

# MANDEL TEACHER EDUCATOR INSTITUTE

## Cohort 7– Seminar 6

### Which is Greater Talmud or Maaseh?

Sunday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 21 Adar

#### *a. Background information*

**R. Tarfon:** a member of the third generation of the Mishnah sages, who lived in the period between the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.) and the fall of Bethar (135 C.E). He served as a student of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and Rabban Gamliel and is referred to as a role model for honoring his parents (Kidushin 31b).

**R. Akiva** (ca.50–ca.135 CE) is a central and leading authority in the matter of Rabbinic Jewish tradition, and one of the most central and essential contributors to the Mishnaic literature to the point that he is referred to in the Talmud as "*Rosh la-Chachamim*" (Head of all the Sages). R. Akiva served as a teacher-student of Rabbi Tarfon.

#### *b. Tractate Kiddushin 40b*

"R. Tarfon and the Elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nithza's house in Lydda, when this question was raised before them:

Is study (*Talmud*) greater or practice (*Maaseh*)?

R. Tarfon answered saying: Practice is greater.

R. Akiba answered saying: Study is greater.

Then they all answered and said: Study is greater for it leads to practice."

#### *c. Explore and discuss with your Havruta partner*

1. Practice (in the sense of doing a mitzvah ) is greater- what could that possibly mean?
2. Study is greater - what could that possibly mean?
3. *Study is greater, for it leads to practice.* How might you account for the rabbis' way solving the conflict?
4. We can expand the discussion to think about relationships between learning and action in general.
  - \* Does every instance of study lead to practice?
  - \* Could this statement refer to the content and/or to the process by which something is studied?  
Or perhaps to both?
  - \* Draw on your personal experience as *student* and as *teacher* to articulate specific examples that would help make sense of this statement.