

# Pirkei Avot 1:8

## Translation:

**Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel says: On three things the world is sustained: on judgment, on truth, and on peace, as it is it says (Zechariah 8:16): "(Speak the truth to one another,) render true and perfect justice in your gates."**

## Maimonides

*Judgment* refers to governing the state with uprightness. In the Fourth Chapter we have explained that *truth* refers to the intellectual virtues, and *peace* refers to the moral virtues. Were these three to be found, existence would undoubtedly be in the state of perfection that is possible for it.

## As a Tree by the Waters

Reuven Bulka

Silence is basic for the body. There are similarly basics for the corporate body of humankind, for the world. If *mishna* 2 deals with the three pillars on which the world stands, namely, *Torah, Sacred Service* and the *practice of loving-kindness*, this culminating *mishna* of the first chapter deals with the three things which preserve the world. The pillars of *mishna* 2 are the utopian goals, the ultimate which humankind should strive for and which are the basis for even starting the human condition. All of Avot may be seen as the attempt to clearly define these three pillars and how they are best made a reality. The three pillars are the summit. The summit, however much it must remain the focus of

our strivings, is preceded by a long climb. In the meantime, there are certain requisites which must be fulfilled if the world is to preserve itself and avoid destruction. These requisites are *truth, justice, and peace*. *Truth* is the basis of all social contact. If what one says is not what one means, suspicion and alienation will reign instead of trust and acceptance. *Justice* is the basic staple for social responsibility. Humans must respect the rights, property, and dignity of others, and legislate the protection of these ingredients. In truth, we say what we mean. In justice, we mean what we say. Together, truth and justice merge to make peace possible. Peace without truth is a fraud; peace without justice the harbinger of chaos. The peace which is founded in truth and justice can at least *preserve the world*, and ensure its availability so that those who desire to reach the summit of *Torah, Sacred Service, and the practice of loving-kindness* can attempt the climb.

Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld

The difference would seem to lie in the slight discrepancy in language between the two mishnas. Above the focus was on what the world is based upon; i.e., upon what basis or for what reason was the world created. And the mishna proceeded to list the three pillars which form the purpose of the creation. They are: (a) that man serve G-d, (b) that we act towards one another with kindness and brotherhood, building perfect and Divine societies, and (c) that we study Torah and become spiritual people capable of forming a relationship with G-d. This is of course only the most hopeless of summaries -- of our discussion there which in itself attempted to explain far too much in far too little space. Nevertheless, for today's purposes, we note what Mishna 2 **was** about -- and what ours is **not** about: G-d's purpose in creating the world

רָבוֹן שְׂמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר :  
עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם  
קַיָּם, עַל הַדִּין וְעַל הָאֱמֶת וְעַל  
הַשְּׁלוֹם, שְׂנֵאָמַר : אֱמֶת  
וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם שְׂפָטוֹ  
בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם.