jew no matter what people tell you.