

# The Dee Pirkei Avot Project

שְׁמַעְיָה וְאַבְטַלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. שְׁמַעְיָה אוֹמֵר, אָהַב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה, וְשָׂנֵא  
אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת, וְאֵל תִּתְּוֹדַע לְרִשׁוּת:

Shemaiah and Abtalion received [the oral tradition] from them. Shemaiah used to say: love work, hate acting superior over others, and do not attempt to draw near to the ruling authority.

The first clause "*ahav et hamalacha*", translates as: love work. To whom is this addressed? And what kind of work should that person love? One idea is that it is aimed at ordinary people, discouraging them from sitting around idly doing nothing. The message of this part of the Mishna is:

Don't be lazy or idle! Love work and be productive!

In the second clause, Shemaya is urging us to hate the "*rabbanut*". Presumably he's not telling us to hate the Rabbinat, so what does it mean? Some interpret *rabbanut* as referring to the character trait of arrogance or 'lording it over others', so Shemaya is encouraging humility. Others interpret it to mean that one should avoid positions of authority.

Whilst the first interpretation is intuitive – of course one should try to eliminate arrogance – why would Shemaya discourage taking positions of leadership?

One explanation suggests that the problem is not serving in a position of leadership, but rather actively seeking the position for its own sake, for the honour and power that it brings. If one does not chase the glory, but aims to guide and inspire others to do good simply because one has the vision to do so, that is praiseworthy and admirable.

Alternatively, this clause can be interpreted in light of the one which follows. The final clause of this Mishna, "*v'al titvada larashut*", is generally understood to mean: don't become known to the ruling authorities and don't seek to curry favour with them. The Yayin Levanon explicitly limits this to governments that do not follow Torah law. In other words, this is not a blanket discouragement from associating with authority but rather from those figures not guided by Torah values. This could then be read back into the middle clause so that "*sneh et harabbanut*" is not a general warning against taking a position of leadership, but against taking a position that could lead to compromising one's values. If it is a leadership position that enables one to work towards higher ideals, bettering society and bringing people closer to Torah values, then that is to be encouraged.

### Discussion Points:

Especially as we begin summer vacation, what can we do to ensure that we still אהב את המלאכה and spend our time productively?

Have you ever served as a leader and successfully gotten your friends, classmates, or family to do something positive without any title or recognition?

Have you ever been in a position of leadership that was a positive, growth-oriented experience, and/or in one that was not? What made the difference?

לעילוי נשמת:

לאה בת רפאל הכהן וציפורה

מאיה אסתר בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

רינה מרים בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

