

Two Classic Works in Jewish Ethics and Morality

PIRKEI AVOS

**SYNTHESIZED
THE CHAPTERS OF THE FATHERS**

**With Inspiring and Integrated Elucidations Based on
Traditional Jewish Commentaries**

&

The Rosh's

ORCHOS CHAYIM

THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

With a Special Addition of

**ALL 613 COMMANDMENTS
IN PROSE**

Accurately Following the Rambam's Seminal "Sefer Hamitzvos"

Translated and Compiled by REUVEN BRAUNER

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15 Sivan 5774

15th Yahrtzeit of the Passing of my Beloved Mother זצ"ל

Dedicated to
My Dear Parents of Blessed Memory

Harry and Rosa Brauner

ר' צבי בן חונה ראובן הלוי ז"ל
מרת רצה בת מנשה הכהן ז"ל

This volume comprises two fundamental and complementary classics in Rabbinic literature concerning authentic Jewish ethical teachings: the Mishna Avos, called Pirkei Avos, and Rabbeinu Asher ben Yechiel, the Rosh's, Orchos Chayim. Both are primary compositions on the Torah's philosophy of proper living with precise instructions for achieving content and happy lives.

Each have been newly translated and, for Pirkei Avos, elucidated with concise notes and comments derived directly from traditional Jewish commentaries.

Also added here is a third, original work, All 613 Commandments in Prose which lays out all the Torah's Commandments in easy to read form, and is exclusively based on the Rambam's (Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvos.

Reuven Brauner
Raanana, Israel
June 13, 2014
15 Sivan 5774



PIRKEI AVOS - SYNTHESIZED

Chapters of the Fathers

Translated and Compiled by Reuven Brauner

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

Preface

For the believing Jew, Pirkei Avos (Chapters of the Fathers) is most significantly unlike any other collection of common wise sayings or book of thoughtful quotations.

For although these maxims are attributed to one particular Sage or another, Pirkei Avos is really Torah Shebe'al Peh, the Oral Torah, the Word of God, received at the Revelation at Sinai by Moses, transmitted by him to Joshua, and then from generation to generation until the great sages, the Tannaim of the Mishna and Braisa, who ultimately committed these adages to writing for posterity.

Pirkei Avos has achieved immense popularity among Jews everywhere, one might dare say, even exceeding that of Solomon's archetypical work on Jewish ethics and morality, Sefer Mishei, the Book of Proverbs, and in spite of the latter's inclusion in the Holy Canon, the Tanach. Yet, for hundreds of years it has been Pirkei Avos which has been the greater source of study and commentary.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

Pirkei Avos - Synthesized is a modest attempt to amalgamate the essence of each Mishna with the insights of several popular commentaries with the intent of enabling the reader to quickly and enjoyably absorb the fundamentals and insights of each judicious and meaningful saying.

Included herein is the Hebrew text of each Mishna with translation. The translation of several Biblical verses is based on the Hirsch Siddur edition.

Primarily sources used for this work were:

Rashi, Rabbeinu Yona, Rav Ovadiah M'Bartenura, Ikar Tosafos Yom Tov, Biurei HaGra, Rabbi Yaacov Emden, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, Siddur Avodas Yisroel of R' Seligmann Baer, Eitz Yosef in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos, and Rabbi Eliezer Levi in Mishna M'fureshes. Due to the brilliant uniqueness of Rabbi Hirsch's commentary, it has been singled out and shown in the lightface type.

The following Introduction has been adapted from the encyclopedia Otzar Yisrael and Sefer Otzar Dinim U'Minhogim, both of R' J.D. Eisenstein.

Footnotes are based on the commentary of R' Chanoch Albeck.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

Introduction

Pirkei Avos (Chapters of the Fathers) or simply Avos is a Mishna in Seder Nezikim set between tractates Avodah Zarah and Horios. It contains five chapters of 'real' Mishna and a sixth chapter, a Braisa, called Kinyan Hatorah (Acquisition of the Torah) whose main theme is praises of the Torah.

Avos is replete with ethical and moral instruction, and Derech Eretz (proper conduct), which the 'fathers' of the Great Assembly transmitted to us, hence its name, Pirkei Avos. Herein are the fundamental principles (another meaning of the word Avos) and beliefs to which every religious Jew should adhere, and by which he should conduct himself throughout his entire life.

The Tanna begins with "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua...until the men of the Great Assembly...until Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakkai." This is mentioned in order to emphasize that even matters of ethics were not invented by the Sages of the Mishna, but were also announced at Sinai (R. Ovadiah of Bartenura).

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

The Rambam (Maimonides) in his introduction to Seder Zeraim said that once (Rebbe) completed the laws of judging (Tractate Sanhedrin), he addressed himself to the personal behavior of the judge himself, with which these Mishnas begin. He did this for two reasons. First, in order to indicate that their authority, tradition and teachings are true and correct and, therefore, they are worthy of proper, high honor. Second, is to learn good conduct from their sayings. But, who needs this more than the judge himself for if an ordinary person were to behave unethically, it would harm but himself alone, whereas unethical and immodest behavior of the judge affects the public, as well as himself.

The first four chapters of Avos include sayings from sixty outstanding sages of Israel who flourished over a period of some 450 years from the time of Shimon the Righteous until the redaction of the Mishna by Rabbi Judah Hanassi. Some sages are quoted once, others multiple times. Although most are ethical adages, several Mishnas are more like commentaries on Scripture, as for example with Rebbe Chananyah ben Tardion (3:2), Rebbe Akiva (3:14) or Ben Zoma (4:1). Many Mishnas are in Aramaic being the language of the people at the time.

The fifth chapter is noted for the many anonymous sayings organized in descended order from the number ten, “The world was created with ten sayings”, “Seven things are characteristic of the dumbbell”, “Four characteristics are found among men”, “Anyone who exhibits these three traits is of the students of Abraham, our forefather”, etc.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

The Gemara (Baba Kamma 30a) states, “Rab Judah said, He who wishes to be pious must fulfill the laws of Seder Nezikin by being careful in matters that may cause damage. But Rabba said, he should apply to himself **the matters** dealt with in the Tractate Avos, i.e. issues affecting ethics and right conduct”.

From here, it has become the universal practice to regularly recite and learn Pirkei Avos, even in synagogue, although many different customs have arisen as to when they are to be read. Some recite a chapter or more a week before or after Shabbos Mincha between Pesach and Shavuos or Succos, others until the 17th of Tammuz or Rosh Hashanna, and others all year round. Early sources for these customs include Seder Rav Amram Gaon, Siddur Rashi, Sefer Hamanhig, and the Kol Bo.

CHAPTER 1

ONE

Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua who, in turn, transmitted it to the Elders, who transmitted it to the Prophets¹. The Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly². They³ said three things, "Be deliberate⁴ in your judgments, set up many students, and make a fence⁵ around the Torah".

א מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמָסָרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מְסָרוּהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, הֵיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהֵעֲמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה:

The Torah in its entirety, both the Written Law and the Oral Law, including these lessons, was derived from God at Sinai. It has been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation, from Moses down to our own day. ♦ As all of Israel was present at Sinai,

¹ From Shmuel to Malachi.

² At beginning of the Second Temple period.

³ The Men of the Great Assembly.

⁴ Before deciding a case.

⁵ In order not to violate a Torah prohibition.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 1:1

the Giving of the Torah was a matter of experience and actual knowledge, not one of faith.

You should be patient, serious and deliberate before judging other people; set up many students for yourself, even when you are old; and create safeguards by making decrees and ordinances to promote and preserve the Law. ♦ Setting students up means to make certain that they are thoroughly well-versed and can check the sources themselves, and that they have enough conviction to rely on their own faith. ♦ Teach Torah to whoever wants to learn it, regardless of their level of understanding.

TWO

Shimon the Righteous was one of the last surviving members of the Great Assembly. He was wont to say, "The world is supported on three pillars: The Torah, the Service, and acts of mercy⁶".

ב שְׁמֵעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מִשְׁיָרֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הַעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים:

The world can exist only when there is observance of Torah, prayer and Temple service, and acts of loving-kindness, such as lending money to the poor. ♦ Lending is greater than charity as it does not shame the poor man. ♦ Loving-kindness is greater than charity since it is performed with the rich as well as with the poor, the dead as well as with the living, one's person as well as with one's money. ♦ The world was only brought into being so there would be a place for these things to exist. ♦ Torah is knowledge of the truth and the Will of God; Service refers to dutiful obedience and proper attitude towards God; and Loving-kindness is selflessness, brotherhood and creating happiness and prosperity for our fellow men.

⁶ With your fellow man.

THREE

Antigonus, from Socho⁷, received it⁸ from Shimon the Righteous. He was wont to say, "Do not be like those slaves who serve their master only because they want a reward. Rather, be like those slaves who serve their master, regardless of any reward⁹; and may the awe of Heaven¹⁰ be upon you."

ג אַנטִיגֶנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְּדִיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֶל תִּהְיוּ כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, אֲלֵא הָיוּ כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב שְׂלֵא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם:

Perform the Commandments simply because they were so demanded by God, and out of awe of Him recognizing how great He is, and not because of the reward you will receive for observing them. ♦ But also serve God out of love. For the one who serves God out of love is meticulous with the Positive Commandments, while the one who serves Him out of fear is careful with the Prohibitions. ♦ Being called to serve God, as we Jews have been, is in itself the richest reward.

⁷ One of two cities in Judea with this name.

⁸ The Torah.

⁹ Only out of love.

¹⁰ מורא is from יראת השם, fear of God, but also that God sees what you do.

FOUR

Yosse ben Yoezer from Tzereidoh¹¹ and Yosse ben Yochanan, the Jerusalemite, received it from them¹². Yosse from Tzereidoh said, "Make your home a gathering place¹³ for the sages, and cover yourself in the dust of their feet¹⁴, and drink thirstily¹⁵ their words".

ד יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מהם. יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה אומר, יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים, והוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, והוי שותה בצמא את דבריהם:

Your home should be a place where distinguished scholars (are willing to) assemble. Sit by their feet to learn Torah, drink their every word thirstily, and serve them. ♦ Even the ordinary conversation of sages is instructive and should be studied.

¹¹ The name of a city.

¹² Alternative reading, from him, Antigonus.

¹³ A study hall.

¹⁴ A way of honoring them.

¹⁵ With great desire.

FIVE

Yosse ben Yochanan, the Jerusalemite, said, "Open your home for providing welfare¹⁶, and poor people should become members of your household. Do not overly engage in conversation with a woman." As this refers to his wife, even more so does this apply to his fellow's wife. From here the Sages learned that one who overly engages in conversation with a woman brings perniciousness upon himself¹⁷, and nullifies the words of Torah. In the end, he shall inherit Gehinnom.

ה יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר, יהי ביתך פתוח לרוחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. באשתו אמרו, קל וזמיר באשת חברו. מפאן אמרו חכמים, כל זמן שאדם מרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנום:

Open your home to wayfarers, and either make the indigent members of your household or hire them as household staff. ♦ Make your home a place to relieve the distress of those in want and who are suffering. Let the homeless share in the pleasures of your home and hospitality. ♦ Do not engage in idle chatter with women, even your wife, for most such discussions are frivolous, without modesty, and generally wind up by speaking gossip. Better you should spend your time learning Torah. ♦ A man cannot think about Torah and women at the same time. It is either one or the other. ♦ Do not chat with women because people might get suspicious of your motives. ♦ Talking leads to desire, and desire leads to action. ♦ Nevertheless, respect and

¹⁶ For way-farers.

¹⁷ You will just end up sinning.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 1:5

attach importance to your wife's views, opinions and counsel. Hold her in esteem and show genuine appreciation for her wisdom by engaging her in serious conversations.

SIX

Yehoshua ben Perachyoh and Nittai the Arbelite¹⁸ received it from them¹⁹. Yehoshua ben Perachyoh said, "Appoint for yourself a rabbi²⁰, acquire a friend²¹ and assume every man to be innocent²²."

וְיְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִטַּי הָאַרְבְּלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב, וְקַנְיָה לְךָ חֵבֵר, וְהָיוּ לָךְ אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת:

Everyone must choose a rabbi for himself to teach him Torah, and proper behavior. ♦ Find a teacher who can help you attain spiritual perfection. ♦ One should not teach himself Torah, but must always look for a teacher. A teacher is preferable than relying on your own reasoning. One remembers more from his teacher than from what he learns on his own. ♦ Acquire a good, trustworthy friend. ♦ Rebuke from a true friend will not diminish your mutual admiration. ♦ Judge everyone favorably and treat them charitably, for as you judge others, so will God judge you.

¹⁸ Arbel was a city in the Lower Galilee.

¹⁹ Yosse ben Yoezer and Yosse ben Yochanan.

²⁰ To whom you go to regularly to learn from.

²¹ Someone with whom you bond and with whom you go to learn together.

²² If you could judge him as being either innocent or guilty, judge him innocent.

SEVEN

Nittai the Arbelite said, ז נתאי הארבלית אומר, הרחק משכון רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע, ואל תתיאש מן הפרענות:
 "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not associate with an evil person, and do not despair from punishments²³".

Avoid bad neighbors for they will have a harmful and detrimental influence upon you. ♦ Before you check out a new house, check out the neighborhood. ♦ Avoid contact and dealings with wicked people for their dishonesty, thoughtlessness, and indifference will soil you, too. ♦ Neither despair if you do not see them as yet punished nor contemplate joining with them in their fleeting moment of success. Know that the wicked will be punished, sooner or later. ♦ Do not take for granted that your wealth is everlasting. ♦ Do not become a member of a community where evil people dominate.

²³ Even though things are going good for you now, if you have sinned, know that you will be punished.

EIGHT

Yehudah ben Tabbai and Shimon ben Shetach received it from them. Yehudah ben Tabbai said, "Do not make yourself like one of those who advise the litigants²⁴. When litigants first appear before you, assume them to be evil²⁵, but when they depart from you, look at them as guiltless²⁶, inasmuch as they did accept upon themselves the judgment."

ז יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן שטח קבלו מהם. יהודה בן טבאי אומר, אל תעש עצמך כעורכי הדין. וכשיהיו בעלי דין עומדים לפניך, יהיו בעיניך פושעים. וכשנפטרים מלפניך, יהיו בעיניך כזכאים, כשקבלו עליהם את הדין:

A judge must not do anything to assist a litigant, such as by bringing evidence to support his position or by helping him formulate his arguments. ♦ Do not give tips to the litigants. ♦ A judge must look at all litigants suspiciously in order to investigate their claims thoroughly. However, after the verdict, he is to view them as being innocent people who have willingly accepted the judgment. ♦ A judge must not favor one party over another, such as a poor man over a rich man or an honorable person over an ordinary man. ♦ A judge must rule objectively and dispassionately without regard to personalities.

²⁴ By teaching them what to say when before the judges in order that they receive a favorable verdict.

²⁵ Question them thoroughly making sure they are not trying to deceive you.

²⁶ As honest and righteous people.

NINE

Shimon ben Shetach said, **ט** שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן שֵׁטַח אוֹמֵר, הָיִי מְרֻבָּה
"Thoroughly investigate the לְחַקֹּר אֶת הָעֵדִים, וְהָיִי זָהִיר בְּדַבְרֶיךָ,
witnesses, and be very careful with שָׂמָא מִתּוֹכֶם יִלְמְדוּ לְשַׁקֵּר:
what and how you say things, lest
they learn from you how to falsify
matters".

Investigate the veracity of the witnesses very well. ♦ Measure your words very carefully lest the witnesses and litigants learn from your line of questioning and your inflections as how to lie by adjusting their testimony accordingly.

TEN

Shemayah and Avtalyon received it from them. *שְׁמַעְיָה וְאַבְטַלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. שְׁמַעְיָה אָמַר, אֲהוּב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה, וְשִׂנְאָה אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת, וְאַל תִּתְוַדַּע לְרִשְׁוֹת:* Shemayah said, "Love work, hate having to be in a position of ruling over others, and do not become chummy with the ruling authorities²⁷".

Love working. ♦ This is so even if one has enough money that he does not have to work, since idleness leads to boredom, and boredom leads to sin. ♦ The one who does not live off charity lives longer. ♦ Hate having power over others. Rather, flee from this. ♦ The demands and pressures on one in a position of power bury him in that position. ♦ Do not become intimate with the authorities in order to receive entitlement to rule over others. ♦ The more one serves a king, the less one serves the King. ♦ The purpose of these maxims seems to be to counsel us to preserve our personal independence.

²⁷ Make no such efforts.

ELEVEN

Avtalyon said, "Wise men! Take great care with what you say²⁸ because you will be condemned²⁹ to an exile in a place of bad waters³⁰, and your students who follow you will drink and die³¹, and you will find that the name of Heaven has been profaned³²."

יֵאָבְטְלִיּוֹן אָמַר, הִזְהָרוּ בְדַבְרֵיכֶם, שְׁמַא תְּחֻבּוּ חֻבַּת גְּלוּת וְתִגְלוּ לְמָקוֹם מַיִם הָרָעִים, וְיִשְׁתּוּ הַתְּלִמִּידִים הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם וְיָמוּתוּ, וְנִמְצָא שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מְתַחֲלָל:

Sages must be extra careful with what they say. The consequences of misunderstood words and rash statements can be disastrous. ♦ In reality, this warning applies to everyone, except that the Sages influence more people, so it is addressed to them. ♦ Scholars are cautioned against delivering inaccurate, vague or ambiguous lessons which may inspire erroneous views and result in spiritual and moral deviations from goodness and truth.

²⁸ Before your students.

²⁹ You will be held accountable for what you say.

³⁰ A reference to detrimental opinions and beliefs which will be quoted in your name.

³¹ For they will sin or because the teaching was not in accordance with the Halacha.

³² People will either say that you died young even though you learned Torah or you learned Torah but did not teach it in accordance with the Halacha.

TWELVE

Hillel and Shammai received it from them. Hillel said, "Make yourself a disciple of Aaron who loved peace, pursued peace, loved all human beings, and drew them near to the Torah."

יב הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם. הלל אומר, הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרבו לתורה:

Emulate Aaron, love and actively pursue peace, and love all people without distinction, for we are all the children of one father and, thus, brothers; attract them to Torah. ♦ All mankind are creatures of God. ♦ Pursuing peace means to go to wherever you have to, to attain it. ♦ Sacrifice for peace! but not at the expense of compromising your loyalty to God and your duty to Him.

THIRTEEN

He³³ said, “One who seeks to exalt³⁴ his own name, loses his name. The one who does not add³⁵ will diminish³⁶. The one who does not learn is deservant of death. The one who uses the crown³⁷ will vanish³⁸.”

ג' הוא הנה אומר, נגד שמה, אבד שמה. ודלא מוסיה, יסיה. ודלא יליה, קטלא חיב. ודאשתמש בתגא, חלה:

The one who is selfishly greedy in the pursuit of honor and fame will ultimately be repudiated for his reprehensible conduct. ♦ Whatever good reputation he may have gained at the outset will vanish apace. ♦ One must always add to his learning, because he who fails to do so loses the opportunity for a worthwhile and worthy life. ♦ Someone who says, “I have learned everything there is to learn in the Torah”, forfeits his life. ♦ Do not exploit the crown of Torah-learning or Torah scholars for your own benefit or for manipulating Nature, as by incanting God’s Name for magical purposes, for this will remove you from this world.

³³ Hillel.

³⁴ Pursues veneration of his own name.

³⁵ To his learning.

³⁶ His learning.

³⁷ Of Torah for his own benefit.

³⁸ From this world.

FOURTEEN

He³⁹ was wont to say, "If I am not for myself⁴⁰, who will be for me? But, if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now⁴¹, when⁴²?"

יָד הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָי:

Pursuit of self-perfection, performance of Mitzvahs and Torah-learning are, first and foremost, one's own responsibility. ♦ Never keep your learning for yourself alone, but spread it amongst others. Do things for the benefit of others and not just for yourself. ♦ It is only when one, in selfless devotion, actively works to create, to establish and to increase the happiness and prosperity of his fellowmen, does he begin to become truly human in the image of his God. ♦ Do now while you are alive, for there is no doing after death, only reward or punishment. ♦ Torah must be learned every day, and regularly, because, if not, it will be forgotten. Torah is to be your main objective in life.

³⁹ Hillel.

⁴⁰ If I do not improve my ways.

⁴¹ If I do not do now what I am obliged to do.

⁴² My procrastination will cause me to miss the proper time to do things.

FIFTEEN

Shammai said, "Make your Torah enduring (a regular activity); say little⁴³ and do a lot; and welcome everyone hospitably".

טו שַׁמַּאי אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה תוֹרַתְךָ קֹבֵעַ. אֲמֹר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה, וְהָוִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר פְּנִים יְפוֹת:

Establish and adhere to a regular schedule of learning Torah. ♦
 Make Torah permanent, and everything else transitory. ♦ Do
 not come to change the Halacha or the Tradition. ♦ Say little
 and do much, for this is the way of the righteous. ♦ Receive
 everyone warmly, friendly and with a kind disposition, as this
 promotes brotherhood, unity, and solidarity. ♦ Angry people are
 disliked. ♦ Be ready at all times to, with the best of your ability,
 fulfill whatever good and reasonable request another may make of you.

⁴³ Promise little.

SIXTEEN

Rabban Gamliel was wont to say, "Appoint for yourself a rabbi⁴⁴; remove yourself from doubt; and do not tithe by means of estimating." טז רבן גמליאל הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רַב, וְהִסְתַּלַּק מִן הַסֵּפֶק, וְאַל תִּרְבֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹר אֲמָדוֹת:

Find a trustworthy and conscientious instructor with whom you can confer in cases of uncertainty. ♦ Always be precise in your tithing, measuring, weighing and calculations, and do not rely on estimates which inevitably result in errors.

⁴⁴ Appoint for yourself a rabbi to help you remove any doubts you may have.

SEVENTEEN

Shimon his⁴⁵ son said, "My entire life, I have grown up among the Sages and I have taken note that nothing is better for the body than silence; and it is not the talk⁴⁶ that matters, but the action⁴⁷; and he who adds words, brings sin."

יז שמעון בנו אומר, כל ימי גדלתי בין החכמים, ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב אלא שתיקה. ולא המדרש הוא העקר, אלא המעשה. וכל המרבה דברים, מביא חטא:

Silence is the best response to humiliation. ♦ Speech of men and their discussions should center on spiritual and moral concerns and not much on the physical aspects of life and personal affairs. Regardless, too much talk is always bad. ♦ **Although the real objective is to learn in order to do, learning for learning's sake can also be of great value.** ♦ **Unfounded conceptual extrapolations lead to sin.**

⁴⁵ Rabban Gamliel.

⁴⁶ Of Torah.

⁴⁷ Performing the Mitzvoahs.

EIGHTEEN

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "The world rests on three pillars: the Law, the truth and peace, as it says (Zechariah 8), *'Administer truth, justice and peace at your gates.'*"

יח רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר, על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על הדין ועל האמת ועל השלום, שנאמר (זכריה ח) אמת ומשפט שלום בשעריכם:

The world can only exist if there is truth, justice and peace. ♦
 Repentance and Torah are truth. ♦ Without truth there would only be error, falsehood and deceit. Without justice there would selfishness, violence, aggression and usurpation. Without peace there would be no one who would freely sacrifice of his own for the sake of peace. ♦
 The one who habitually lies even though he has neither loss nor gain will become incapable of speaking the truth, because lying has now become his intrinsic nature.

CHAPTER 2

ONE

Rebbe⁴⁸ asked, "What is the correct course that a man should choose? One which is admirable for himself⁴⁹, and others see it honorable for him⁵⁰. Be as careful with a light Mitzvah as with a more serious one, since you do not know the reward for Mitzvahs. Consider the reward⁵¹ you shall receive versus any loss you may incur by performing a Mitzvah, and think of the retribution you shall receive versus the pleasure you had from committing a sin. Always remember these three things and you shall not come to sinning: Contemplate what is above you, an eye which sees, an ear which hears, and all your deeds are recorded in the book."

א רבי אומר, איזוהי דרך ישרה שיבור לו האדם, כל שהיא תפארת לעושיה ותפארת לו מן האדם. והוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה, שאין אתה יודע מתן שכרן של מצוות. והוי מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה, ושכר עברה כנגד הפסדה. והסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עברה, דע מה למעלה ממך, עין רואה ואזן שומעת, וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין:

⁴⁸ Rebbe Yehudah HaNassi.

⁴⁹ It is good for him, it fits him.

⁵⁰ Others praise him for his ways and he finds favor with them.

⁵¹ Its ultimate reward.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:1

The noblest path for you to travel through life is to act in a way which brings glory to yourself by observing God's Torah and by carefully fulfilling all your obligations to your fellow man. ♦
Make yourself acceptable to people by avoiding extreme behavior. Even being overly generous is to be shunned. ♦
Execute every Torah obligation with equal earnestness, eagerness and enthusiasm for no one knows what the real rewards are for any Mitzvah. Have in mind that the ultimate reward for performing a Mitzvah exceeds any loss you might have now for performing it, and the final punishment for a transgression exceeds any of its short-term benefits and ephemeral pleasures. ♦
♦ The reward for each Mitzvah has been withheld from us in order that we perform all the Mitzvahs. Otherwise, we would only perform the more profitable ones. ♦ The recompense for any evil act is instantaneous; it takes the form of a sense of loss of moral purity, a weakening of moral fiber, a greater propensity to additional sin, and the realization that we have failed to fulfill our purpose, sinning against our destiny. ♦ Do not say that God does not care about simple Mitzvahs, "What is it to Him if I do it or not?" He cares! All acts have everlasting ramifications. ♦ God withholds the reward in this world for performing a Mitzvah in order that the person will do it with faith. ♦ Remind yourself at all times of three things, and you will never sin: Know that there is an omniscient God above you; that He sees and hears everything that you do; and that all your deeds are recorded. ♦ God forgets nothing.

TWO

Rabban Gamliel, son of Rebbe Yehudah the Prince said, "How pleasant it is to combine the learning of Torah with Derech Eretz⁵², the way of the land! If you toil in both, sin shall be forgotten⁵³. And any Torah which is not accompanied by work will, in the end, be nullified and you will be drawn to sin⁵⁴. And all those who engage themselves with the public should do so for the sake of Heaven. The merits of their⁵⁵ fathers assist them⁵⁶, and their⁵⁷ righteousness shall remain with them forever. And I shall reward you⁵⁸ greatly, as if you had done it."

ב רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר, יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ, שיגיעת שניהם משפחת עון. וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה, סופה בטלה וגוררת עון. וכל העמלים עם הצבור, יהיו עמלים עמהם לשם שמים, שזכות אבותם מסייעתן וצדקתם עומדת לעד. ואתם, מעלה אני עליכם שכר הרבה כאלו עשיתם:

How good is it to combine Torah-learning with gainful employment! ♦ For if you become weakened by work and tired from learning Torah, you will have no energy or time to sin. ♦ Nor will you have any desire to steal since you have of your own. ♦ Torah without work results in idleness and invites sin. ♦ One who serves the public must do so only for the sake of Heaven and not in order to reap personal benefit or honor. Your reward will be great. It will be calculated as the total merit accrued by the

⁵² An occupation.

⁵³ You will be so preoccupied in those other matters that you will be too weary to think about sinning.

⁵⁴ Such as thievery and robbery, and many other sins.

⁵⁵ The public's.

⁵⁶ In succeeding.

⁵⁷ Fathers'.

⁵⁸ Who toil with the public.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:2

public for all their good deeds. ♦ Those involved in community affairs must be prompted solely by a sense of duty without ulterior motives. ♦ The one who inspires and causes others to do good deeds and fulfill their duty has even greater merit than the one who does the same with his own resources.

THREE

“Be⁵⁹ cautious with the ruling authorities inasmuch as they do not bring people close to themselves except for their own purposes. They appear loving when they see this as advantageous for themselves, but will not stand by you in your hour of need.”

ג הוּו זְהִירִין בְּרִשׁוֹת, שְׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין לּוֹ לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצַרְךָ עֲצָמָן. נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשִׁעַת הַנְּאֻתָן. וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לּוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשִׁעַת דְּחֻקוֹ:

Be skeptical of governmental officials and of politicians. They only get chummy with people who serve their personal agendas. They favor someone when they can gain something from this association, but will disassociate themselves and not support him when he is in trouble.

⁵⁹ This is Rabban Gamliel speaking. This is addressed to those who have to deal with the government.

FOUR

He⁶⁰ was wont to say, "Do⁶¹ His Will⁶² as if it were your own so that He shall do your will as if it were His. Negate your will⁶³ in place of His Will so that He shall nullify the will of others⁶⁴ in place of your will." Hillel said, "Do not separate yourself from the public⁶⁵, never trust yourself⁶⁶ until the day of your death, and do not judge your fellow⁶⁷ until you are in his place⁶⁸. Never say anything the end of which cannot be heard⁶⁹, and never say that you will learn⁷⁰ when you will have free time⁷¹ to do so, for you may never be free."

ד הוא הִיָּה אֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כְּרְצוֹנְךָ, כְּדֵי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנְךָ כְּרְצוֹנוֹ. בְּטַל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנוֹ, כְּדֵי שְׂיִבְטַל רְצוֹן אֲחֵרִים מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנְךָ. הִלֵּל אָמַר, אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוֹר, וְאַל תִּתְאַמֵּן בְּעַצְמְךָ עַד יוֹם מוֹתְךָ, וְאַל תִּדְּיוֹן אֶת חֵבְרֶךָ עַד שְׂתִּגִּיעַ לְמִקּוֹמוֹ, וְאַל תֹּאמַר דְּבַר שְׂאֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְשִׁמוֹעַ נְסוּפּוֹ לְהִשְׁמַע. וְאַל תֹּאמַר לְכַשְׁאֲפֹנָה אֲשֶׁנָּה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְּנָה:

Do Heaven's Will with the same fervor as if it were your own will, so that Heaven will fulfill your will as if it were Heaven's Will. When there is a conflict, defer your will in favor of Heaven's Will

⁶⁰ Rabban Gamliel the son of Rebbe Yehuda Hanassi.

⁶¹ Whole-heartedly.

⁶² Observe the Torah, perform the Commandments.

⁶³ To sin.

⁶⁴ Who may want to cause you harm.

⁶⁵ Participate in their sorrows, joys and enterprises.

⁶⁶ Believing that you are so righteous that you will not sin.

⁶⁷ Negatively.

⁶⁸ You find yourself in the same predicament as he is in, and you do not falter.

⁶⁹ Say nothing which is incomprehensible nor tell secrets.

⁷⁰ Torah.

⁷¹ From your various occupations.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:4

so that Heaven will cancel other people's will in favor of yours. ♦
Do not say of any word that it cannot possibly be heard, for in the end
it will be heard.

FIVE

He⁷² was wont to say, "The ignorant man⁷³ cannot dread sin, the unlearned person⁷⁴ cannot be virtuous, the meek man cannot be learned⁷⁵, and the overly-meticulous person⁷⁶ cannot be a teacher. The one always engaged in commerce cannot become wise, and if you find yourself in a place where there are no men⁷⁷, try to be a man."

ה הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֵין בּוֹר יִרָא חַטָּא,
וְלֹא עִם הָאָרֶץ תְּסִיד, וְלֹא הַבִּינְשׁוֹן לְמִיד,
וְלֹא הַקְּפָדוֹן מְלַמֵּד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה
בְּסִחּוּרָה מְחַפִּים. וּבְמָקוֹם שְׂאִין אַנְשִׁים,
הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לְהִיּוֹת אִישׁ:

If you abandon the public in their time of need, they will abandon you in yours. ♦ It is not to the individual, but the community that God entrusted His Torah as an inheritance for all generations to come. ♦ Do not assume that you will always remain faithful to God. You may even come to abandon Judaism at an old age. ♦ Never judge anyone until you are in his shoes. He may have failed the test, but so might have you. ♦ Never begin to say something which you might not be able to finish, lest the listener

⁷² Hillel.

⁷³ One lacking both Torah and good character.

⁷⁴ One weak in his Torah learning.

⁷⁵ He will be too embarrassed to ask questions about the things he does not understand.

⁷⁶ Who is quick to anger. He has no patience to answer his students' questions.

⁷⁷ Who do what has to be done.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:5

misunderstand your words and be misled. ♦ Alternatively, do not refrain from expressing a good and true opinion for ultimately you will be heard. ♦ **Do not reveal secrets, including your own, to anyone.** ♦ **Never say that you will get around to learning Torah when you have the time, lest you never have the time, and end up never learning.**

A person without Torah will not fear sinning for such a person does not see the long-term consequences of his actions, and he denies God's system of reward and punishment. ♦ **A person without Torah cannot be fully virtuous.** ♦ **A shy person cannot become a scholar.** ♦ **Bashfulness is a worthy attribute, except for when learning.** ♦ **Never be embarrassed to ask a question.** ♦ **An impatient person cannot teach.** ♦ **The more business dealings one engages in, the less wisdom he will have and the less time he will have to teach others.** ♦ **When there is no one else to lead and instruct, lead and instruct.** ♦ **But if there is someone else to lead, go learn Torah.** ♦ **If you are qualified and have the skills to act as leader and spokesman, endeavor to take part in affairs where articulate leadership is needed, for under such conditions reticence would not be modest, but downright criminal.**

SIX

He⁷⁸, too, saw a skull floating on the surface of the water and said, “Because you drowned others, you were drowned; and those who drowned you, will be drowned⁷⁹.”

ו אף הוא ראה גלגלת אחת שצפה על פני המים. אמר (לה), על דאטפת, אטפוד. וסוף מטיפוד יטופוד:

God punishes measure for measure.

⁷⁸ Hillel.

⁷⁹ By the same standard you used (regarding them), you will be measured.

SEVEN

He⁸⁰ was wont to say, "The more meat, the more worms⁸¹. The more assets, the more worries⁸². The more women, the more spooks⁸³. The more maidservants, the more licentiousness. The more servants, the more theft. The more Torah, the more life. The more learning⁸⁴, the more wisdom. The more counsel, the more understanding. The more charity and righteousness, the more peace. If you acquire a good name, you acquired it for yourself, but if you acquire words of Torah⁸⁵, you acquire a life in the World to Come."

ז הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, מְרַבָּה בְּשׂוֹר, מְרַבָּה רָמָה. מְרַבָּה נְכֹסִים, מְרַבָּה דְאָגָה. מְרַבָּה נְשִׁים, מְרַבָּה כְּשָׁפִים מְרַבָּה שְׁפָחוֹת, מְרַבָּה זְמָה. מְרַבָּה עֲבָדִים, מְרַבָּה גְזֹל. מְרַבָּה תוֹרָה, מְרַבָּה חַיִּים. מְרַבָּה יְשִׁיבָה, מְרַבָּה חֲקָמָה. מְרַבָּה עֲצָה, מְרַבָּה תְבוּנָה. מְרַבָּה צְדָקָה, מְרַבָּה שְׁלוֹם. קָנָה שֵׁם טוֹב, קָנָה לְעַצְמוֹ. קָנָה לוֹ דְבָרֵי תוֹרָה, קָנָה לוֹ חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

The more one eats and drinks, the more good food for the worms there will be. ♦ The more assets one has, the more worrying there will be. ♦ The more women one has, the more superstition there will be. ♦ The more maidservants one has, the more decadence there will be. ♦ The more servants one has, the more thievery there will be. ♦ However, the more Torah one has, the

⁸⁰ Hillel.

⁸¹ In the grave.

⁸² How to prevent losing his money.

⁸³ Women were more superstitious.

⁸⁴ Lit., sitting – before the sages.

⁸⁵ Which you can never lose.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:7

more life there will be. ♦ The more students one has, the more wisdom there will be. ♦ The more one asks for sage advice, the more understanding there will be. ♦ The more one gives charity and encourages others to give, the more peace there will be. ♦ The acquisition of a good name for oneself is good, but the acquisition of Torah-learning will buy one life in the World to Come. ♦ Money one can inherit, but a good name one has to earn for himself. ♦ Who is the one who has “acquired” Torah? This the individual who absorbed the words of Torah to such a degree that they have become part and parcel of his thoughts and emotions and he has learned how to apply them in study and in his personal development.

EIGHT

Rabban Yochanan be Zakkai received the Torah from Hillel and Shammai. He⁸⁶ was wont to say, "If you learned a lot of Torah, do not think good of yourself⁸⁷, because it was for this you were created." Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five students: Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus, Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chananyah, Rebbe Yosse the Kohen, Rebbe Shimon ben Nesanel, and Rebbe Elazar ben Arach. He enumerated praises for each one. Of Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus he said, "A plastered cistern⁸⁸ which does not lose a drop⁸⁹." Of Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chananyah he said, "Happy is she⁹⁰ who gave birth to him." Of Rebbe Yosse the Kohen he said, "Compassionate." Chananyah he said, "Happy is she⁹¹ who gave

הַרְקָנוּס בְּכַף שְׁנֵיָהּ, מְכַרֵּיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.
 אָבָא שְׂאוּל אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ, אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל
 חֻכְמֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכַף מֵאֲנָאִים וְהִבִּי אֱלֹהֵי עוֹר
 וְהִשְׁמַעְתִּי הַיְיָ אֵלֵינוּ מִלִּבִּי בְּיָאֵל שְׂמֵדָה בְּיוֹ
 תְּלִיָּהּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ, שֶׁהָיָה אֵלֵינוּ אֶתְּבִילֵי עֲמֻדָה,
 כִּי לְכֹד נִוְצָרְתָּ. חֲמִשָּׁה תְּלִמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ
 לְרַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי, וְאֵלֵינוּ הוּא, רַבִּי
 אֶלְיעֶזֶר בֶּן הַרְקָנוּס, וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן
 חַנְּנִיָּה, וְרַבִּי יוֹסֵי הַכֹּהֵן, וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן
 גִּתְיָאֵל, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָד. הוּא הָיָה
 מוֹנֵה שְׁבֻתָּה. רַבִּי אֶלְיעֶזֶר בֶּן הַרְקָנוּס,
 בּוֹר סוּד שְׂאִינוֹ מֵאֵבֶד טֶפֶה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
 בֶּן חַנְּנִיָּה, אֲשֶׁרֵי יוֹלְדָתוֹ. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי
 הַכֹּהֵן, חֲסִיד. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גִּתְיָאֵל, יֵרֵא
 חֲטָא. וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָד, מַעְיָן
 הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר מַעְיָן
 הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל
 חֻכְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזָנִים, וְאֶלְיעֶזֶר
 בֶּן

⁸⁶ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.
⁸⁷ As one who thinks himself special since he did something voluntarily.
⁸⁸ Nothing is lost, nothing is absorbed in the ground.
⁸⁹ He forgets nothing.
⁹⁰ His mother.
⁹¹ His mother.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:8

birth to him." Of Rebbe Yosse the Kohen he said, "Compassionate." Of Rebbe Shimon ben Nesanel he said, "Fears sin." And of Rebbe Elazar ben Arach he said, "An overwhelming spring"⁹²". He⁹³ was wont to say, "If all the sages of Israel would be on one side of a balance scale, and Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus on the other side, he would outweigh them all". Abba Shaul said in his⁹⁴ name, "If all the sages of Israel would be in one side of the scale, and even with Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenas there, and Rebbe Elazar ben Arach on the other side, the latter would outweigh them all."

Do not be arrogant because you have learned a great deal of Torah, since it was for that reason you were created.

From among his many students, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai had five particularly noteworthy disciples who had very different character traits.

One was Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus who never forgot anything of his learning. ♦ Another was Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah who was so wise and moral that it brought great praise on his family, for surely he learned his love of learning and good behavior from home. When his mother was pregnant with him, she would go to the Study Halls and beg for mercy that her child would be a Sage. ♦ Another was Rabbi Yossi HaCohen who was remarkably virtuous. ♦ Another was Rabbi Shimon ben Nesanael who had great fear of sinning. ♦ Another was Rabbi Elazar ben Arach who was constantly churning out more and more Torah wisdom, like a never-ending spring. ♦ Our Sages have stated, "Between Sinai and Oker Harim, Sinai is preferred."

⁹² He adds to what he has learned from his teachers.

⁹³ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

⁹⁴ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:8

This means the person who has a breadth of Torah knowledge is preferred over the one who has great analytic skills in Torah.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai thought that Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus was greater than all the rest combined, while Abba Shaul thought that it was Rabbi Elazar (ben Arach) who was the greatest.

NINE

He⁹⁵ said to them, "Go out and see which is the straight way to which a person should adhere. Rebbe Eliezer said, "A good eye"⁹⁶. Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A good friend"⁹⁷. Rebbe Yosse said, "A good neighbor"⁹⁸. Rebbe Shimon said, "Seeing what will be"⁹⁹, i.e. common sense". Rebbe Elazar said, "A good heart." He said to them, I prefer the words of Rebbe Elazar ben Arach over your words for his insight encompasses those you suggested¹⁰⁰. He said to them, "Go see what is the bad way from which a person should distance himself." Rebbe Eliezer said, "A bad eye." Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A bad friend". Rebbe Yosse said, "A bad neighbor"¹⁰¹. Rebbe Shimon said, "Borrowing without repaying,

ט אָמַר לָהֶם, צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיזוֹהֵי דֶרֶךְ יִשְׁרָה שְׂיִדְבַק בָּהּ הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר אָמַר, עֵינַי טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אָמַר, חֵבֵר טוֹב. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אָמַר, שָׁכֵן טוֹב. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אָמַר, הַרוֹאֶה אֶת הַנּוֹלֵד. רַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר אָמַר, לֵב טוֹב. אָמַר לָהֶם, רוֹאֶה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעִזָּר בֶּן עֶרְוֹ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שְׁבַכְלָל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם. אָמַר לָהֶם צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אֵיזוֹהֵי דֶרֶךְ רְעָה שְׂיִתְרַחַק מִמָּנָה הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר אָמַר, עֵינַי רְעָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אָמַר, חֵבֵר רְעָה. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אָמַר, שָׁכֵן רְעָה. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אָמַר, הַלֵּוָה וְאִינוּ מִשְׁלָם. אֶחָד הַלֵּוָה מִן הָאָדָם, כְּלוּהַ מִן הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שְׁנֹאֲמַר (תהלים לז) לֵוָה רָשָׁע וְלֹא יִשְׁלָם, וְצַדִּיק חוֹנֵן וְנוֹתֵן. רַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר אָמַר, לֵב רְעָה. אָמַר לָהֶם, רוֹאֶה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעִזָּר בֶּן עֶרְוֹ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שְׁבַכְלָל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם:

⁹⁵ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

⁹⁶ One who is never jealous of anyone, and he gives of his own to others.

⁹⁷ One should acquire a good friend for himself.

⁹⁸ One should search out for a good neighbor.

⁹⁹ Think of the consequences of your actions and you will be more careful with what you do.

¹⁰⁰ Everything is dependent upon having a good heart.

¹⁰¹ One whom you should avoid.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:9

regardless if he borrows from a שְׁבִכְלֵל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם:
person or he borrows from the
Holy One¹⁰², blessed be He, as it says (Psalms 37), '*Evil is the borrower
who does not repay*¹⁰³, and he who deals generously and is a giver is
righteous'." Rebbe Elazar said, "A good heart". He said to them, "I
prefer the words of Rebbe Elazar ben Arach since they encompass all
your words."

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai asked these students what they
thought is the preeminent nature that a person should adhere to
in his life.

Rabbi Eliezer:

A person should not be jealous of anyone else, he should be
satisfied with what he has, and he should look upon
everyone and everything in a favorable light. ♦ Never place
obstacles into the path of the happiness and prosperity of your
neighbor and gladly do whatever may promote his welfare.

Rabbi Yehoshua:

A person should make sure that he has a good friend who
can admonish him when necessary, and exhort him to do
good, but also that he himself should act as a good friend to
others to do the same for them.

¹⁰² One who borrows from a person is as if he is borrowing from God.

¹⁰³ When he borrowed, he did not calculate how he was going to pay his debt. Consequently, he gets into trouble.

Rabbi Yosse:

One should have a good neighbor, because a neighbor is close-by day and night, unlike a friend who is only there some of the time. He should also learn to be a good neighbor himself by teaching himself how to act in a neighborly and friendly manner. ♦ One should only live in the neighborhood of good people.

Rabbi Shimon:

One should be responsible and always consider the short and long-term consequences of his actions and words. ♦ Such a person will never be guilty of frivolous and reckless behavior.

Rabbi Elazar:

One should have a good heart, for all dispositions come from the heart. If one is good, it is because he has a good heart. ♦ One should only will good for others. ♦ One with a good heart is incapable of desiring evil and is ready for every good endeavor. His heart is receptive only to the good and directed to the good alone.

To this Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai agreed saying, “What Rabbi Elazar said includes what all the others have said”. ♦ Generous and benevolent people are beneficial to everyone.

Then Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai asked them what is negative from which a person should distance himself?

Rabbi Eliezer:

A bad eye. ♦ Such a person experiences distress when others prosper and rejoices when others suffer loss and sorrow, grief and misery.

Rabbi Yehoshua:

A bad friend. ♦ Those characterized with a bad eye or heart or bad friends or neighbors are dangers to our moral purity. We are not only forbidden to associate with them, we must distance ourselves from them.

Rabbi Yosse:

A bad neighbor.

Rabbi Shimon:

The one who does not repay his loans, for a person who borrows with no intent of repaying is an evil thief. ♦ He is the opposite of the one who sees the consequences of his actions. He should have calculated if he would have the means to repay his debts on time. ♦ He should also have been concerned about how his defaulting would impact the lender and those dependent on him.

Rabbi Elazar:

A bad heart.

To this Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai agreed saying, “What Rabbi Elazar said includes what all the others have said”.

TEN

They each said three things. Rebbe Eliezer said, "Your fellow's honor should be as dear to you as your own, do not be quick to anger, repent the day before your death, and warm yourself by the fire of the Sages¹⁰⁴, but be careful not to burn yourself with their hot coals¹⁰⁵ for their bite is the bite of a fox¹⁰⁶, their sting is the sting of the scorpion, their hiss is the hiss of a snake, and all their words are like fiery coals".

י הם אמרו שלשה (שלשה) דברים. רבי אליעזר אומר, יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך, ואל תהי גות לבעוס. ושוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך. והוי מתחמם כנגד אורן של חכמים, והוי זהיר בגחלתן שלא תפוח, שנשיכתן נשיכת שועל, ועקיצתן עקיצת עקרב, ולחישתן לחישת שרף, וכל דבריהם כגחלי אש:

Each of these students had three sayings they were wont to say.

Rabbi Eliezer:

Honor your fellow as you would honor yourself; do not be quick to anger; and repent the day before your death. Not knowing when you might die, repent every day. ♦ Although anger is a perfectly normal human trait, being angry is characteristic of fools. ♦ To this he added two more things: warm yourself with the fire of the Sages, but do not get too close to them for you may come to burn yourself. This means

¹⁰⁴ Become close to the Sages to listen to their words. From this point on, more is added to these three initial things.

¹⁰⁵ Be careful that you show them no disrespect.

¹⁰⁶ A bite which is difficult to heal.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:10

do not think that you know so much as to be able to argue with them. You probably do not, and they will cut you down to size quickly. ♦ The Sages' words are a fiery force. Many an ancient precept or ordinance may seem "burned out", obsolete and extinct, but they hold within them an eternal flame which will burn the hand that would touch them with irreverence. ♦ Torah scholars are as dangerous as foxes whose bites are sharp and deep, poisonous as scorpions, and astute as snakes. Their words are like burning coals.

ELEVEN

Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A bad eye, evil passions and misanthropy remove a person from this world".

יא רבי יהושע אומר, עין הרע, ויצר הרע, ושנאת הבריות, מוציאין את האדם מן העולם:

Rabbi Yehoshua:

A bad eye, an evil inclination, and misanthropy remove a person from this world. ♦ What is a “bad eye”? This is either someone who is never satisfied with what he has and always wants more or it is someone who is jealous of others and schemes to harm them. ♦ Why do these things “remove a person from this world”? Because hatred brings one to perform evil deeds. ♦ Lust kills.

TWELVE

Rebbe Yosse¹⁰⁷ said, "Your fellow's money should be as dear to you as is your own¹⁰⁸. Prepare yourself for learning Torah, because Torah is not inherited¹⁰⁹. All your deeds should be done for the sake of Heaven".

יב רבי יוסי אומר, יהי ממון חברך חביב עליך כשלך. והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה, שאינה ירשה לך. וכל מעשיו יהיו לשם שמים:

Rabbi Yosse:

Treat your fellow's money as if it were your own; everyone must learn his own Torah because Torah wisdom is not inherited; and do everything for the sake of Heaven and in purity. "Everything" includes eating, drinking and having relations. ♦ What does it mean to "treat your fellow's money as if it were your own"? This means do not charge interest, be fraudulent or dishonest in business. ♦ It is not enough merely not to be envious of the wealth of our fellow-man or to view it with unconcern, we should be happy when he prospers, we must not stand by idly if we can guard him from injury, and we should rejoice at any opportunity we may have to help him improve his lot.

¹⁰⁷ Rebbe Yosse the Kohen.

¹⁰⁸ Inasmuch as you are careful not to lose it.

¹⁰⁹ You must learn it on your own.

THIRTEEN

Rebbe Shimon¹¹⁰ said, "Be careful with saying Krias Shema and prayer. When you pray, do not pray in a perfunctory manner¹¹¹, but do so compassionately and with supplications before the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says (Joel 2), '*For He is merciful and forbearing, He is patient, withholding His anger. He is full of loving-kindness, and forgiving of badness.*' And do not hold yourself evil in your own eyes¹¹²".

יג רבי שמעון אומר, הוי זקיר בקריאת שמע ובתפלה. וכשאתה מתפלל, אל תעש תפלתך קבע, אלא רחמים ותחנונים לפני המקום ברוך הוא, שגאמר (יואל ב) כי חנון ורחום הוא ארך אפים ורב חסד ונתחם על הרעה. ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך:

Rabbi Shimon:

Be meticulous to say the Shema and the various Prayers in their correct times, and recite them with the properly prescribed texts. ♦ When you pray, pray with compassion and as a supplication, and not like it was some obligatory burden. ♦ Never consider yourself a sinner who God abandons. That is, never give up hope that God will answer your prayers and have mercy on you. Your soul is holy and pure, and no one inherits the sins of his forefathers. ♦ This is a world where we can save ourselves from sin by prayer

¹¹⁰ Ben Nesanael.

¹¹¹ Do not pray simply because you are required to.

¹¹² Do not consider yourself an evil person, so that you will not come to do evil, and even if others do not know you as an evil-doer. Alternatively, do not do evil even if no one else sees you. Act in private as you do in public.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 2:13

and repentance. ♦ Rather, consider yourself average, for someone who holds himself to be evil will not see the malevolence of his sins or he may despair about the efficacy of his repentance and not even try to repent.

FOURTEEN

Rebbe Elazar¹¹³ said, "Be diligent in your Torah learning, know how to respond to the heretic¹¹⁴, and know before whom it is that you toil. He¹¹⁵ is trustworthy with His workers, and He pays them for their efforts."

יֵד רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר, הָיִי שָׂקוּד לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה, וְדַע מָה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹס. וְדַע לְפָנֵי מִי אַתָּה עֹמֵל. וְנֶאֱמָן הוּא בֵּעַל מְלֶאכֶתְךָ שִׁישְׁלֵם לְךָ שְׂכָר פְּעֻלָּתְךָ:

Rabbi Elazar:

Be persistent and diligent in your Torah-learning, including Talmud and Halacha, until you know all its principles, details and Laws. ♦ Know how to respond to the heretic. ♦ Only the one who continuously and thoroughly studies Torah, and delves into it with devotion will clearly see the speciousness and invalidity of the scorners' allegations and arguments and know that they are founded on ignorance and distortion of the facts. ♦ Know before whom you toil, and who the real boss is. ♦ Do not worry, for He will pay your wages.

¹¹³ Ben Arach.

¹¹⁴ Who engages you in disputations.

¹¹⁵ God.

FIFTEEN

Rebbe Tarfon said, "The day¹¹⁶ is short, the task¹¹⁷ is great, and the workers are lazy. Yet the reward is great, and the Boss is demanding."

טו רבי טרפון אומר, היום קצר והמלאכה מרבה, והפועלים עצלים, והשכר הרבה, ובעל הבית דוחק:

Although life in this world is short and we have so much Torah to learn and observe, we are lazy. Remember, however, that our final reward is great, and God is very demanding. ♦ All people are indolent by nature, some more than others.

¹¹⁶ Life.

¹¹⁷ Learning Torah.

SIXTEEN

He¹¹⁸ was wont to say, "It is not for you to finish the job nor are you free to avoid it¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰. If you learned a lot of Torah, you shall receive a great reward. He is trustworthy to pay the wages for your work. Know, too, that the righteous ones shall only receive their full payment in the future¹²¹."

טז הוא הנה אומר, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה. אם למדת תורה הרבה, נותנים לך שכר הרבה. ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פועלתך. ודע, מתן שכרו של צדיקים לעתיד לבוא:

Do not despair given the immense task of learning and observing so much Torah since you are not expected to complete this task, only that you must be constantly engaged in it. You cannot shirk this responsibility. ♦ The good that God wants to see accomplished on Earth is not all meant for one individual to complete. Any human being can contribute only one fraction to the whole. It is only through the united efforts of all that the salvation to come into flower on Earth can be brought about. Everyone must make his contribution. ♦ You will receive reward for whatever Torah you learn and for the amount of effort you exert in thwarting your evil inclination which seeks to divert you from your mission. ♦ You will also be punished for the time you wasted when you could have learned Torah. ♦ The ultimate reward for the righteous, however, will not be given in this world, but is held for them in the World to Come.

¹¹⁸ Rebbe Tarfon.

¹¹⁹ Therefore, do not despair in not being able to complete the task of Torah.

¹²⁰ Do not say, 'Since I am willing to forfeit my reward, I will not have to learn'.

¹²¹ The World to Come.

CHAPTER 3

ONE

Akavia ben Mehalalel said, "Contemplate three things and you shall not come to sin. Know from where you came, know to where you are going, and know before whom it is that you shall have to give an accounting. 'From where you came' – a putrid drop. 'To where you are going' – to a place of filth, decay and maggots. 'To whom you shall have to give an accounting' – to the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."

א עקביא בן מהללאל אומר, הסתפל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה. דע, מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחסבון. מאין באת, מטפה סרוחה, ולאן אתה הולך, למקום עפר רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחסבון, לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא:

Constantly be cognizant of three things and you will not come to sin, for you will then be infused with a great sense of humility: ♦ Human life, including yours, began with but a putrid drop of semen. ♦ The end for everyone is death. ♦ You will be buried deep in the ground and eaten by worms and maggots. ♦ You personally will be held fully accountable for your words and deeds by the King of Kings, God.

TWO

Rebbe Chanina¹²², Sgan Hakohanim¹²³ said, "Always pray for the welfare of the government¹²⁴ for if it were not for fear of it, the people would eat each other up alive." Rebbe Chananyah ben Tardion said, "Two people who sit together and do not exchange words of Torah between them are a caucus of clowns, as it says (Psalms 1), '*Do not sit among a gathering of mockers*'. However, if two sit together and words of Torah are exchanged between them, the Divine Presence hovers over them, as it says (Malachi 3), '*When those who fear God speak each with his fellow, God listens attentively, and He hears, and He writes this in the Book of Remembrance before Him, of those who fear God and contemplate His Name.*' From here we learn of two, but from where do we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, fix the wages for even for one person who sits and engages in Torah? It says

ב רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר, הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות, שאמלא מורא, איש את רעהו חיים בלעו. רבי חנניא בן תרדיון אומר, שנים שיושבין ואין ביניהן דברי תורה, הרי זה מושב לצים, שנאמר (תהלים א), ובמושב לצים לא ישב. אבל שנים שיושבין ויש ביניהם דברי תורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר (מלאכי ג), אז נדברו וראי יי איש אל רעהו ויקשב יי וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי יי ולחשבי שמו. אין לי אלא שנים. מנין שאפלו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה, שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר, שנאמר (איכה ג), יושב בדד וידם פי נטל עליו:

¹²² Alt. Rebbe Chanania.

¹²³ The Kohen who was responsible for supervising the other Kohanim and their Service in the Temple.

¹²⁴ Their peace is your peace.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:2

(Lamentations 3), *'Although he may sit alone, he may feel at ease, since he (knows that he) shall receive his due' ''*.

Pray for the peace of the ruling authorities for it is they who instill fear in the population in order to maintain public order. ♦ For if the government could not exercise its authority, the hand of everyone would be lifted up against all the others and all of society would disintegrate. ♦ The truly righteous empathize with the sorrows of all human beings and pray for their peace and welfare

If two sit and do not discuss Torah, they sit in a place of mockers. Whereas, if the two discuss Torah, God's Holy Presence is found between them. ♦ God bestows charm on those who remain silent to the harassment of scoffers. ♦ One who squanders his time and does not learn Torah, ridicules its value. ♦ These scorners are foes of God's Law who, by glibness of speech, undermine the respect and reverence in which the Torah should be held. ♦ God will also reward the one who sits alone engaged in Torah, for this is as if the entire Torah was (created) just for him.

THREE

Rebbe Shimon said, "Three who ate at one table and did not exchange words of Torah are compared with those who ate sacrifices for the dead (i.e. idols), as it says (Isaiah 28), '*For all the tables were entirely filled with vomit*¹²⁵.' However, when three eat at one table and speak Torah, it is like they are eating at God's table¹²⁶, as it says (Ezekiel 41), '*And he spoke to me saying, This is the table before God.*' "

ג רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו מזבחי מתים, שנאמר (ישעיה כח), כי כל שלחנות מלאו קיא צאה בלי מקום. אבל שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ואמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו משלחנו של מקום ברוך הוא, שנאמר (יחזקאל מא), וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני ה' :

If three sit at the table and do not discuss Torah, it is as if they are dedicating their efforts to worthless idolatry, for the Name of God is never mentioned. ♦ Meals, instead of being part of the spiritual and moral aspects of living, become only acts of animal gratification. ♦ If, however, they were engaged in Torah, it would be as if they were eating in the presence of God Himself.

¹²⁵ A reference to idolatry.

¹²⁶ Like the altar before God.

FOUR

Rebbe Chanina ben Chachinai said, "The one who stays awake at night, the one who walks on his way alone and the one who empties his heart for vanity¹²⁷, gives up his life." ד רבי חנינא בן חכנינאי אומר, הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלַּיְלָה וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בְּדַרְךְ יְחִידִי וְהַמְפַנֶּה לְבוֹ לְבַטָּלָה, תָּרִי זֶה מֵתָחִיב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ:

The one who ponders useless matters at night or the one who walks alone at night in dangerous places without thinking Torah thoughts, and the one who daydreams about worthless subjects, puts his life in danger. ♦ Instead of utilizing those quiet moments for serious meditation and reflection, he wastes them on frivolous and idle thoughts. He is sinning against his own soul.

¹²⁷ Without Torah.

FIVE

Rebbe Nechunya ben Hakanna said, "Anyone who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah will have the burden of the government¹²⁸ and the yoke of daily drudgery¹²⁹ removed. Anyone who casts off the yoke of Torah, will be burdened with the yokes of government and daily drudgery."

ה רבי נחוניא בן הקנה אומר, כל המקבל עליו על תורה, מעבירין ממנו על מלכות ועל דרך ארץ. וכל הפורק ממנו על תורה, נותנין עליו על מלכות ועל דרך ארץ:

Anyone who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah has the burden of the government removed from him. ♦ However, the one who removes the yoke of Torah puts upon himself the burden of the government, and the burden of making a living. ♦ That is, he will not feel oppressed by those burdens.

¹²⁸ Toiling for them or giving them money.

¹²⁹ He will not have to work hard for a living. Others will toil for him.

SIX

Rebbe Chalafta ben Dosa from Kfar Chanania¹³⁰ said, "If ten sit and engage in Torah, the Divine Presence will be present among them, as it says (Psalms 82), '*God is present among the congregation of the Lord*¹³¹.' And from where do we learn that this will also occur among five? It says, (Amos 9), '*And His band*¹³² *on Earth is the foundation*.' And from where do we learn three? It says, (Psalms 82), '*From in the midst of the judges*¹³³ *He shall judge*.' And from where do we learn two? It says (Malachi 3), '*Then those who fear God shall speak one with another, and God shall pay attention, and listen, etc.*' And from where do we learn even one? It says (Exodus 20), '*Anywhere where I permit My Name to be remembered, I shall come to you and bless you.*' "

ו רבי חלפתא בן דוסא איש כפר חנניה אומר, עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר (תהלים פב), אלהים נצב בעדת אל. ומנין אפלו חמשה, שנאמר (עמוס ט), ואגדתו על ארץ יסדה. ומנין אפלו שלשה, שנאמר (תהלים פב), בקרב אלהים ישפט. ומנין אפלו שנים, שנאמר (מלאכי ג), אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע וגו'. ומנין אפלו אחד, שנאמר (שמות כ), בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליה וברכתי:

If ten sit together and are engaged in Torah, God's Holy Presence resides among them. This is true even for five, three, two or one.

¹³⁰ A town situated between the Upper and Lower Galilee.

¹³¹ There is no congregation of less than ten (Sanhedrin 1:6).

¹³² A band is held by the five fingers.

¹³³ The Hebrew term אלוקים is also used for judges, nominally three (in a Beis Din). Alternatively, with three judges and two witnesses, God's Holy Presence is in attendance.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:6

Five refers to three judges and the two litigants. Three refers to the three judges alone. ♦ Any group of ten men, united in accordance with the spirit of Judaism for truly Jewish causes, constitutes a congregation and represents, on a small scale, the entire Jewish community.

SEVEN

Rebbe Elazar from Bartosa¹³⁴ said, "Give to Him of His, since you and all of yours are His¹³⁵. So it says with David (I Chronicles 29): '*All is from You, and from Your hand, we gave to You.*' " Rebbe Shimon¹³⁶ said, "If one was learning while he is going on his way, and stops his learning to say, 'O, how pleasant is this tree' or 'How fine is this field', of him it is written that he causes his own demise."

ז רבי אלעזר איש בריתותא אומר, תן לו משלו, שאתה ושלך שלו. וכן בדוד הוא אומר (דברי הימים א כט) כי ממך הכל ומידך נתנו לך. רבי שמעון אומר, המהלך בדרך ושונה ומפסיק ממשנתו ואומר, מה נאה אילן זה ומה נאה ניר זה, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו:

Always give of yourself and your property for matters of Heaven, because you and everything you own, including your soul, are His and come from Him. ♦ All you have and all you have achieved are a result of the strength and means received from God. All you have was given to you only for the purpose of employing it to do the Will of God.

The one who was learning Torah while traveling through a perilous place and interrupts to admire a tree or a field, endangers his life, since it is just his Torah-learning which is what is protecting him there. More broadly, Torah protects us from

¹³⁴ Possibly a Galilean village.

¹³⁵ Everything is His.

¹³⁶ More correctly, Rebbe Yaakov.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:7

danger. ♦ The physical beauties of nature all recede in the shadows of the higher beauty of God's Teaching. The beauty and dignity of a human soul that is guided and enlightened by the spirit of God is a beauty and dignity that surpasses all Earthly beauty by far.

EIGHT

Rebbe Dostai son of Rebbe Yannai in the name of Rebbe Meir said, "Regarding anyone who forgets even one thing of his learning, it is written that he causes his own demise, as it says (Deut. 4), *'Be careful and take great care of your life lest you forget any of the matters you saw with your eyes'*. If his learning was difficult for him, we have learned (ibid.), *'And lest these be diverted from your heart all the days of your life.'* From here we learn that he is not guilty with his life until he deliberately removes it from his heart¹³⁷."

ח רבי דוסתאי ברבי ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר, כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר (דברים ז), רק השמר לה ושמר נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך. יכול אפלו תקפה עליו משנתו, תלמוד לומר (שם) ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך, הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישיב ויסירם מלבבו:

Anyone who forgets anything from his learning, since he did not review his learning, sins against his soul. He may also come to permit the forbidden and, thus, cause others to sin, as well.

¹³⁷ He is only guilty if he erases his learning from his mind intentionally.

NINE

Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa said, "Anyone whose fear of sinning takes precedence over his desire for wisdom, shall have his wisdom endure. Anyone whose wisdom takes precedence over his fear of sinning, shall not have his wisdom endure." He was wont to say, "Anyone whose deeds¹³⁸ are greater than his wisdom¹³⁹, shall have his wisdom endure. Anyone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds¹⁴⁰ shall not have his wisdom endure."

ט רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר, כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת. הוא הנה אומר, כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת:

The one whose fear of sinning is foremost in his mind will have his Torah wisdom preserved, while the one whose wisdom is more important to him than his fear of sinning will not have his wisdom preserved.

It is also true that if a man's deeds exceed his Torah wisdom, his wisdom will endure, whereas if his wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

¹³⁸ Mitzvoahs.

¹³⁹ His knowledge of Torah.

¹⁴⁰ He does not put his learning into practice.

TEN

He¹⁴¹ was wont to say, "If people are pleased with him, God is at ease with him, too. But, if people are displeased with him, so is God." Rebbe Dosa ben Harkinos said, "Morning sleep, mid-day wine¹⁴², childish (children's) talk¹⁴³ and attending the synagogues of the simple, ignorant masses¹⁴⁴ removes a man from this world."

י' הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, כּל שְׂרוּת הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הַיְמָנוּ, רוּחַ הַמָּקוֹם נוֹחָה הַיְמָנוּ. וְכֹל שֶׁאֵין רוּחַ הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הַיְמָנוּ, אֵין רוּחַ הַמָּקוֹם נוֹחָה הַיְמָנוּ. רַבִּי דוֹסָא בֶן הֶרְפִּינְס אוֹמֵר, שְׁנָה שֶׁל שְׁחֵרִית, וַיֵּין שֶׁל צְהָרִים, וְשִׁיחַת הַיְלָדִים, וְיֹשִׁיבַת בְּתֵי כְּנֻסִיּוֹת שֶׁל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ, מוֹצִיאֵין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם:

God likes amiable people, whereas He is uncomfortable with those who are generally disliked. ♦ A Jew who is honest is praised for his Torah-learning and his parents are praised for raising such a trustworthy son. ♦ God created men for a single, universal union of human beings beneath the reign of the Father of all Mankind. Unkind and hostile conduct toward other men is displeasing to God and is in direct contradiction to the goals intended by God to be attained through Mankind's life together.

Sleeping late in the morning because of late-night escapades, drinking wine in the middle of the day when he should be most alert and mentally clear, engaging in childish conversations, and frequenting the synagogues of ignorant people where they speak of trivial matters, removes a person from this world. ♦ He is

¹⁴¹ Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa.

¹⁴² Typically, they did not eat in the afternoon.

¹⁴³ Talking with children.

¹⁴⁴ Who do not come there to pray or learn, but engage in idle talk.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:10

thoughtlessly squandering the most precious gift that has been given to man - time.

ELEVEN

Rebbe Elazar the Modaite¹⁴⁵ said, "The one who desecrates holy things, the one who disgraces the holidays, the one who humiliates his fellow-man in public, the one who denies the covenant of Abraham, our Patriarch¹⁴⁶, may he rest in peace, and the one who interprets Torah in contradiction to the Halacha¹⁴⁷, even though he may have Torah knowledge and good deeds to his credit, has no share in the World to Come."

יֵא רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַמּוֹדַעֵי אוֹמֵר, הַמְחַלֵּל אֶת הַקְּדוּשִׁים, וְהַמְבַזֶּה אֶת הַמוֹעֲדוֹת, וְהַמְלַבִּין פְּנֵי חֵבְרוֹ בְּרַבִּים, וְהַמְפַר בְּרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם, וְהַמְגַלֵּה פְּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא כַּהֲלָכָה, אִף עַל פִּי שֵׁשׁ בְּיָדוֹ תּוֹרָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, אֵין לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

The one who desecrates that which is holy, such as desecrating the Sabbath in public or by working on Chol Hamoed, thus treating these as ordinary days, and the one who humiliates someone in public, and the one who denies the covenant of Abraham by concealing it, and the one who intentionally misinterprets or misquotes the Torah and the Halacha, even though they may have acquired Torah and have done good deeds, have no place in the World to Come, unless they fully repent before their deaths. ♦ They are guilty of contributing to undermining the future of God’s kingdom on earth.

¹⁴⁵ From the city of Modi'im.

¹⁴⁶ He does not fulfill the Commandment of circumcision.

¹⁴⁷ He makes things up which are contrary to the Halacha. Alternatively, he disparages the Torah.

TWELVE

Rebbe Yishmael said, "Be amiable with a superior and pleasant with the dark-haired ones¹⁴⁸, and receive every person with joy."

יב רבי ישמעאל אומר, הוי קל לראש ונוח לתשחרת, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה:

Serve your elders and superiors with peace of mind. ♦ Execute the demands of the authorities swiftly. ♦ Be amiable with those of lesser standing or who are younger than you. ♦ Receive everyone with a pleasant demeanor.

¹⁴⁸ People who are sought to work for the ruling authorities [i.e., the young who still have the youthful hair color – RB].

THIRTEEN

Rebbe Akiva said, "Levity and light-headedness accustom a person to promiscuity. Tradition¹⁴⁹ is a protective fence around the Torah. Tithing is a fence for wealth. Vows are a fence for abstinence. The fence for wisdom is silence."

יג רבי עקיבא אומר, שחוק וקלות ראש, מרגילין לערוה. מסורת, סג לתורה. מעשרות, סג לעשר. נדרים, סג לפרישות. סג לחכמה, שתיקה:

Jesting and levity draw us close to lewdness and unchastity and bring a person to immorality. ♦ The Tradition safeguards the Torah. The Tradition is the standard by which we measure the veracity of our Halachic reasoning and logic. ♦ Tithing safeguards wealth. Seeing that the person shares his assets with the less fortunate shows them that he is just. Not only will the poor not be jealous of him, but they will delight in his successes. ♦ Vowing safeguards abstinence which, in turn, safeguards moral behavior. ♦ Vows strengthen our resolve to abstain from sin in the struggle against evil impulses. ♦ Silence safeguards wisdom. If so for wise people, all the more so for simpletons. ♦ The person who devotes more time to thought than speech will never run the danger of making thoughtless or ill-considered statements. ♦ When you do not know, say, "I do not know". ♦ Remain silent until your teacher finishes so that you can hear his entire analysis and rationale before questioning it.

¹⁴⁹ Including the Oral Torah.

FOURTEEN

He was wont to say, "How privileged is Man who was created in the Image¹⁵⁰. And it was a special act of favor that he¹⁵¹ was informed of this, as it says (Genesis 9), '*For in the image of God did He make Man.*' How privileged are Israel that they are called 'children to God' as it says (Deut. 14), '*You are children to the Lord, your God.*' So special are Israel that they were given this especially desirable medium¹⁵² of love when the world was created, as it says (Proverbs 4), '*For I have given you a good portion – My Torah. Do not abandon it.*'"

יד הוא הִיָּה אוֹמֵר, חָבִיב אָדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם. חָבֵה יִתְּרָה נֹדְעֵת לוֹ שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בראשית ט), כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם. חָבִיבִין יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּנִים לַמָּקוֹם. חָבֵה יִתְּרָה נֹדְעֵת לָהֶם שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּנִים לַמָּקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים יד), בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. חָבִיבִין יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנֶּתַן לָהֶם כָּלִי חֻמְדָּה. חָבֵה יִתְּרָה נֹדְעֵת לָהֶם שֶׁנֶּתַן לָהֶם כָּלִי חֻמְדָּה שֶׁבּוֹ נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי ד), כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ:

How pleasant it is for Man to have been created in the image of God, for just because of this he became obligated to execute God's Will. ♦ It is Man's dignity and nobleness which raises him above all other creatures. ♦ Israel is privileged to be His children and to whom He has revealed His great affection and love. ♦ Israel is singularly cherished since it was specifically to them that God's beloved Torah, the blueprint for the Creation, was given.

¹⁵⁰ Of God.

¹⁵¹ God informed Adam that he was formed in His image.

¹⁵² The Torah.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:14

◆ Man's task is to bring about moral Good in the world, which can only be attained through the Torah.

FIFTEEN

“All¹⁵³ is foreseen, freedom of choice¹⁵⁴ has been granted, and according to goodness¹⁵⁵ is the world judged. Everything is in accordance with most¹⁵⁶ works.”

טו הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה, ובטוב העולם נדון. והכל לפי רב המעשה:

All is known to God, and nothing done, even in secret, is hidden from Him. Paradoxically, Man has complete free-will to do whatever he wants, to choose right or wrong, to do good or bad.

◆ In fact, if it were not within Man’s power to do evil, were sin to hold no charms for him, indeed, Man would then not be human at all.

◆ God judges us for our choices. If, by and large, we do good and observe His commandments, He will be merciful with us.

¹⁵³ Rebbe Akiva here continues.

¹⁵⁴ Although all is foreseen, Man has been granted free-will to choose to do good or evil.

¹⁵⁵ In God’s goodness and His mercy.

¹⁵⁶ Man is rewarded by the majority of his good deeds.

SIXTEEN

He¹⁵⁷ was wont to say, "Everything is given on account¹⁵⁸, and a net has been spread over all of life¹⁵⁹. The store is open¹⁶⁰, the shopkeeper extends credit, the ledger is open, and the hand records therein. Anyone who wishes to borrow can come and borrow, but the collectors go out everyday and demand their due, whether they the people are aware of it or not. They¹⁶¹ have upon what to rely when exacting payment. The law is just, and everything has been prepared for the banquet¹⁶²."

טז הוא הֵיָה אֹמֵר, הַכֹּל נָתוּן בְּעֶרְבוֹן, וּמִצְוָה פְּרוֹסָה עַל כָּל הַחַיִּים. הַחֲנוּת פְּתוּחָה, וְהַחֲנוּנֵי מִקִּיָּה, וְהַפְּנֻקִּים פְּתוּחִים, וְהַיָּד פּוֹתֶבֶת, וְכָל הַרוֹצֵה לְלוֹוֹת יָבוֹא וְיִלְוֶה, וְהַגְּבָאִים מִחֲזִירִים תְּדִיר בְּכָל יוֹם, וְנִפְרָעִין מִן הָאָדָם מִדַּעְתּוֹ וְשֵׁלָא מִדַּעְתּוֹ, וְיֵשׁ לָהֶם עַל מָה שְׂיִסְמוּכוּ, וְהֵדִין דִּין אֱמֶת, וְהַכֹּל מֵתֻקֵּן לְסַעֲוָדָה:

Life is on loan, and God can reclaim it whenever He wants. ♦ We are like fish in a sea and the net of affliction and death has already been spread before us. It can scoop us up at any moment without notice or perception. But, since we have free-will and we can choose to do good or bad, and make ourselves wholesome or polluted as we wish, we can escape the net by making the right choices. ♦ We can live a life of moderation or one of lack of

¹⁵⁷ Rebbe Akiva.

¹⁵⁸ All man has been given is on loan, and he will have to make an accounting as to what he did with it all.

¹⁵⁹ Man is trapped like a fish in a net.

¹⁶⁰ The world and all of life's pleasures are available to him.

¹⁶¹ The collectors, for all is written in the ledger.

¹⁶² Awaiting the righteous ones in the World to Come.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 3:16

restraint. ♦ Life is like an open store. We come in and take what we need and want. The storekeeper trusts his customers, but also records everything they take. Even when he is extremely busy, he still records everything. At the end of the day, everyone has to pay. ♦ Life is like taking an easy loan. We can borrow however much we like. But, the lender's collectors always turn up, usually without any warning, and demand payment. They can be very agonizing. This refers to the agents of God: illness and affliction. ♦ Sometimes the borrower remembers his debts and admits to them. But, sometimes he has long-forgotten them and cries out, "Injustice!". Nevertheless, the lender never forgets and always acts judiciously and righteously. ♦ Those who pay their debts will ultimately be rewarded, if not in this world then in the World to Come, while those from whom payment was not obtained in this world, will be made to pay in the World to Come.

SEVENTEEN

Rebbe Elazar ben Azariah said, "Without Torah¹⁶³, there is no Derech Eretz¹⁶⁴. Without Derech Eretz, there is no Torah. Without wisdom, there is no fear. Without fear¹⁶⁵, there is no wisdom. Without understanding¹⁶⁶, there is no knowledge. Without knowledge, there is no understanding. Without flour¹⁶⁷, there is no Torah. Without Torah¹⁶⁸, there is no flour." He was wont to say, "The one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is comparable with a tree which has many branches, but few roots. Comes a wind, and the tree is uprooted and upended, as it says (Jeremiah 17): *'He is like a solitary tree in the desert, and does not see*

יז רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר, אם אין תורה, אין דרך ארץ. אם אין דרך ארץ, אין תורה. אם אין חכמה, אין יראה. אם אין יראה, אין חכמה. אם אין בינה, אין דעת. אם אין דעת, אין בינה. אם אין קמת, אין תורה. אם אין תורה, אין קמת. הוא היה אומר, כל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, למה הוא דומה, לאילן שענפיו מרבין ושרשיו מעטין, והרוח באה ועוקרתו והופכתו על פניו, שנאמר (ירמיה יז), והיה כערער בערבה ולא יראה פי יבוא טוב ושכן תררים במדבר ארץ מלחה ולא תשב. אבל כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, למה הוא דומה, לאילן שענפיו מעטין ושרשיו מרבין, שאפלו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו אין

¹⁶³ Without assigning Torah a place of importance.

¹⁶⁴ Correct and ethical behavior.

¹⁶⁵ Of sin.

¹⁶⁶ Analyses.

¹⁶⁷ Food, sustenance.

¹⁶⁸ What is life without Torah?

when goodness comes; he lives on the parched soil in the wilderness, a salt-saturated and uninhabitable land'. However, if his deeds exceed his wisdom, we compare him to a tree whose branches are few, but has many roots. Even if all the winds in the world were to blow upon him they would be unable to move him from his place. Of him it is written there, 'He is like a tree planted by the waters which spreads out its roots toward the stream for water; he does not sense the heat, and his leaves remain fresh; he is not troubled in a year of drought, neither does he cease to bear fruit''.

מְזִיזִין אוֹתוֹ מִמְקוֹמוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שם), וְהָיָה
 כְּעֵץ שֶׁתּוֹלַע עַל מַיִם וְעַל יוֹבֵל יִשְׁלַח שָׂרְשָׁיו
 וְלֹא יִרְאֶה כִּי יָבֵא חֶם, וְהָיָה עָלָיו רֵעָנוֹ,
 וּבִשְׁנַת בְּצֻרַת לֹא יִדָּאֵג, וְלֹא יִמְיֵשׁ מַעֲשׂוֹת
 פְּרִי:

Without Torah, there is no “Derech Eretz” - an orderly way of life – and there is no civilization or society. Without “Derech Eretz”, there is no Torah. ♦ Torah cannot truly exist in a person who does not have exemplary personal attributes, faultless morality, and impeccable behavior. ♦ Without wisdom, there is no fear of Heaven. Without fear of Heaven, there is no wisdom. ♦ Without understanding, that is, the ability to analyze issues and draw inferences and conclusions, there is no knowledge. Without knowledge, that is, the ability to synthesize concepts, there is no understanding. ♦ Without sustenance, there is no Torah. Without Torah, there is no sustenance.

We can compare the one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds to a tree with many branches, but few roots. One swift wind and he is toppled. While the one whose deeds exceed his wisdom can be compared to a tree with few branches but many roots. No wind in the world can uproot him.

EIGHTEEN

Rebbe Eliezer ben Chissma said, "The laws governing Kinin¹⁶⁹ and Niddah¹⁷⁰ are the really, true essences of the Halacha, whereas astronomy and numerologies are mere tantalizations to wisdom."

יח רבי אליעזר בן חסמא אומר, קנין ופתחי נדה, הן הן גופי הלכות. תקופות וגמטריאות, פרפראות לתקמה:

The minutiae of the Halacha are the essence of the Halacha. It is the observance of these details for which one receives reward. ♦ However, subjects such as star-gazing (tracking the Zodiac, calculating the equinoxes) and numerology are of lesser importance. Entertaining, but not very useful in and of themselves for most people, although they can bring a person to the more serious topics of Halacha. ♦ Nevertheless, both these topics do require an understanding of mathematics which sharpens the mind.

¹⁶⁹ The stringent laws governing bird-sacrifices and doubts about them.

¹⁷⁰ The menstruant.

CHAPTER 4

ONE

Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? He who learns from all people, as it says (Psalms 119), *'From all my teachers, I have gained understanding; while Your testimonies are my pursuits.'* Who is courageous? He who controls his impulses, as it says (Proverbs 16), *'Better is the one who holds back his anger than the strong man; better the one who rules over his spirit than the one who captures a city.'* Who is rich? He who is content with his portion¹⁷¹, as it says (Psalms 128), *'When you enjoy the work of your hands, you shall be content, and it shall be good for you.'* 'You shall be content' – in this world; 'good for you' – in the World to Come. Who is respected? He who respects other people, as it says (1 Samuel 2), *'Those who honor me, I honor, but those who despise me, shall be held in contempt.'*"

א בן זומא אומר, איזהו חכם, הלומד מכל אדם, שנאמר (תהלים קיט), מכל מלמדי השפלתני פי עדותיך שיחה לי. איזהו גבור, הכובש את יצרו, שנאמר (משלי טז), טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר. איזהו עשיר השמח בקלקו, שנאמר (תהלים קכח), יגיע כפיה פי תאכל אשריה וטוב לה. אשריה, בעולם הזה. וטוב לה, לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד, המכבד את הבריות, שנאמר (שמואל א ב), פי מכבדי אכבד ובזי יקלוי:

¹⁷¹ He makes no effort to chase wealth.

Who is wise? The one who learns from everyone, including those who are lesser than he. ♦ For any person can be more expert than he in at least one calling or pursuit and thus give him valuable practical information which he may then utilize for his study of the Law of God.

♦ **Who is called wise? The one who loves and pursues wisdom.**

♦ **Pursue knowledge with the same vigor as you would if you were trying to retrieve a valuable object you lost.** ♦ **Who is strong? The one who is in control of his desires, and the one who does not anger.** ♦ He who can subdue his passions is mightier than the bravest of warriors. ♦ **Who is rich? The one who is content with his portion** because the lust for money can never be satisfied. ♦ **Who is honorable? The one who respects others.** ♦ **God honors those who honor Him.**

TWO

Ben Azzai said, "Always run to do a simple Mitzvah (as you would to do a more serious one), and flee from sin. For one Mitzvah tows with it another Mitzvah, and a sin drags with it another sin. For the reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah, and the payment for a sin is a sin."

ב בֶּן עֲזַאי אוֹמֵר, הָיִי רָץ לְמִצְוָה קְלָה (כְּבִתְמוּרָה), וּבֹרֵחַ מִן הָעֲבֵרָה. שְׂמִצְוָה גּוֹרֶרֶת מִצְוָה, וְעֲבֵרָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבֵרָה. שְׂשֹׁכֵר מִצְוָה, מִצְוָה. וְשֹׁכֵר עֲבֵרָה, עֲבֵרָה:

Rush to perform an easy Mitzvah as you would a more difficult one, and flee from sin, because the reward for a Mitzvah is the opportunity to perform another Mitzvah, while the punishment for one sin is another sin. ♦ Sinning dulls the keen edge of moral judgment and weakens resistance to future evil. ♦ Committing sins is easy for people, and people enjoy most sins. ♦ Distancing from God may accelerate as one moves away from Him.

THREE

He was wont to say, "Do not disgrace anyone nor deem anything worthless since there is no one who does not have his moment nor is there anything that does not have its place."

ג הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֵל תְּהִי בּוֹ לְכֹל אָדָם,
וְאֵל תְּהִי מִפְּלִיג לְכֹל דְּבָר, שְׂאִין לָהּ
אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ שְׂעָה וְאִין לָהּ דְּבָר שְׂאִין
לוֹ מְקוֹם:

Never disgrace another person, and never divide people into higher and lower sects, because there is no person who does not have his moment, and there is no thing that does not have its place.

FOUR

Rebbe Levitas of Yavne said, "Be of exceedingly humble spirit since the 'hope' of every human is the maggot." Rebbe Yochanan ben Beroka said, "Anyone who disgraces the Name of Heaven in secret shall be paid back in public; whether he desecrated the Name intentionally or even by accident."

ד רבי לויטס איש יבנה אומר, מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח, שתקות אנוש רמה. רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא אומר, כל המתליל שם שמים בסתר, נפרעין ממנו בגלוי. אַתָּד שׁוֹגֵג וְאַתָּד מְזִיד בְּחֵלוֹל הַשֵּׁם:

Unlike all other attributes where a person should attempt to find the middle ground, regarding humility, one must be exceptionally humble and modest, for nothing is more despicable and repugnant than pride, conceit and arrogance. Since egotism is a common problem, we must be very wary of it. ♦ What are we, after all? In the end, the worms are waiting for us, and we will decay.

Whoever disgraces the Name of Heaven in private by secretly sinning surmising that no one will find out about it, will ultimately be exposed. ♦ Actually, people like to boast to others of their sins as an arrogant show of defiance of Heaven. ♦ It makes no difference if his desecration is intentional or not, because no one is excused from being cognizant of the fact that there is a God who is everywhere and who sees and hears everything.

FIVE

Rebbe Yishmael his son¹⁷² said, "Anyone who learns Torah to teach it, shall be given the opportunity to both learn and teach. Anyone who learns in order to put it into practice, shall be given the opportunity to learn, teach, observe¹⁷³ and do." Rebbe Tzodok said¹⁷⁴, "Do not make them¹⁷⁵ a coronet in order to elevate¹⁷⁶ yourself nor a spade with which to dig." And so would Hillel say, "He who makes use of the crown of Torah shall pass away." From here we learn that anyone who personally benefits from the words of Torah removes his existence from the world.

ה רבי ישמעאל בנו אומר, הלומד תורה על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד. והלומד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות. רבי צדוק אומר, אל תעשים עטרה להתגדל בהם, ולא קרדם להפוך בהם. וכך הנה הלל אומר, ודאשתמש בתגא, חלה. הא למדת, כל הנהנה מדברי תורה, גויטל חיייו מן העולם:

¹⁷² [His son or the son of Rabbi Yosse – RB].

¹⁷³ The Mitzvoahs.

¹⁷⁴ [Some additions of the Mishna add: כוערכי הדיינין ואל תעש עצמך כוער מן הציבור ואל תעש עצמך כוער מן הדיינין – Do not set yourself apart from the community and do not act as a counsel of the judges. –RB].

¹⁷⁵ Words of Torah.

¹⁷⁶ Boast about.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 4:5

Whoever learns in order to teach, will be given the opportunity to both learn and teach. However, the one who learns in order to do, will be given the opportunity to learn, teach, observe and do; and he will be protected from sinning.

(Never set yourself apart from the community and do not act as counsel to the judges.) Never learn Torah so that people will call you rabbi or for the honor or to be able to rule over others. Nor should you learn Torah because you think that that will lead to a good job.

Anyone who ascends by means of the Crown of Torah does the opposite from the intention of God. God intended Man to be subservient to Torah, not that Torah be subservient to Man. ♦
From this we learn that anyone who benefits from the Torah removes himself from this world.

SIX

Rebbe Yosse said, "Anyone who honors the Torah shall himself be honored by people. Anyone who desecrates the Torah shall himself be debased by other people."

ו רבי יוסי אומר, כל המכבד את התורה, גופו מכבד על הבריות. וכל המחיל את התורה, גופו מחיל על הבריות:

Whoever honors the Torah will himself be honored by others. ♦ Anyone who disgraces the Torah, will be disgraced. ♦ How should you honor the Torah? By escorting the Sefer Torah when it is being carried to and from the Ark, handling it with reverence, and listening intently when it is being read. Also, by showing that every letter of it has meaning, and that there is meaning even where the letters are missing.

SEVEN

Rebbe Yishmael his son said, "The one who hides himself from the judgment unyokes himself from enmity¹⁷⁷, thievery¹⁷⁸ and false oaths¹⁷⁹, while the one who boasts¹⁸⁰ of his decision-making is a fool, wicked and has a haughty spirit."

ז רבי ישמעאל בנו אומר, החושך עצמו מן הדין, פורק ממנו איבה וגזל ושבועת שוא. והגס לבו בהוראה, שוטה רשע וגס רוח:

He who shuns judicial office rids himself of hatred, robbery and perjury. ♦ The judge who brings the litigants to amicable compromise avoids having the losing litigant hate him for finding him guilty, stealing by wrongfully compelling an innocent man to pay money, and causing unnecessary oath-taking. ♦ Here we are referring to one unfit to administer justice. ♦ Also, judges who issue complicated and convoluted judgments are fools, apathetic, and arrogant. ♦ This could also apply to those people who conceitedly deliver verdicts for themselves without going to a legitimate court for judgment.

¹⁷⁷ From the one he found guilty.

¹⁷⁸ For he may have found guilty the innocent one [who now has to pay his fellow], and would then himself be a thief.

¹⁷⁹ Obliging someone to take an oath. The man may then perjure himself and swear falsely.

¹⁸⁰ He is arrogant.

EIGHT

He was wont to say, "Do not judge by yourself for there is no single judge but One. Do not say¹⁸¹, 'Accept my opinion' since they have free-will, and are not bound by you¹⁸²."

ז הוא קנה אומר, אל תהי דן יחידי, שׂאין דן יחידי אלא אקד. ואל תאמר קבלו דעתי, שיהו רשאים ולא אתה:

Never be haughty, even if you are an expert in a topic nor think that you can adjudicate without consultation with others. For the only One Judge we have is God. ♦ A judge must never compel his fellow judges to accept his reasoning simply because it was he who invited the others to come together to judge with him. Rather, he must acquiesce to the final ruling of the majority. ♦ Everyone errs, even the greatest and sharpest of sages.

¹⁸¹ To your fellow judges.

¹⁸² If they are the majority, they can compel you to accept their verdict.

NINE

Rebbe Yonoson said, "Anyone who observes the Torah when poor will ultimately observe it when rich, while anyone who fails to observe the Torah when rich will fail to observe it when poor."

ט רבי יונתן אומר, כל המקיים את התורה מעני, סופו לקיימה מעשר. וכל המביטל את התורה מעשר, סופו לבטלה מעני:

Whoever observes the Torah in poverty when he is troubled about his sustenance and is pressed for time and has always to look for work, will ultimately be able to observe the Torah in wealth and comfort. ♦ Anyone who violates the Torah when wealthy when he had the time to learn and observe the Commandments but failed to do so, will end up violating it in poverty and desperation.

TEN

Rebbe Meir said, "Reduce your involvement in business and engage yourself in Torah. Be of a lowly spirit before all men¹⁸³. If you neglect and avoid Torah, you shall have a lot of 'avoidings'¹⁸⁴ to deal with. But, if you toil in Torah, He has much reward awaiting you."

י רבי מאיר אומר, הוי ממעט בעסק, ועסוק בתורה. והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם. ואם בטלת מן התורה, יש לך בטלים הרבה כנגדך. ואם עמלת בתורה, יש לו שכר הרבה לתן לך:

Engage in as little commerce and affairs of the world as is necessary. Rather spend most of your time learning Torah. ♦ Accustom yourself to a more modest standard of living than the social circles in which you move. ♦ Know that you can learn from everyone, even from someone who is much less learned than you. ♦ If you relax in your Torah-learning, you will subject yourself to many forces which will pull you further away from this task. But, if you toil in Torah, you will have an enormous reward. ♦ Your reward is commensurate with how hard you toiled in learning, and not for how much you actually learned.

¹⁸³ Even someone smaller (lesser) than you.

¹⁸⁴ You will be confronted with many things which will prevent you from doing your task.

ELEVEN

Rebbe Eliezer ben Yaacov said, "When a person does one Mitzvah, he acquires an advocate, but when he commits a sin, he acquires an accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like shutters before punishments. Rebbe Yochanan HaSandler said, "Any congregation assembled for a holy purpose shall endure¹⁸⁵, while any group brought together not for the sake of Heaven shall not endure."

יא רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, העושה מצוה אחת, קונה לו פרקליט אחד. והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים, פתרים בפני הפרענות. רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר, כל פנסיה נשחיה לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים. ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים:

For every Mitzvah you perform in this world, you acquire an advocate in the World to Come. For every sin committed, you acquire an accuser. ♦ Repentance and good deeds safeguard against troubles. ♦ Sins are like shutters between Man and God. Repentance opens these barriers.

The decisions and recommendations of any group assembled for the purpose of Heaven will endure, while the pronouncements of gatherings not for the sake of Heaven will not survive. ♦ It is only a matter of time before ignobly-motivated assemblies disintegrate.

¹⁸⁵ Their endeavors will endure.

TWELVE

Rebbe Elazar ben Shamua said, "May the honor of your students be as dear to you as your own; may the honor of your colleague be like the reverence of your rebbe and may the reverence of your rebbe be like the fear of Heaven."

יב רבי אלעזר בן שמוע אומר, יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשאלך, וכבוד חברך כמורא רבך, ומורא רבך כמורא שמים:

The honor of your student should be as dear to you as your own honor. ♦ The honor of your friend should be the same as the honor you have for your teacher. ♦ The honor you have for your teacher should be the same as the reverence you have for Heaven. ♦ In our zeal to teach and discipline, we must never allow ourselves to degrade or injure the dignity of a disciple. We must not let the intimacy we have with our equals diminish our honor for them.

THIRTEEN

Rebbe Yehuda said, "Be careful in your learning¹⁸⁶ since any mistake¹⁸⁷ in learning shall be counted as intentional." Rebbe Shimon said, "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of kingship. But the crown of a good name exceeds them all."

יג רבי יהודה אומר, הוי זקיר בתלמוד, ששגגת תלמוד עולה זדון. רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתרִים הם, כתר תורה וכתר כהונה וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן:

Be precise and investigative in your learning, because even inadvertent errors in learning are reckoned as intentional sins. ♦ Improper and superficial study or indifference when studying Torah is sinful.

Our Sages spoke of three crowns – the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship. But there is actually a fourth one, the crown of a good name, which exceeds all the others. ♦ All the other three are without value unless they are linked with the crown of a good name. ♦ Not everyone can be a priest or a king, but everyone can learn Torah. ♦ It is of the greatest of achievements for a person to die having earned a “good name” during his life.

¹⁸⁶ Explaining and understanding the Halacha and instruction.

¹⁸⁷ One who errs in instruction because he did know the reason for a Halacha is considered as an intentional violator.

FOURTEEN

Rebbe Nehorai¹⁸⁸ said, "Rather you should be exiled¹⁸⁹ to a place where there is already Torah and do not say that it will follow you¹⁹⁰, and that your associates¹⁹¹ will establish it in your possession¹⁹²; and do not rely upon your own understanding¹⁹³."

יֵד רַבִּי נְהוֹרַאי אוֹמֵר, הָיִי גוֹלָה לְמָקוֹם תּוֹרָה וְאַל תֵּאמַר שֶׁהִיא תָבוֹא אַחֲרַיָּהּ, שֶׁתִּבְרִיחַ יְקִימוּהָ בְיָדֶךָ. וְאַל בִּינְתָהּ אֶל תִּשְׁעֶן:

Move only to a place where there is an existing Torah community, one with an indigenous population of Torah scholars, even at the sacrifice of living somewhere where you would have a better income. ♦ Do not assume that if you are the first in a new place others will follow and build a community around you, even if you are a top scholar yourself. ♦ Seek out a place where the Torah is diligently studied, even if it means leaving your home that you love. Whatever skill you have will grow and survive only if you associate with people of similar interests. If you lack such companionship, your talent - in this instance the knowledge of Torah - will eventually atrophy.

¹⁸⁸ [Rabbi Elazar ben Arach – Rashi].

¹⁸⁹ Move to a place where there are scholars from whom you can learn Torah.

¹⁹⁰ 'I shall wait for Torah here, and a rabbi will come to me.'

¹⁹¹ Who left you to learn.

¹⁹² [A difficult phrase. R' Pinchas Kahati in his commentary, quoting the Meiri, says that this means that you will have to ask your colleagues, who did go to a place of Torah, your questions since they learned on your behalf, as it were, and they will then have to explain things to you. Rather, you should go to a place of Torah to learn it yourself, directly from the rabbis, and not have to rely on the 'students'. –RB]

¹⁹³ Saying that I understand things myself, and I do not need a rabbi.

FIFTEEN

Rebbe Yannai said, "We cannot comprehend why the wicked are calm¹⁹⁴ nor why the righteous are afflicted¹⁹⁵." Rebbe Masya¹⁹⁶ ben Chorosh said, "Always be the first to greet other people. Rather be a tail to the lions than the head of the foxes."

טו רבי ינאי אומר, אין בנדינו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים. רבי מתנא בן תרש אומר, הוי מקדים בשלום כל אדם. והוי זנב לאריות, ואל תהי ראש לשועלים:

We are unable to fathom why the wicked succeed in this world and continue to flourish, while the righteous suffer. This is surely one of the greatest enigmas of life. ♦ To determine the relationship between the visible fate of a man and his moral worthiness or lack thereof is utterly beyond our power. We do not have sufficient insight either to determine a person's moral worth or worthlessness, or to judge where that which befalls him is indeed a blessing or a calamity.

Always be the first to extend greetings to everyone, but everyone. ♦ Better to be the tail to lions than the head of foxes. That is, it is better for someone to be the follower of great and learned people than the leader of lesser people. After all, the tail of a lion is still part of the lion, while the head of a fox is a part of the fox. ♦ Seek the company of those who are superior to you both spiritually and morally even though you would occupy an inferior position in their midst and would have to submit to their guidance.

¹⁹⁴ Have it easy.

¹⁹⁵ They suffer.

¹⁹⁶ [or Matisyoh or Matisyohu – RB]

SIXTEEN

Rebbe Yaacov said, "This world can be compared to an antechamber to the World to Come. Therefore, prepare yourself¹⁹⁷ in the antechamber so that you can enter the banquet hall."

טז רבי יעקב אומר, העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא. התקן עצמך בפרוזדור, כדי שתכניס לטרקלין:

This world is like a corridor leading to the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the hallway in order that you can enter the throne room of the king.

¹⁹⁷ With good deeds.

SEVENTEEN

He¹⁹⁸ was wont to say, "Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than a lifetime in the World to Come¹⁹⁹. Better one hour of spiritual contentment in the World to Come than a lifetime in this world."

יז הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, יִפָּה שְׁעָה אַחַת בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְיִפָּה שְׁעָה אַחַת שֶׁל קוֹרַת רוּחַ בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה:

Better one hour of repentance and doing good deeds in this world than life in the World to Come. ♦ This world is where we prepare ourselves by faithfully discharging our physical, moral and spiritual tasks. What was not attained here cannot be made up in the Next World. ♦ The World to Come is a place of blissful happiness. All the joys and pleasures which even the longest lifetime on earth could afford cannot outweigh even one single hour of spiritual satisfaction such as is found in the World to Come.

¹⁹⁸ [Rebbe Yaacov - RB].

¹⁹⁹ In the World to Come, no one can repent nor perform good deeds.

EIGHTEEN

Rebbe Shimon ben Elazar said, "Make no attempt to placate your friend in the hour of his anger²⁰⁰; do not try to comfort a person when his dead lies before him²⁰¹; do not discuss the matter with someone at the time he made a vow²⁰²; and do not visit someone at the moment of his defeat²⁰³."

יח רבי שמעון בן אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר, אַל תְּרַצֶּה אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ בְּשַׁעַת כַּעֲסוֹ, וְאַל תִּנְחַמְנוּ בְּשַׁעַת שְׂמִתּוֹ מִטָּל לְפָנָיו, וְאַל תִּשְׁאַל לוֹ בְּשַׁעַת גְּדָרוֹ, וְאַל תִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לְרֵאוֹתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קְלָקְלָתוֹ:

Make no attempt to pacify an angry man. ♦ Do not console someone who is at the height of his mourning, because at that moment he expects you to mourn with him and not help him rationalize his loss. ♦ Do not try to help someone find a way out of his vow at a time when he is highly intent on fulfilling that vow. Your attempt will only backfire and strengthen his resolve. ♦ Good intentions alone are an insufficient excuse and justification for all things. Consider the timing. ♦ **Avoid looking at someone when he is sinning for this will only shame him.** ♦ Do not go out of your way to visit someone who suffered something unpleasant if you know that he would rather remain alone and unseen in his distress.

²⁰⁰ He will reject your attempt to soothe him.

²⁰¹ Wait until after the burial.

²⁰² Even if you try to release him from his vow by finding some sort of loophole for him, at the moment he made it, he will reject your efforts saying he is determined to keep it anyway.

²⁰³ Just when he failed, and is most embarrassed.

NINETEEN

Shmuel Hakoton said²⁰⁴ (Proverbs 24), “*Do not be jubilant when your enemy falters nor rejoice when he fails. God sees you, and this that you do is bad in His eyes, and He shall rescind His anger from your fellow*”.

יט שמואל הקטן אומר, (משלי כד) בגנפול
 אויביך אל תשמח ובפנולו אל יגל לבך,
 פן יראה יי ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו
 אפו:

Do not rejoice in your enemy’s downfall nor be gleeful of his failings. God sees you, and this is evil in His eyes, and He will be angry with you.

²⁰⁴ He was accustomed to saying these verses.

TWENTY

Elisha ben Avuyah said, "Teaching a child is compared to writing on a new, blank sheet of paper²⁰⁵, whereas teaching a mature person is like writing on an erased sheet of paper." Rebbe Yose bar Yehuda from Kfar Bavli²⁰⁶ said, "One who learns from children is compared to someone who eats unripened grapes and drinks wine from the winepress, whereas the one who learns from the elders is compared to one who eats fully-ripened grapes and drinks old wine." Rebbe²⁰⁷ said, "Do not look at the jug, but what is in it. There are new containers with old wine, and old ones which are empty".

כ אֱלִישָׁע בֶּן אַבוּיָה אָמַר, הַלּוֹמֵד יְלֵד לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה, לְדִיו כְּתוּבָה עַל גִּיר חֲדָשׁ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה, לְדִיו כְּתוּבָה עַל גִּיר מְחֻזָּק. רַבִּי יוֹסִי בַר יְהוּדָה אִישׁ כָּפַר הַבְּבֵלִי אָמַר, הַלּוֹמֵד מִן הַקִּטְנִים לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה, לְאוּכַל עֲנָבִים קְהוֹת וְשׁוֹתָה יַיִן מִגִּתּוֹ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד מִן הַזְּקֵנִים לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה, לְאוּכַל עֲנָבִים בְּשׁוּלוֹת וְשׁוֹתָה יַיִן יָשׁוּן. רַבִּי אָמַר, אַל תִּסְתַּכֵּל בַּקַּנְיָן, אֲלֵא בְּמָה שְׁיֵשׁ בּוֹ. יֵשׁ קַנְיָן חֲדָשׁ מְלֵא יָשׁוּן, וְיָשׁוּן שְׂאֵפְלוֹ חֲדָשׁ אֵין בּוֹ:

To what can we compare the teaching of children? To writing on a blank sheet of paper. To what can we compare the teaching of an older person? To writing on a page which had been erased. ◆

Old minds are prejudiced and not easily impressed.

²⁰⁵ It makes a permanent impression.

²⁰⁶ Near Sidon.

²⁰⁷ Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi [or Rebbe Meir – RB].

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To what can we compare someone who learns from children? To someone who eats unripe grapes and drinks wine directly from the winepress, that is, its processing is incomplete. ♦ To what can we compare someone who learns from an old person? To someone who eats ripened grapes, and drinks mature, mellowed wine.

Do not look at the container, rather look at its contents. There are new containers filled with old wine, and old containers which do not have even a little something new inside. ♦ Rabbi Meir modifies the previous Mishna saying that that rule is not universally applicable. Some young minds are mature, while some old ones are not.

TWENTY-ONE

Rebbe Elazar HaKapor said, כֹּא רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַקָּפֹר אָמַר, הַקְּנָאָה
"Envy, lust and a desire for וְהַתְּאֵוָה וְהַפְּבוֹד מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן
honor remove a person from the הָעוֹלָם:
world".

Envy of the success of sinners, desire for physical pleasures, and the pursuit of personal honor remove a person from this world. These are the sources for almost all the sins in the world. ♦ Envy leads to thievery, desire for pleasure leads to eating wrong foods and the engaging in immoral sexual unions, and the pursuit of honor leads to pride, disputes, and humiliation.

TWENTY-TWO

He²⁰⁸ was wont to say, "All who are born²⁰⁹ will die, the dead will be resurrected²¹⁰, and all living beings will be judged. Know, inform²¹¹ and comtemplate that He is God, He is the Fashioner, He is the Creator, He understands²¹², He is the Judge²¹³, He is the witness, He is the prosecuter, and He will judge. Blessed be He that with Him there is no injustice, no forgetting, no partiality, and no bribery; for everything is His²¹⁴. Everything is done in accordance with the accounting.²¹⁵ Do not trust your inclination²¹⁶, since the grave is surely your refuge. For against your will were you created (and against your will you were born), and against your will you live, and

כב הוא הנה אומר, היולדים למות, והמתים להחיות, והחיים לדון. לידע להודיע ולהודע שהוא אל, הוא היוצר, הוא הבורא, הוא המבין, הוא הדין, הוא עתיד, הוא בעל דין, והוא עתיד לדון. ברוך הוא, שאין לפניו לא עולה ולא שכיחה ולא משוא פנים ולא מקח שוחד, שהכל שלו. ודע שהכל לפי התשבון. ואל יבטיחך יצרך שהשואל בית מנוס לך, שעל פרכתך אתה נוצר, (ועל פרכתך אתה נולד), ועל פרכתך אתה חי, ועל פרכתך אתה מת, ועל פרכתך אתה עתיד לתן דין ותשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא:

²⁰⁸ Rebbe Elazar HaKapor.

²⁰⁹ Everyone.

²¹⁰ At the time of the Resurrection.

²¹¹ Everyone must learn for himself and teach others.

²¹² What everyone does.

²¹³ The only judge.

²¹⁴ And with what can you possibly bribe Him?

²¹⁵ Of Mitzvoths and good deeds.

²¹⁶ [Deceiving you that all will be well -RB].

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 4:22

against your will you will die, and against your will will you have to give a full reckoning and accounting before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."

We were all born to die, but those who have died will be resurrected. ♦ Everyone will be judged. ♦ In the end, everyone will know there is the one God who is fashioner, creator, and all-knowing. He is judge, witness, and prosecutor. And He will judge. ♦ A human being may be formed and fashioned but, unlike a vessel, he is never "finished". ♦ God's verdict is just. ♦ All is revealed before Him. ♦ No one is absolved of being judged. ♦ He takes no bribes. This refers to someone who might "offer" God the performance of a Mitzvah in return for erasing a sin. Rather, He rewards for each Mitzvah and punishes for each sin. ♦ Everything is His. ♦ All sins, small and large, will be accounted for and the sinner punished. Do not be tempted by your evil inclination which argues that with death all will be forgiven. ♦ You were created against your will, you were born against your will, you live against your will, you will die against your will, and you will give accounting for your deeds before the King of kings, blessed be He.

CHAPTER 5

ONE

The world was created with ten sayings²¹⁷. What do we learn from this since the world could have been created in one utterance? It was done this way in order to emphatically penalize the wicked who destroy the world, which was create in ten sayings, and well-reward the righteous²¹⁸ who sustain the world, which was created with ten sayings.

א בעשירה מאמרות נברא העולם. ומה תלמוד לומר, והלא במאמר אחד יכול להבראות, אלא להפרע מן הרשעים שמאבדין את העולם שנברא בעשירה מאמרות, ולתן שכר טוב לצדיקים שמקימין את העולם שנברא בעשירה מאמרות:

God created the world with ten utterances such as, “Let there be light”. Ten and not one, so that those who destroy the world will be punished tenfold and the righteous who uphold the world will be rewarded tenfold. ♦ Who destroys the world? Anyone who kills a person. ♦ God made such an effort to create this world, and this one destroys it with one criminal act. ♦ Creation with a single utterance would have fixed Man on the same plane with that of

²¹⁷ Ten commands.

²¹⁸ In whose merit the world is sustained.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:1

all the other works of creation. Man is the final work of creation, the goal and summit of the whole, in whom all of creation culminates.

The ten sayings were:

1. Breishis – “Creation!”
2. “Let there be light”.
3. “Let there be a firmament”.
4. “Let the waters gather”.
5. “Let there be vegetation”.
6. “Let there be sources of light”.
7. “Let the waters swarm with life”.
8. “Let the land bring forth life”.
9. “Let us make Man”.
10. “Behold, I have given you...”

Then God said to all, “Be fruitful and multiply”.

TWO

The reason there were ten generations²¹⁹ from Adam to Noah was in order to inform us of how patient God is, for each generation constantly irritated Him until He finally brought upon them the waters of the flood. There were ten generations²²⁰ from Noah to Abraham in order to inform us how patient He is, for each generation continuously angered Him, until Abraham came and reaped the reward due all of them.

ב עֲשָׂרָה דוֹרוֹת מֵאָדָם וְעַד נֹחַ, לְהוֹדִיעַ כַּמָּה אַרְבָּע אַפִּים לְפָנָיו, שֶׁכָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ מְכַעֲסִין וּבָאִין עַד שֶׁהֵבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת מִי הַמַּבּוּל. עֲשָׂרָה דוֹרוֹת מִנֹּחַ וְעַד אַבְרָהָם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כַּמָּה אַרְבָּע אַפִּים לְפָנָיו, שֶׁכָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ מְכַעֲסִין וּבָאִין, עַד שֶׁבָּא אַבְרָהָם וְקִבֵּל (עָלָיו) שְׂכָר כָּלָם:

There were ten generations from Adam to Noah in order to teach how patient God was with Man, and how slowly He angered with Man, until He brought the Flood. ♦ His patience allowed them time to repent.

There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham in order to teach how patient God was with them, even though they angered Him. Abraham then came and received all their rewards. That is, Abraham did all the good they should have done in this world and was rewarded in the Next World with the rewards they all should have received. ♦ Abraham saved the world from destruction.

²¹⁹ As enumerated in Genesis Chapter 5.

²²⁰ As enumerated in Genesis Chapter 11, verses 10-26.

THREE

Abraham, our Patriarch, may peace be upon him, was tested ten times and withstood each one, in order to inform us how beloved was Abraham, our Patriarch, may peace be upon him²²¹.

ג עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְּנָה אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ
עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם וְעָמַד בְּכֻלָּם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמָה
חֶבְתּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם:

Abraham was tested ten times, and passed each one of them. God did this to prove how much he loved Abraham, for then God could reward Abraham ten times.

The ten tests were (the Rambam lists those marked with an *):

1. The furnace he was tossed into in Ur Casdim by Nimrod.
2. Leaving his homeland and family*.
3. The famine*.
4. Marrying Pharaoh's daughter Hagar.
5. The war of the kings*.
6. He was shown prophetically that his descendents would be slaves.
7. His circumcision*.
8. Avimelech's abduction of Sarah*.
9. Evicting Hagar* and Ishmael*.
10. The binding of Isaac*.

Another version substitutes Pharaoh's abducting Sarah*, and lists divorcing Hagar and evicting Ishmael as two separate tests, and does not count the furnace (1.) and the prophecy of slavery (6.).

The Gra has the following list:

²²¹ By God.

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1. When Abraham, our forefather, was born, all the mighty ones in the kingship wished to kill him. So they buried him in the ground for thirteen years, and he did not see sunlight or moonlight that entire time.
2. He was captive for ten years and then thrown into the furnace, as it says, “*As you were taken from Ur Casdim*”, meaning the furnace of Casdim.
3. Leaving his home and homeland.
4. The famine.
5. The taking of Sarah.
6. The war of the kings.
7. When God told Abram in a vision not to fear for He is his shield.
8. His circumcision.
9. When he evicted Hagar and Ishmael.
10. The binding of Isaac.

FOUR

Ten miracles in Egypt and ten on the sea were performed on behalf of our forefathers. The Holy One, blessed be He, brought ten plagues down on the Egyptians and ten on the sea. With ten trials did our forefathers try God, blessed be He, in the wilderness, as it says (Numbers 14), "*And they tested me ten times, and they did not listen to My voice.*"

ד עֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂרָה עַל הַיָּם. עֲשָׂרַת מִכּוֹת
הֵבִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם
בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂרַת עַל הַיָּם. עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת
נִסּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶת הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא
בְּמִדְבָּר, שְׁנַיִמָּר (בַּמִּדְבָּר יד), וַיִּנְסּוּ אֶתִּי זֶה
עֲשָׂרַת פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי:

There were ten miracles in Egypt and ten on the sea. ♦ The ten miracles on the sea were:

1. The sea split.
2. The waters formed a protective tent for the people.
3. The sea-floor dried and hardened so that the people could pass without sinking in mud.
4. When the pursuing Egyptians came, the sea-floor reverted to a slippery mire.
5. The sea-floor became like small, decorative tiles.
6. The sea-walls became hard like stone.
7. There were twelve separate gaps, one for each tribe.
8. The sea-walls were transparent and jewel-like; the light of the Pillar of Fire was visible to all.
9. The waters were sweet and drinkable.
10. The waters they did not drink froze in place.

God brought ten plagues on the Egyptians in Egypt and ten plagues on the sea. ♦ The ten miracles in Egypt were that we

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were saved from the ten plagues. ♦ The ten plagues in Egypt were:

1. Blood.
2. Frogs.
3. Lice.
4. Beasts.
5. Disease.
6. Boils.
7. Hail.
8. Locusts.
9. Darkness.
10. The death of the first-born.

The ten plagues on the sea were:

1. The horses and their riders were thrown into the waters.
2. Pharaoh's chariots and the host were cast in the sea.
3. The choicest Egyptians drowned.
4. The flood-waters covered them.
5. They sunk into the depths like a stone.
6. God's Right Hand shattered them.
7. Those who rose up against God were thrown down.
8. God sent forth His glowing wrath and consumed them like straw.
9. The sea enveloped them.
10. They sank like lead in mighty waters.

The ten times our forefathers tested God because of their lack of trust in Him in the desert where, given its natural desolation, they assumed that God had abandoned them. In accordance with the Rambam, these were at:

1. The Red Sea regarding their leaving a comfortable life in Egypt for the desert (Ex. 14:11).
2. Marah in the wilderness where the waters were bitter and undrinkable (Ex. 15:24).
3. The Sin Desert, also about leaving Egypt for the desert (Ex. 16:2).
4. (Ex. 16:20) and

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5. (16:27) regarding the Manna.
6. Refidim regarding a lack of drinking water (Ex. 17:2).
7. Chorev (with the Golden Calf).
8. Taberah (Numbers 11:1) and
9. Kivros HaTaava (11:4) complaining about the good food they miss from Egypt.
10. The Paran Desert upon hearing the report of the spies (Numbers 14:2).

Unlike other codes of religious law, the Jewish “religion” and Jewish Law did not originate *within* the people but were handed to it from *without* – from God.

FIVE

Ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in the Temple. No woman ever miscarried because of the aroma of the sacrificial meat; no holy sacrificial meat ever had a foul smell; no fly was ever seen in the Temple butchery; the High Priest never experienced a nocturnal emission on Yom Kippur; rains never extinguished the burning pyre on top of the Altar; no wind ever overpowered the smoke column rising from the Altar; no disqualification was ever found in the Omer²²² or with the Two Loaves²²³ or with the Shewbread²²⁴; people would stand closely bunched up, yet still had plenty of room to bow down; no snake or scorpion ever injured anyone in Jerusalem; and no one ever said to his fellow, "This place is too crowded for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem".

ה עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש. לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקדש, ולא הסריח בשר הקדש מעולם, ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחיים, ולא ארע קרי לכהן גדול ביום הפפורים, ולא כבו גשמים אש של עצי המערכה, ולא נצחה הרוח את עמוד העשן, ולא נמצא פסול בעמר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים, עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רוחים, ולא הזיק נחש ועקרב בירושלים מעולם, ולא אמר אדם לתברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים:

Our forefathers were blessed with ten miracles in the Temple:

²²² Offered on the 16th of Nissan.

²²³ Offered on Shavuos.

²²⁴ Arranged each Shabbos.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:5

1. No woman ever miscarried due to the smell of the sacrificial meat.
2. The sacrificial meat never putrefied. This may refer to certain portions of the sacrifices waiting on the top of the Altar for two or three days to be burned due to a large backlog.
3. No fly was ever seen in the butcher's quarters.
4. In the first Temple, no Kohen Godol on Yom Kippur was ever disqualified due to seminal impurity.
5. No rain ever quenched the flames of the pyre on the Altar.
6. No wind ever distorted the straight column of the rising smoke above the Altar.
7. No disqualification was ever found in the Omer offering or with the two loaves or with the showbread.
8. Although the people were crowded in the Temple courtyard, they always had enough room to prostrate themselves.
9. No one in Jerusalem was ever injured by a snake or scorpion bite.
10. No one ever complained that he did not have lodging in Jerusalem.

These miraculous occurrences bore testimony to the constant presence of God both in the Holy City and in the Sanctuary, safeguarding the sacred rites performed in these holy places.

SIX

Ten things were created before Shabbos²²⁵ at twilight. The opening of the Earth, the opening of the well, the mouth of the donkey, the rainbow, the Manna, the staff, the Shamir worm, writing, script²²⁶, and the Tablets of the Law. Some say, also injurious things²²⁷, Moses' grave, Abraham, our forefather's, ram, and some say even the tongs²²⁸ which made the tongs.

ו עֲשָׂרָה דְבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְעֶרְבַּ שַׁבָּת בֵּין
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, וְפִי הַדֶּבֶר,
וְהַמָּטָה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת, וְהַמָּן,
וְהַלְוִיָּהוּ. וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים, אֶף הַמְזִיקִין,
וְקַבְרֵתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה, וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם
אֶבְיָנוּ. וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים, אֶף צָבַת בְּצָבַת
עֲשׂוּיָהּ:

Ten things were created on the evening of the Sabbath of Creation at twilight:

1. **The abyss which would swallow up Korah and his band.** ♦ Mutiny against Moses or denial of his mission was a criminal act.
2. **Miriam's traveling-well which provided water for Israel in the wilderness.** ♦ Their every drink of water was a testimony to the presence of Divine Providence.
3. **The ability of Balaam's donkey to speak.** ♦ In order to humble that man of brilliant speech who, led by base passion and impudent conceit, sought to misuse his human speech to curse a whole nation.

²²⁵ The first Shabbos of Creation. The facility to bring forth these supernatural things in the future was implanted at that time.

²²⁶ The engraved letters on the Tablets. Some say this means the etching pen.

²²⁷ Shades and spirits.

²²⁸ Which, therefore, had to have been made in Heaven.

4. **The rainbow which was a sign from God after the Flood that He would never again destroy the entire world by water.** ♦ This is an eternal symbol of God's patience with human error.
5. **The Manna.** ♦ The Manna bore testimony to the care with which God remembers every living thing, and which was to teach men to trust and cheerfully obey Him.
6. **Moses' staff with which he performed his miracles.** ♦ As a visible sign of God's intervention in His own world order to train man and to chastise him for his disobedience and his pusillanimity.
7. **The stone-eating Shamir worm which hewed the jewels of the Ephod and Choshen and the stones for Solomon's Temple.**
8. **The form of the lettering on the Tablets of the Law.** ♦ The miraculous writing and tablets were testaments that they were the works of God.
9. **The ability to read the writing on the Tablets from any of its four sides.**
10. **The Tablets themselves.**

Some say that the injurious spirits, Moses' grave, and Abraham's ram were also created then. ♦ Some would like to say that the first pair of tongs was also created then. Since tongs can only be fashioned by forging, there needed to be a primordial pair to hold the red-hot metal in the fire. How else can that tool have been formed? ♦ But, an opinion in the Talmud (Pesachim 54a) says the tongs could have been fashioned in a mold. ♦ The six days of Creation embrace the visible world while the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a memorial to the unseen Creator and serves to train Man to recognize his unseen Lord and of his moral destiny. These items form a transition between the physical world and the Sabbath. ♦ The location of Moses' grave is hidden to us so as to prevent, with all ceaseless pilgrims who would have come, the rise of a cult of quasi-idolatry which would have been most detrimental itself to our spiritual welfare. ♦ The ram is a symbol of Man's selfless sacrifice to God.

SEVEN

Seven things are characteristic of the dumbbell, and seven of the wise man. The wise man does not speak first before someone who is greater in wisdom and experience than he; he does not interrupt his friend when he is speaking; he does not rush to respond²²⁹; he asks to the point²³⁰ and answers to the point; he speaks to the first matter first and the latter matter last; of that which he did not learn he says, "I have not learned that"; and he acknowledges the truth. The opposite of all of these are the traits of a stupid person.

ז שבעה דברים בגלם ושבעה בקרבם. חכם אינו מדבר בפני מי שהוא גדול ממנו בחכמה ובמנין, ואינו נכנס לתוך דברי חברו, ואינו נבהל להשיב, שואל פענין ומשיב פהלכה, ואומר על ראשון ראשון ועל אחרון אחרון, ועל מה שלא שמע, אומר לא שמעתי, ומודה על האמת. וחלופיהו בגלם:

Seven characteristics are found in a boor, and seven are found in a wise man.

The wise man:

1. Never speaks before someone who is wiser and more experienced than he.
2. Never interrupts.
3. Always answers deliberately and logically, and indicates when his answers are those he learned from his teacher and when his answers are his own.
4. Always asks to the subject and responds to the issue.

²²⁹ He contemplates the question before responding.

²³⁰ About the matter at hand.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:7

5. Always answers questions in the order asked or he addresses the more important issues first.
6. Is never embarrassed to acknowledge his ignorance of some matter.
7. Always acknowledges the truth, that is, he admits when he was wrong and does not remain stubbornly loyal to his position. ♦ He is ready and willing to concede that he made an error and was wrong.

Now the boor has the opposite attributes [per RB]:

1. He has to speak first.
2. He constantly interrupts others when they are speaking.
3. He responds without thinking.
4. His answers have nothing to do with the questions.
5. His responses are mixed up.
6. He never admits that he does not know.
7. He never admits that he was wrong.

EIGHT

Seven types of punishments came upon the world due to seven sorts of sins. If some people tithe and others do not, there will be a drought - some will be hungry, and some will be satiated. If everyone stops tithing, there will be the hunger of disturbances²³¹, and a drought. If everyone stops taking Challah, hunger of annihilation²³² will come. Pestilence comes to the world for those death sentences mentioned in the Torah which are not within the purview of the courts²³³, and due to violations regarding produce of the Sabbatical year²³⁴. Sword comes to the world because of painful court decisions²³⁵ (delays in justice), court injustices²³⁶ (perversion of justice), and because Torah was taught incorrectly and not in accordance with Halacha.

ז שבעה מיני פּרעניוּת באין לעולם על שבעה גופי עברה. מקצתו מעשרין ומקצתו אינו מעשרין, רעב של בצורת באה, מקצתו רעבים ומקצתו שבעים. גמרו שלא לעשר, רעב של מהומה ושל בצורת באה. ושל לא לטול את החלה, רעב של פליה באה. דבר בא לעולם על מיתות האמורות בתורה שלא נמסרו לבית דין, ועל פרות שביעית. חרב באה לעולם על ענוי הדין, ועל עוות הדין, ועל המורים בתורה שלא כהלכה:

There are seven kinds of punishments which come to this world corresponding to seven types of sins:

²³¹ Wars.

²³² People will be so hungry that they will resort to mass killings of other people.

²³³ The courts were unable to judge the violators.

²³⁴ People did not make their fields ownerless in the Sabbatical year.

²³⁵ The courts knew the Law, but did not rule.

²³⁶ The courts permitted the forbidden, etc.

1. **If some people tithe and some do not, famine will come; some will have food and some will starve.**
2. **If no one tithes, war will come and everyone will starve or they will eat but not be satiated.**
3. **If no one takes Challah, a drought will come, and people will starve.**
4. **If society is filled with people deserving the death penalty, but the courts do not convict or the Laws of the Sabbatical Year are not observed, pestilence will come.**
5. **If the courts take bribes, or delay or pervert justice, or teachers teach Torah incorrectly by permitting what is forbidden and forbidding what is permitted, war will come.** ♦ If the Jewish State carries out its Divine mission, it will have Divine support against all enemy powers and no nation will dare attack it. But if the Jewish State should cast off its task and destiny or put it to wrongful use, it will thereby become a nation at the mercy of fate just like all the other states of the world, and God will withdraw His protection from it. Once Divine protection is denied the Jewish State, hostile powers will not hesitate to wield the sword against it.
6. **If people are swearing falsely (perjury) or if there is desecration of the Name of Heaven, such as by intentionally sinning in public, and others learn from this, dangerous beasts will come.** ♦ By indifference to the sacred nature of a vow, a person will deny his allegiance to God or actually contravene it. The beast will no longer view this man as its superior.
7. **If there is idolatry or immorality or murder or people are working their fields during the Sabbatical year, exile will come.** ♦ The Land has been turned over to us by the Ruler and Owner with the explicit stipulation that we acknowledge His sovereignty and carry out His Will as laid down in His Law.

NINE

Wild animals²³⁷ come to the world because of vain oaths (perjury), and profanation of the Name²³⁸. Exile comes to the world because of idolatry, immorality, bloodshed and failure to maintain the land fallow²³⁹. Pestilence is more severe during four periods: during the fourth year, the seventh year, at the conclusion of the seventh year, and after the Chag²⁴⁰ every year. During the fourth year, because of failure to observe the laws of tithing for the poor during the third year. During the seventh year, due to failure to observe the laws of tithing for the poor during the sixth year. After the seventh year, because of failure to observe the laws of fruits during the Sabbatical year, and after the Chag each year, because of theft of the gifts²⁴¹ designated for the poor.

ט חזיה רעה באה לעולם על שבועת שוא, ועל חלול השם. גלות באה לעולם על עובדי עבודה זרה, ועל גלוי עריות, ועל שפיכות דמים, ועל השמטת הארץ. בארבעה פרקים הדבר מתרבה. ברביעית, ובשביעית, ובמוצאי שביעית, ובמוצאי הקהג שבכל שנה ושנה. ברביעית, מפני מעשר עני שבשלישית. בשביעית, מפני מעשר עני שבששית. ובמוצאי שביעית, מפני פרות שביעית. ובמוצאי הקהג שבכל שנה ושנה, מפני גזל מתנות עניים:

²³⁷ [Wild animals and Exile are a continuation of the theme of the previous Mishna, and are printed there in other editions – RB].

²³⁸ This is particularly vile.

²³⁹ Plowing and sowing during the seventh year.

²⁴⁰ Succos.

²⁴¹ gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners, one or two grapes or clusters of smallish grapes.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:9

Pestilence occurs during four periods: During the fourth and seventh years of the Sabbatical cycle, at the end of the Sabbatical cycle, and after every Succos. ♦ During the fourth and seventh years, because people did not give the Tithe for the Poor in the third and sixth years. ♦ After the seventh year, because people did not make ownerless their fruits for the poor. ♦ After Succos of each year, because people were not careful in distributing to the poor their due. This is thievery.

TEN

Four characteristics are found amongst men: There are those who say, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours. Such a person has an average character²⁴², but some say this is the character of Sodom²⁴³. There are those who say, What is mine is yours, but what is yours is mine. This person is uncultured²⁴⁴. There are those who say, What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours. Such a person is pious. And there those who say, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine. Such a person is wicked.

י ארבע מדות באדם. האומר שלי שלי ושלי שלי, זו מדה בינונית. ויש אומרים, זו מדת סדום. שלי שלי ושלי שלי, עם הארץ. שלי שלי ושלי שלי, חסיד. שלי שלי ושלי שלי, רשע:

Four attributes are found in Man:

1. The one who says what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours. This is an ordinary attribute because although he does not prevent his fellow from enjoying that fellow's own property or deny him his pleasures, neither does he invite his friend to come and benefit from what he himself has. Moreover, he arrogantly says that he does not want to have any part of his fellow's graciousness or beneficence. Some suggest that this is an evil attribute because maybe his friend needs him and use of his resources.

²⁴² He is neither righteous nor evil.

²⁴³ Who were exceedingly miserly and misanthropic.

²⁴⁴ He takes no note of what belongs to whom.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:10

2. The one who says what is mine is yours and what is yours is mine. This is an ignoble attribute. It indicates a boorish person who does not understand and respect the concept of private property and privacy.
3. The one who says what is mine is yours and what is yours is yours is virtuous. This man is supremely altruistic. ♦ Justice is the foundation of society, and mercy is its finishing touch.
4. The one who says what is yours is mine and what is mine is mine is wicked. Such a person is selfish and egocentric.

ELEVEN

Four types of temperments are found amongst men²⁴⁵. Easy to anger, but easy to appease – such a person’s loss is greater than his gain²⁴⁶; hard to anger and a hard to appease – his reward is greater than his loss; hard to anger, but easy to appease – he is virtuous; and, easy to anger, but difficult to appease – he is evil.

יא ארבע מדות בדעות. גות לקעוס ונות לרצות, יצא שקרו בהפסדו, קשה לקעוס וקשה לרצות, יצא הפסדו בשקרו קשה לקעוס ונות לרצות חסיד. גות לקעוס וקשה לרצות רשע:

Four innate dispositions are found amongst men.

1. The one who is quick to anger about everything, but is equally quick to calm down. Since he gets angry all the time, his loss is greater than his gain because as quickly as he became calm, he will soon again anger. Some say the opposite.
2. The one who rarely angers, but if he does he has a hard time in being pacified. His reward is greater than his loss because, in the end, he does control his anger. Some say the opposite.
3. The one who rarely angers, but if he does he immediately returns to a tranquil, peace of mind. He has our highest admiration.
4. The one who angers quickly and has a hard-time calming down and purging his fury. He is depraved.

²⁴⁵ [There is basic disagreement regarding how to read these first two sayings resulting in very different understandings of the intended meaning of this Mishna. See, for instance, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary on this Mishna. –RB].

²⁴⁶ His gain of being quick to be pacified is lost because of his quickness to anger.

TWELVE

Four types of temperments are found among students. Quick to perceive²⁴⁷, and quick to forget²⁴⁸ – his loss is greater than his gain; slow to perceive, but slow to forget – his reward is greater than his loss; quick to perceive and slow to forget – he is wise; and, slow to perceive, and quick to forget – he has a bad portion²⁴⁹.

יב ארבע מדות בתלמידים. מהר לשמוע ומהר לאבד, יצא שכרו בהפסדו. קשה לשמוע וקשה לאבד, יצא הפסדו בשכרו. מהר לשמוע וקשה לאבד, חכם. קשה לשמוע ומהר לאבד, זה חלק רע:

Four natures are found in students:

1. The one who is quick to learn, but quickly forgets. He loses more than he gains.
2. The one who is slow to learn, but slow to forget. His gain exceeds his loss.
3. The one who is quick to learn and slow to forget. He is blessed with a wonderful gift.
4. The one who is slow to learn and forgets quickly. He has a misfortune.

²⁴⁷ He learns fast.

²⁴⁸ His learning.

²⁴⁹ In life.

THIRTEEN

Four sorts of attitudes exist regarding those who give charity. The one who is willing to give, but begrudges others giving – he has a stingy eye regarding others; others should give, but not him – he is stingy for himself; he is willing to give and others should give, as well – he is virtuous; and, the one who is stingy to give and he does not want others to give, either – he is just plain wicked.

יג ארבע מדות בנותני צדקה. הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים, עינו רעה בשל אחרים. יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן, עינו רעה בשלו. יתן ויתנו אחרים, תמיד. לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים, רשע:

There are four types of people regarding the giving of charity:

1. The one who gives, but discourages others to give. He is not good since he does not want others to be rewarded for being charitable.
2. The one who wants and encourages others to give, but he himself does not give. He is stingy.
3. The one who encourages others to give and he himself gives. He is righteous.
4. The one who dissuades or prevents others from giving, and he does not give. He is malevolent.

It is primarily that wealth which is spent on good works that truly becomes the permanent possession of the giver, benefiting him by advancing his eternal salvation.

FOURTEEN

There are four sorts of people regarding going to the Study Hall²⁵⁰. There is the one who goes to learn, but does not put anything²⁵¹ into practice – he, at least, gets a reward for making the effort to go there; he who observes, but does not go²⁵² – he is rewarded for his observance; he who goes and learns, and he observes – he is virtuous; and, he who neither goes to learn nor observes – he is impious.

י' אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי לְבֵית הַמְדְרָשׁ.
הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שְׂכָר הַלֵּיכָה בְּיָדוֹ.
עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה בְּיָדוֹ.
הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, תְּסִיד. לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא
עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע:

There are four types who go to the Beis Medrash to study Torah.

1. The one who goes regularly and attends Torah lectures, but is unable to learn or did not understand the lesson. This may be the one who goes but does not put his learning into practice. He receives reward for attending the lectures.
2. The one who learns at home, on his own. This may be the one who practices, but makes no effort to learn from rabbis. Such a person lacks one vital element in his comprehensive Torah-learning - the personally-transmitted Tradition which can be obtained only by direct interaction with a teacher. He gets reward for his practice only.
3. The one who goes to the Beis Medrash and puts his learning into practice. He is righteous.

²⁵⁰ To learn.

²⁵¹ He learned. Some say that this refers to one who went to the Beis Medresh, but did not learn because he did not understand anything.

²⁵² Either he practices, but does not learn or he learns at home.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:14

4. The one who does not go to learn and does not improve his behavior. He is bad.

The Beis Medresh was chiefly where the Oral Teaching was communicated.

FIFTEEN

Those who sit before the wise men can be divided into four categories²⁵³: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer²⁵⁴, and the colander. The sponge absorbs everything²⁵⁵. The funnel lets the liquid pour through from one vessel into another²⁵⁶. The strainer allows the wine to pour out and collects the dregs, and the colander removes the flour-dust²⁵⁷ and retains the clean flour²⁵⁸.

טו ארבע מדות ביושבים לפני חכמים. ספוג, ומשפך, משמרת, ונפה. ספוג, נשהוא סופג את הכל. משפך, שמכניס בזו ומוציא בזו. משמרת, שמוציאה את היין וקולטת את השמרים. ונפה, שמוציאה את הקמח וקולטת את הסלת:

Four types of people sit before the wise men. They are compared to different vessels.

1. The sponge. This is one who absorbs everything, but may not be able to differentiate fact from fiction.
2. The funnel. This is one through whom the lesson just passes through. He understands little, and then only after repetitive lessons.

²⁵³ Regarding their ability to differentiate between the essential and correct parts from the non-essential and incorrect portions of a matter.

²⁵⁴ Filtering the dregs which remain in it from the wine which flows forth. [An alternative definition is ‘the cask’ – RB].

²⁵⁵ The correct and the incorrect.

²⁵⁶ Such a person does not take care to preserve for himself the correct and the essential.

²⁵⁷ Fine dust-like flour.

²⁵⁸ The essential.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:15

3. The strainer or the cask drained of its wine but which still retains the dregs. He loses the essential parts of the lesson by letting them pass through, but holds onto the unessential portions.
4. The colander. He captures the essential concepts, and lets pass the unimportant portions.

SIXTEEN

Any love which is dependent upon some external matter²⁵⁹ is liable to disappate once the external matter is no longer extant. However, love which is not dependent upon some external matter is permanent. What sort of love is dependent upon an external matter? That would be like the love between Amnon and Tamar²⁶⁰.

טז כל אהבה שֶׁהיא תלויה בְּדָבָר, בְּטֵל דָּבָר, בְּטֵלָה אֲהָבָה. וְשֵׂאִינָה תְלוּיָה בְּדָבָר, אֵינָה בְּטֵלָה לְעוֹלָם. אִיזוֹ הִיא אֲהָבָה הַתְלוּיָה בְּדָבָר, זוֹ אֲהָבַת אֲמִנוֹן וְתָמָר. וְשֵׂאִינָה תְלוּיָה בְּדָבָר, זוֹ אֲהָבַת דָּוִד וַיהוֹנָתָן:

The type of love which is not dependent upon an external matter is like that that there was between David and Jonathan.

Any love which is dependent upon physical attraction or some external matter will vanish if that which it is dependent upon vanishes, such as that between Amnon and Tamar. He loved her simply for her beauty or because he lusted for her. Tanna D'vei Eliyohu says this was like the love between Balaam and Balak. ♦ Any love which is not dependent upon something transitory will never vanish, such as that between David and Jonathan. Their bond and mutual admiration was based on their equal desire and commitment to fulfill God's Will. Tanna D'vei Eliyohu says this was like the love of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

²⁵⁹ From which he wishes to derive pleasure.

²⁶⁰ Once his lust was satisfied, his attitude changed to hatred.

SEVENTEEN

Any disagreement which is for the Sake of Heaven shall, in the end, endure²⁶¹, whereas any controversy not for the Sake of Heaven shall, in the end, not endure. What is an example of a dispute for the Sake of Heaven? The one between Hillel and Shammai. And what is one not for the Sake of Heaven? That of Korach and his compatriots.

יז כל מחלוקת שְׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, סוּפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם. וְשֵׁי אֵינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, אֵין סוּפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם. אֵיזוֹ הִיא מִחְלוּקַת שְׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, זֶה מִחְלוּקַת הַלֵּל וְשַׁמַּיִי. וְשֵׁי אֵינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, זֶה מִחְלוּקַת קֹרַח וְכָל עֲדָתוֹ:

Any disagreement which is for the sake of Heaven will have enduring results, such as the disagreements between Hillel and Shammai. ♦ Any disagreement which is not for the sake of Heaven will not last, such as that stirred up by Korah and his followers. ♦ Hillel and Shammai and their students had mutual respect. They all were in the pursuit of the truth. This why we still learn of their disputations. ♦ On the other hand, Korah and his gang were envious of Moses and argumentative in order to cause dissent. They were rebellious, conceited, power-hungry and pursued honor. They have long since disappeared.

²⁶¹ The disputants search for the truth enhancing the honor of Heaven.

EIGHTEEN

No sin shall be on the hands of those²⁶² who do things for the benefit of the public²⁶³, whereas anyone who leads the public to sin shall never be given²⁶⁴ the opportunity to successfully repent. Moses²⁶⁵ had merit and caused the masses to merit, therefore, we ascribe their merit to him²⁶⁶, as it says (Deut. 33), *“He did the righteousness of God, and righteous ordinances remained with Israel.”* Jereboam (son of Nevat) sinned and caused others to sin, so their sins are attributed to him, as it says (I Kings 15), *“Regarding the sins of Jereboam who sinned and caused Israel to sin”*.

יח פל המזכה את הרבים, אין חטא בא על ידו. וכל המחטיא את הרבים, אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. משה זכה וזכה את הרבים, זכות הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר (דברים לג), צדקת ה' עשה ומשפטיו עם ישראל. ירבעם (בן נבט) חטא והחטיא את הרבים, חטא הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר (מלכים א טו), על חטאות ירבעם אשר חטא ואשר החטיא את ישראל:

Anyone who acts for the benefit of the public will not come to sin. This is so that it should not resultt that his “students” are in Heaven while he, the teacher, is in Gehinnom. ♦ Anyone who causes the public to sin will not even be given the opportunity to repent. ♦ Moses acted on behalf of the public by teaching them Torah and leading the multitudes to righteousness, while

²⁶² They will not sin and they will not cause others to sin.

²⁶³ And lead them in the proper way.

²⁶⁴ By Heaven.

²⁶⁵ He taught the nation to perform matters of righteousness and justice.

²⁶⁶ His name is specifically mentioned.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:18

Jeroboam ben Nevat sinned and caused others to sin. The sins of the public are attributed to him. ♦ The entire dynasty of Jeroboam perished by reason of the criminal seduction perpetrated by its ancestor.

NINETEEN

Anyone who exhibits any of these three traits is a pupil of Abraham, our forefather. But, if he has three other traits, it marks him as a one of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. A good eye²⁶⁷, a lowly spirit²⁶⁸ and subdued soul²⁶⁹ mark him as a student of Abraham, our forefather. An evil eye, a haughty spirit²⁷⁰ and an exaggerated soul²⁷¹ make him a student of the wicked Balaam. What is the difference between the students of Abraham, our forefather, and those of the wicked Balaam? The students of Abraham, our forefather, eat in this world, and inherit the World to Come, as it says, (Proverbs 8), *“I have what to bequeath those who love me, and their treasures I shall fill.”* But the

יט כל מי שישיש בידו שלשה דברים הללו, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. ושלשה דברים אחרים, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. עין טובה, ורוח נמוכה, ונפש שפלה, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. עין רעה, ורוח גבוהה, ונפש רחבה, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. מה בין תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו לתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו, אוכלין בעולם הזה ונוחלין בעולם הבא, שנאמר (משלי ח) להנחיל אהבי יש, ואצרתיהם אמלא. אבל תלמידיו של בלעם הרשע יורשין גיהנום ויורדין לבאר שחת, שנאמר (תהלים נה), ואתה אלהים תורידם לבאר שחת, אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו ימיהם,

²⁶⁷ He is not jealous of the good others have.

²⁶⁸ Humility.

²⁶⁹ Modesty and satisfied with little.

²⁷⁰ Conceited.

²⁷¹ Pursues pleasures.

disciples of the wicked Balaam shall
inherit Gehinnom, and shall descend

וְאֵנִי אֶבְטַח בְּךָ:

a bottomless pit, as it says (Psalms 55). *“You, God, shall lower them into a bottomless pit, those murderous people, and their lives shall be cut in half – but I shall trust in You.”*

The one who looks positively on things due to his love of God and people, has a humble spirit and does not pursue his desires but is satisfied with little, is counted as a disciple of Abraham. ♦
However, the one who casts an evil eye on others and views everyone as his competitor and enemy, acts haughtily, and is relentlessly pursuing his every desire or is a misanthrope, is a student of Balaam the wicked.

TWENTY

Yehuda ben Tema said, “Be as robust²⁷² as a leopard, as fleet as an eagle, run like a deer, and be as strong as a lion when doing the will of your Father in Heaven.” He was wont to say, the arrogant²⁷³ go to Gehinnom, and the humble²⁷⁴ to the Garden of Eden. May²⁷⁵ it be Your will, Lord, our God, that Your city be rebuilt very soon, in our days, and that we shall receive a portion in Your Torah.

כ יהודה בן תימא אומר, הוי עז פומר, וקל פנשר, ורץ פצבי, וגבור פארי לעשות רצון אביה שבשמים. הוא היה אומר, עז פנים לגיהנם, ובשת פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניה יי אלהינו שתבנה עירך במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך:

Be as strong as a leopard - and not fear asking your teacher about something you do not understand nor be self-conscious about observing the Torah and strong enough to resist attempts to lure you away from good and to induce you to do evil; and light as an eagle – racing to do God’s Will, and untiringly reviewing your learning over and over again, soaring up to God; run like a deer - in pursuit of performing the Commandments and away from sinning, knowing neither procrastination nor hesitation; and be as courageous as a lion and conquer your Inclination; mighty, to overcome all obstacles from within and without - all to do the Will of our Father in Heaven.

²⁷² Courageous.

²⁷³ Impudent.

²⁷⁴ Who blushes easily.

²⁷⁵ Here ends the tractate. From here, are additions to the Mishnayos.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:20

Conceited people, those who publicly defy God's Commands, will go to Gehinnom, while the bashful, who are compassionate and do acts of loving-kindness, will go to Heaven. ♦ Timidity leads to prudence, guarding a man from errors. ♦ May it be Your will, God of our fathers and forefathers, to quickly build the Temple in our days and for You to give us a portion in Your Torah. ♦ The Torah is the antidote for the Evil Inclination.

TWENTY-ONE

He²⁷⁶ was wont to say, “Five years of age²⁷⁷ for Scripture, ten years old for Mishna, thirteen²⁷⁸ for the Commandments²⁷⁹, fifteen for Talmud, eighteen for the marriage canopy, twenty for pursuing²⁸⁰, thirty for strength²⁸¹, forty for understanding, fifty for counsel, sixty for sagaciousness, seventy for hoariness, eighty for courageousness, ninety for bending over²⁸², and a hundred – well that’s like he’s dead, and useless, and has passed from this world.

כא הוא הִיהָ אוֹמֵר, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִי לְמִשְׁנָה, בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לְמִצְוֹת, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לְתַלְמוּד, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה לְחַפָּה, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים לְרִדּוּף, בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לְכַת, בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים לְבִינָה, בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים לְעֵצָה, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנֶים לְזִקְנָה, בֶּן שְׁבַעִים לְשִׁיבָה, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה לְאִבּוֹרָה, בֶּן תְּשַׁעִים לְשׁוֹת, בֶּן מֵאָה כְּאִלוֹ מֵת וְעֵבֶר וּבֵטֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם:

The ideal ages to begin Torah education are as follows: At three or four a child should learn to read. At five, we begin to teach him Scriptures. ♦ At ten, Mishna. At thirteen, the Commandments. ♦ At fifteen, Talmud. ♦ The Gemara is that work which “completes” the Torah. ♦ When he turns eighteen, he should go find himself a wife. ♦ At twenty, he must begin pursuing a career or profession in order to support his wife and children. At

²⁷⁶ [Shmuel Hakoton- RB].

²⁷⁷ To begin to learn.

²⁷⁸ When he brings two hairs, and is called a man.

²⁷⁹ To be obligated to perform the Mitzvoths in the Torah.

²⁸⁰ To go earn a living for his wife and children. Some say to pursue the enemy, i.e. join the army.

²⁸¹ He is at peak physical strength and can do hard work.

²⁸² He can no longer do physical work.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 5:21

this age, he becomes personally liable for his sins. He is also old enough to go out to war. ♦ At thirty, a man is at his peak strength. ♦ At forty, he begins to understand. ♦ At fifty, he has enough life-experience that he can now give intelligent counsel and advise. ♦ At sixty, he begins old age. ♦ At seventy, he has basically completed his life's work and achievements. ♦ At eighty, he attains courageousness. His advice is sage. ♦ At ninety, he is bent over and his physical capabilities are diminished. He can now recount his life's history. ♦ At one hundred, he has concluded his active life. He will no longer contribute to society. Every day he lives is a gift from God.

TWENTY-TWO

Ben Bag Bag said, “Turn it²⁸³ over and over, for everything is contained within it, and you can view all matters through it. Become old and worn with it, for you have no better pursuit than her.”

כב בן בג בג אומר, הקף בה והקף בה, דכלא בה. ובה תחזי, וסיב ובליה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לה מדה טובה הימנה:

Everything is in the Torah. Learn it repeatedly. And then, learn it again. You will learn from it even as an old man. Do not abandon it. ♦ Do not bother studying other philosophies, ideologies and theologies and so forth, as they are all a waste of your time. ♦ No wisdom in the world is superior to that of the Torah. ♦ The Torah is the one inexhaustible source of all the knowledge of what is good and true and worthwhile.

²⁸³ The Torah.

TWENTY-THREE

Ben Hei Hei said, “The reward **כג בן הוא הא אומר, לפום צערא**
is commensurate with the **אגרא:**
effort.”

The more effort you exert in your learning and the more you sweat, the grander the reward. ♦ The measure of his earnest striving and devotion determine the true worth of both a man and his life.

CHAPTER 6 – BRAISA

שְׁנוּ חֲכָמִים בְּלִשׁוֹן הַמִּשְׁנָה, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁבָחַר בָּהֶם וּבְמִשְׁנָתָם:

²⁸⁴The Sages taught this in the language of the Mishna. Blessed be He who chose them and their teachings.

ONE

Rebbe Meir said, “Anyone who engages in Torah for Heaven’s sake, merits many things. Not only that, but the entire world is only worthwhile because of him²⁸⁵. He is called a companion²⁸⁶, beloved, lover of God, lover of mankind, makes God glad, makes mankind joyous, it dresses him in humility and awe²⁸⁷, it prepares him to be a righteous person, pious, honest, and trustworthy. It distances him from sinning²⁸⁸, and

א רַבִּי מֵאִיר אֹמֵר כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׂמְחָה, זוֹכֵה לְדַבְרִים הַרְבֵּה. וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ פְדָאֵי הוּא לוֹ. נִקְרָא רַע, אֶהוּב, אֹהֵב אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, אֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וּמְלַבֵּשׁתוֹ עֲנוּוָה וִירְאָה, וּמְכַשְׂרֵתוֹ לְהִיּוֹת צַדִּיק חֲסִיד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנֶאֱמָר, וּמְרַחֵקתוֹ מִן הַחַטָּא, וּמְקַרְבֵּתוֹ לְיַדֵּי זְכוּת, וְנֶהְנִיחַ מִמֶּנּוּ עֲצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה בֵּינָהּ וּגְבוּרָה. שְׁנֵאָמַר (משלי ה)

²⁸⁴ This chapter is an addendum to Mishna Avos and it is nearly completely like that found in Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 17 and in Tractate Kalla Rabassi, Chapter 8.

²⁸⁵ Worthy of existing because of him.

²⁸⁶ Albeck reads this, A beloved friend. One who engages in Torah for the sake of Heaven is called a beloved friend.

²⁸⁷ Of God.

²⁸⁸ By his performing the Mitzvoths and good deeds.

brings him close to merit. Others benefit from his counsel, and sound wisdom, with understanding and courage, as it says, (Proverbs 8), “*I have counsel and sound wisdom, I am understanding, and I have might*”. It gives him majesty and rule, the ability to analyze the Law, and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him. He becomes like an over-flowing spring and never-ending river. He shall be modest and persevering, forgiving of insults, exalted above all creation.

לי עצה ותושיה אני בינה לי גבורה, ונותנת לו מלכות וממשלה וחקור דין, ומגליון לו רזי תורה, ונעשה כמעין המתגבר וכנהר שאינו פוסק, והוי צנוע וארך רוח, ומוחל על עלבונו, ומגדלתו ומרומתו על כל המעשים:

Anyone who occupies himself with Torah for its own sake is called by many positive appellations. ♦ It is as if the whole world was created just for him. ♦ He is called a friend of God’s, beloved, lover of God, lover of Man, one who makes God happy, and makes people happy. ♦ He is clothed in modesty and awe. ♦ He is righteous in his thoughts and deeds. ♦ He is honest, trustworthy, distant from sinning, and meritorious. ♦ He is wise, intelligent and his counsel is bold. ♦ Such a person will be rewarded with majesty and governance. ♦ He will be able to judge. ♦ The mysteries of the Torah will be revealed to him. ♦ He will become like an ever-flowing spring and a vigorous river. ♦ He will be humble, compassionate and forgiving. This will make him great and exalted over all other people. ♦ Torah is to be studied with a pure purpose. ♦ Still, the upright man is preferred over the righteous one.

TWO

Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi said, “Every single day a Heavenly Voice goes out from Mount Horeb declaring ‘Oy to those who insult the Torah. For all those who do not engage themselves in Torah are called ‘reprimanded’, as it says (ibid. 11), “*A beautiful, but tasteless, woman who is like a ring in the nose of a pig*”. And, (Exodus 32), “*The Tablets are a work of God, and the script engraved (Charus) upon them is the script of God.*” Do not read Charus (engraved) on the Tablets, but Cheirus (freedom)²⁸⁹ in order to teach you that there is no one freer than he who involves himself in learning Torah. Anyone who engages in learning Torah becomes exalted, as it says, (Numbers 21), “*And from Mattana to Nachaliel²⁹⁰ and from Nachaliel to Bomos.*”

ב אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי, בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹמַר בַּת קוֹל יוֹצֵאת מִהַר חוֹרֵב וּמְקַרְצֵת וְאוֹמֶרֶת אוֹי לָהֶם לְבָרִיּוֹת מֵעֲלֵבוֹנָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה. שֶׁכָּל מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה נִקְרָא גְזוּף, שְׁנֵאמַר (שם יא) גְזוּם זָהָב בְּאֵף חֲזִיר אֲשֶׁה יָפָה וְסָרַת טָעַם. וְאוֹמַר (שמות לב), וְהִלַּחַת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה וְהַמְּכַתֵּב מִכְתָּב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל הַלַּחַת, אֵל תִּקְרָא חֲרוּת אֶלָּא חֲרוּת, שֶׁאֵין לָהּ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בַּתְּלִמוּד תּוֹרָה. וְכָל מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בַּתְּלִמוּד תּוֹרָה הָרִי זֶה מִתְעַלֶּה, שְׁנֵאמַר (במדבר כא) וּמִמַּתָּנָה נַחְלִיאֵל וּמִנַּחְלִיאֵל בָּמוֹת:

²⁸⁹ The freedom of Israel is dependent upon the Tablets.

²⁹⁰ Israel is called His *Nachalah* - inheritance.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 6:2

A Heavenly voice is heard every day saying, How ugly it is that a Jew fails to learn Torah! What a waste! It is like a woman who was given natural beauty, but lacks moral sense or grace. ♦ The Torah frees Man from the temptations of physical lusts and desires. ♦ The man of Torah controls his inclinations and he is now free to be virtuous without being enticed by his desires. ♦ The angry man forgets his Torah.

THREE

Anyone who learns even one chapter or one Halacha or one verse or one saying or even one letter from his fellow, must bestow upon him honor, since we found that David, King of Israel, learned but two things from Achitophel²⁹¹, and yet called him ‘my master, my commander, my confidant’, as it says, (Psalms 55), *“You are a man equal to me; you are my commander, my confidant”*. This is a matter of inference. What David, King of Israel, who learned but two things from Achitophel and still called him my master, my commander, my confidant, how much more so anyone²⁹² who learns even one chapter, one Halacha, one verse, one saying or one letter must

ג הלומד מחברו פרק אחד או הלכה אחת או פסוק אחד או דבור אחד או אפילו אות אחת, צריך לנהג בו כבוד, שכן מצינו בדוד מלך ישראל, שלא למד מאחיתופל אלא שני דברים בלבד, קראו רבו אלופו ומידעו, ושנאמר (תהלים נה), ואתה אנוש כערפי אלופי ומידעי. והלא דברים קל וחומר, ומה דוד מלך ישראל שלא למד מאחיתופל אלא שני דברים בלבד קראו רבו אלופו ומידעו, הלומד מחברו פרק אחד או הלכה אחת או פסוק אחד או דבור אחד או אפילו אות אחת על אחת כמה וכמה שצריך לנהג בו כבוד. ואין כבוד אלא תורה, ושנאמר (משלי ג), כבוד חכמים

²⁹¹ 1) David wanted the Levites to transport the Ark via wagon (II Samuel 6:3-8), but Achitophel said that they should carry the Ark on their shoulders as Moses had instructed (Numbers 7:9), and 2) Achitophel taught David that it was permitted to write the Name of God on earthenware in order to silence the nether-waters (Succah 53b). Tractate Kallah Rabbassi says that he taught him two different things: 1) that one should not learn Torah alone, but with a friend, and 2) one should go to synagogue with enthusiasm and not contritely.

²⁹² A commoner surely must call his teacher 'rabbi'.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 6:3

honor the one who taught him this. וְגִחְלוּ, (שם כח) וְתַמְיָמִים יִגְחְלוּ טוֹב, וְאֵין
טוֹב אֶלָּא תוֹרָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כִּי לָקַח טוֹב
Torah²⁹³, as it says (Proverbs 3), “*The
wise²⁹⁴ shall inherit honor*” and
נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרָתִי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ:
(ibid. 28), “*The perfected ones shall
inherit good*”. There is nothing truly good but Torah, as it says, “*I
have given them a good portion, my Torah; do not abandon it.*”

Once a person learns any matter of Torah from someone else, even as simple as how to read one letter correctly, he must give reverence to that person. He becomes his mentor and master. This is all the more true if he learns a wise saying or a Scriptural verse or a Torah Law or a chapter. ♦ Real honor is reserved for Torah scholars. ♦ The true good is Torah. ♦ The Torah holds our true human dignity and our true salvation.

²⁹³ No one is worthy of honor except for the Torah he has learned.

²⁹⁴ The wise in Torah.

FOUR

So is the way of Torah²⁹⁵: You shall eat bread with salt, and drink water in measured amounts. You shall sleep on the ground, and you shall suffer a life of hardship, and in Torah you shall toil. If you do so, (Psalms 128), *“Happy shall you be, and good will it be for you.”* Happy in this world and good for you in the World to Come.

ד כף היא דרבה של תורה, פת במלח
 תאכל ומים במשורה תשתה ועל הארץ
 תישן וחי צער תחיה ובתורה אתה
 עמל, אם אתה עשה כן, (תהלים קכח)
 אשריך וטוב לך. אשריך בעולם הזה
 וטוב לך לעולם הבא:

In order to truly gain from Torah study, one must set aside worldly pleasures, such as good food and a comfortable bed, and greatly exert himself in Torah-learning. ♦ Content will such a person be in this world, and good he will have in the World to Come.

²⁹⁵ The way to acquire the knowledge of Torah.

FIVE

Do not seek greatness for yourself nor covet honor. More than your learning, is your doing²⁹⁶. Do not envy the noblemen’s tables, for your table is greater than theirs and your crown is greater than their crowns. Your Employer is trustworthy and shall pay you appropriately for your work.

ה אל תבקש גדלה לעצמך, ואל תתקמוד כבוד, יותר מלמודך עשה, ואל תתאוה לשלחנם של שרים, ושלחנך גדול משלחנם וכתרך גדול מכתרם, ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעלתך:

Neither pursue governing over other people nor honor. ♦ Do not allow yourself to become envious when others are honored while you stand aside unnoticed. ♦ Spend more time and effort in doing than in actual learning. ♦ Do not desire the table of kings. For your table in the Next World is greater than is their table in this world. Your crown there is greater than their crown here. For there you shall sit among the righteous and God shall reward you for your good deeds.

²⁹⁶ Your deeds should exceed your learning.

SIX

The Torah is greater than the priesthood and kingship, for kingship is acquired in thirty ways²⁹⁷, the priesthood in twenty-four²⁹⁸, but the Torah in forty-eight ways, which are: studying, attentiveness²⁹⁹, ordered speech³⁰⁰, understanding³⁰¹, fear, awe³⁰², humility, joy, purity, serving the wise³⁰³, punctiliousness of colleagues³⁰⁴, incisive talk with students³⁰⁵, stability³⁰⁶, knowledge of Scripture and Mishna³⁰⁷, minimizing involvement with commercial activity and secular affairs³⁰⁸, minimizing pleasures in

ו גְּדוּלָהּ תוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכֹּהֲנֻת וּמִן הַמְּלָכוֹת, וְשֶׁהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית בְּשִׁלְשִׁים מַעֲלוֹת, וְהַכֹּהֲנֻת בְּעֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבַּע, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמוֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן, בְּתִלְמוּד, בְּשִׁמְיעַת הָאָזֶן, בְּעֵרִיכַת שְׁפָתַיִם, בְּבִינַת הֵלֶב, בְּאִימָה, בְּיִרְאָה, בְּעִנּוּת, בְּשִׂמְחָה, בְּטִהָרָה, בְּשִׁמוּשׁ חֻכְמִים, בְּדִקְדוּקַת חֲבָרִים, בְּפִלְפּוּל הַתְּלָמִידִים, בְּיִשׁוּב, בְּמִקְרָא, בְּמִשְׁנָה, בְּמַעוֹט סְחוּרָה, בְּמַעוֹט דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, בְּמַעוֹט תַּעֲנוּג, בְּמַעוֹט שִׁנָּה, בְּמַעוֹט שִׁיחָה, בְּמַעוֹט שִׁחוּק,

²⁹⁷ Thirty grades.

²⁹⁸ Twenty-four Priestly gifts.

²⁹⁹ To one's rabbi. This is the Oral Law.

³⁰⁰ Organizing one's learning and repeating it clearly.

³⁰¹ Learning intelligently.

³⁰² Of God. [Fear is dread of danger and punishment; awe is a matter of wonderment. –RB]

³⁰³ And learning from their actions.

³⁰⁴ Alternatively, בְּדִיבּוּק – to bond with friends for the purpose of learning and being exacting in the words of Torah.

³⁰⁵ Engaging in sharp exchanges of give and take with students.

³⁰⁶ Of thought/opinion. Some say it is יְשִׁיבָה – sitting [i.e. diligence and persistence –RB].

³⁰⁷ Reading Scriptures and learning Mishna.

³⁰⁸ General affairs of the world.

sleep, in conversation, and in levity, restraint, good-heartedness, trust in the Sages³⁰⁹, acceptance of affliction³¹⁰, knowing one's place³¹¹, being content with one's portion, creating a fence around one's words³¹², not feeling that you are due good³¹³, beloved³¹⁴, loves God, loves mankind, loves righteousness³¹⁵, loves integrity³¹⁶, loves reproof, distances himself from honor, does not belittle his learning³¹⁷ (alt. is not conceited because of his learning - Hirsch), takes no joy in ordering others around, shares the burden of his fellow men, prods his fellow towards innocence³¹⁸, draws him to the truth, draws him to peace, comes to terms with his learning

בְּאֶרְךָ אַפִּים, בְּלֵב טוֹב, בְּאַמוּנַת חֲכָמִים, בְּקִבְלַת הַיְסוּרִין, הַמְּכִיר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ, וְהַשְׂמַח בְּחֶלְקוֹ, וְהַעוֹשֶׂה סִיג לְדַבְּרָיו, וְאֵינוֹ מַחְזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמוֹ, אֹהֵב, אֹהֵב אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, אֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, אֹהֵב אֶת הַצְּדָקוֹת, אֹהֵב אֶת הַמַּיְשָׁרִים, אֹהֵב אֶת הַתּוֹכְחוֹת, וּמִתְרַחֵק מִן הַכְּבוֹד, וְלֹא מַגִּיס לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ שׂמַח בְּהוֹרָאָה, נוֹשֵׂא בְעַל עַם חֶבְרוֹ, וּמְכַרְיָעוֹ לְכַף זְכוּת, וּמַעְמִידוֹ עַל הָאֲמֵת, וּמַעְמִידוֹ עַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, וּמִתְיַשֵּׁב לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, שׂוֹאֵל וּמַשִּׁיב שׂוֹמֵעַ וּמוֹסִיף, הַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לְלַמֵּד וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לְעֲשׂוֹת, הַמְּחַכִּים אֶת רַבּוֹ, וְהַמְּכוֹן אֶת שְׂמוּעָתוֹ, וְהַאֹמֵר דָּבָר בְּשֵׁם

³⁰⁹ Believing their words.

³¹⁰ Not complaining to God about your condition.

³¹¹ One must know his value and place, and not force himself into a place where he does not fit or is not qualified.

³¹² By using careful, unambiguous speech.

³¹³ Because of the Torah you learned or your good deeds.

³¹⁴ By people.

³¹⁵ Loves doing acts of righteousness.

³¹⁶ Honesty, straightforwardness.

³¹⁷ Does not equate the value of his (Torah) learning with secular learning.

³¹⁸ He encourages his friend to do the right things.

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(engages in mature reflection when studying – Hirsch), asks and responds, listens and adds³¹⁹, learns in order to teach, learns in order to do, make his master wise³²⁰, orders his lessons³²¹ (retains accurately what has been handed down to him by transmission – Hirsch), attributes what he quotes to the one from whom he heard it. For anyone who identifies his sources brings redemption to the world, as it says (Esther 2), “*Esther spoke to the king in the name of Mordechai*³²².”

אומרו, היא למדת כל האומר דבר בשם
אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם, ושנאמר
(אסתר ב), ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם
מרדכי:

Torah is greater than the priesthood and kingship. Kingship is acquired in thirty ways, the priesthood in twenty-four, but the Torah in forty-eight. ♦ These are the moral and spiritual virtues which he who strives after the crown of the Torah must acquire and employ through diligent labor upon his own personality before he can attain the goal of Torah.

The thirty ways which kingship is acquired are by his:

1. Ruling over others.
2. Recruiting male soldiers.
3. Commanding the army.
4. Controlling military resources.
5. Setting military doctrine and being the chief military strategist.
6. Commanding the high officers.
7. Commanding the low-rank officers.
8. Controlling the nation's real-estate.

³¹⁹ To his learning.

³²⁰ By asking intelligent questions.

³²¹ Is precise in the Laws he heard and orders them one with another.

³²² Redemption then came to Israel.

9. Controlling the nation's harvest and GNP, i.e. the economy.
10. Controlling the weapons industry.
11. Controlling the military vehicle industry.
12. Enlisting the females.
13. Making the girls into pharmacists or perfumers.
14. Making them into cooks.
15. Making them into bakers.
16. Seizing private fields.
17. Seizing vineyards.
18. Seizing olives.
19. Giving them to his servants.
20. Taking private fields.
21. Taking vineyards, which he will tithe for his-
22. Courtesans, and
23. Servants.
24. Taking people's male-servants.
25. Taking their maidservants.
26. Taking the best of their youth.
27. Taking their teachers; all of which he will-
28. Use for his own needs.
29. He will tithe the people's flocks.
30. The populace will be his slaves.

Correspondingly, the king has thirty privileges:

1. The king does not judge, and
2. We do not judge him.
3. He does not give testimony, and
4. We cannot give testimony about him.
5. He does not do Chalitza, and
6. His wife does not have Chalitza done with her.
7. He does not perform Levirate marriage, and
8. His wife does not have Levirate marriage done with her.
9. No one can marry his widow.
10. He does not exit his palace for the funeral of a relative.
11. The people sit on the ground when consoling him, and he sits on an ottoman.

12. He sends soldiers out to a discretionary war.
13. He can confiscate land for his own needs such as building roads, which
14. He can build as wide as he likes.
15. He receives all the booty from the people, and
16. He takes his portion first.
17. He may have (up to) eighteen wives, and
18. He may accumulate (only) as much money as he needs for supplies and provisions.
19. He may accumulate as many horses as he needs for his chariots.
20. A Sefer Torah is written for him, which
21. He carries with him to war, and
22. When he comes back from war or
23. When he is sitting in judgment or
24. When he is eating.
25. No one may ride his horse.
26. No one may sit on his chair.
27. No one may use his scepter.
28. No one may see him when he is naked.
29. No one may see him while he is having his hair cut.
30. No one may see him while he is in the bathhouse.

The Kohanim acquire their priesthood by receiving twenty-four gifts: ten in the Sanctuary and fourteen outside the Sanctuary.

The ten in the Sanctuary comprise:

1. The animal sin-offering.
2. The bird sin-offering.
3. Certain guilt-offerings.
4. Doubtful guilt-offerings.
5. Public peace-offerings.
6. The leper's oil.
7. Remnants of the Omer.
8. The two loaves.
9. The showbread.
10. Remnants of the meal-offering.

The second group outside the Sanctuary comprises four in Jerusalem which are:

1. The first-born and first-fruits.
2. Portions of the Thanksgiving-offering.
3. Portions of the Nazirite's offering.
4. Consecrated hides.

This second group also comprises ten outside of Jerusalem which are:

1. The priest's due.
2. The priest's due from the Levite.
3. The Challah.
4. The first shearing.
5. The foreleg, jaw and stomach.
6. The first-born son.
7. The first-born donkey.
8. The homestead field.
9. The "Sdei Cherem" or "Sdei Achuza" (see Erchin Chapters 7 and 8).
10. Returned property stolen from a now-deceased convert who has no heirs.

The Gra has a slightly different list. He says that corresponding to these the Kohen Godol has twenty-four privileges (see Biurei HaGra).

The Torah is acquired in forty-eight ways:

1. **By paying close attention and listening carefully to one's rabbi, and by learning from everyone.** ♦ Even though the Oral Tradition has been put down in writing, it still cannot be passed on properly without also being taught by the written word.
2. **By repeating many times the lesson to himself verbally, until he grasps the learning.** ♦ Proper accurate and logical enunciation and verbalization serves not only as a test of the thought, but also as a means for impressing and retaining in the mind the subject matter.

3. **By deep contemplation.**
4. **By developing awe of Heaven and of his rabbi.**
5. **By having fear of Heaven.** ♦ The student must become aware of the sacred nature and Divine source of the subject. He must not come to violate the dignity of the sacred subject and its bearers.
6. **By being humble.** ♦ Modesty is the loftiest of virtues which faithfully guards and protects against any misstep or error on the path to wisdom and practical observance.
7. **By being joyous, and having purity of heart and intention.** ♦ There is no greater means for spiritual progress and elevation than that serenity and joy of the spirit which will cause a man to rejoice in life with all its tasks and burdens.
8. **By serving Torah scholars, which is greater than studying with them.**
9. **By adhering to those committed to Torah.** ♦ Isolation is incompatible with Jewish knowledge. It is only by association with living sages, close communion with associates and teaching disciples, that knowledge of Torah can be nurtured and promoted.
10. **By engaging in profound discourse with other students.** ♦ Calm and prudent learning is the mother of true and thorough knowledge.
11. **By establishing set times for learning Torah and Mishna, which are the foundations for all Torah study.**
12. **By minimizing his business activities.** ♦ The Torah seeks to teach us to view and arrange all human affairs on earth in the light of the Teaching of God. Active participation in civic and communal endeavors is a duty, but moderation is essential for there to be the time, mental clarity and emotional calm necessary for the cultivation of Torah wisdom.
13. **By minimizing involvement in mundane affairs.**
14. **By minimizing pleasure.**
15. **By minimizing sleep.**
16. **By minimizing idle talk.**
17. **By minimizing humor.**
18. **By not angering.**

19. **By being kindhearted.** ♦ The search for knowledge is obscured by jealousy and hatred. Because of his envy, he cannot acknowledge facts of truth and right discovered and uttered by others.
20. **By trusting the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition.** This means believing that everything our Sages and rabbis have said came directly from Heaven via Moses.
21. **By accepting one's afflictions.** ♦ Suffering trains both mind and spirit.
22. **By accepting one's limitations and restricted capacity to learn.**
23. **By accepting one's lot in life, and not pursue riches.** This also means that everyone must recognize that his real place is in the World to Come. ♦ God evaluates our achievements solely in terms of the extent to which we have made good use of the faculties with which He has endowed us.
24. **By safeguarding one's tongue against leading him to sin.** ♦ Do not force your views on others; restrain yourself from voicing your convictions unless outspokenness is fitting and proper; and qualify all your utterances with the reservation that they are true only to the best of your knowledge.
25. **By not using one's achievements in learning for his own benefit nor take credit for his Torah accomplishments.** ♦ All our attainments are due to Divine Providence and with God's help. Knowing this, we must view our achievements with no other emotion but humility.
26. **By being loved.**
27. **By loving God.**
28. **By loving people, which will result in his being able to bring them close to Torah.**
29. **By doing righteousness.**
30. **By loving honesty and integrity.** ♦ A true disciple of Torah study loves right, duty and fairness and will defend them wherever he may go.
31. **By loving rebuke. For we should understand that reproach makes us better people.**

32. By distancing oneself from honor and public recognition.
33. By taking no pride in your accomplishments in learning.
34. By having no enjoyment in ruling over others.
35. By carrying your weight in communal needs.
36. By judging everyone favorably.
37. By inspiring honesty and decency in others.
38. By inspiring others to pursue peace.
39. By learning with a reasoned mind. One should be levelheaded.
40. By not being afraid to ask when you do not know the answer.
41. By responding to inquiries when you do know the answer.
42. By being attentive.
43. By responding wisely and adding pertinent insights.
44. By learning in order to teach others.
45. By learning in order to do.
46. By sharpening his teacher with good questions.
47. By having a desire to learn.
48. By quoting his sources, otherwise it is like plagiarism. It is this quality which brings redemption to this world.

SEVEN

Great is the Torah as it gives life, both in this world and the World to Come, to those who put it into practice, as it says (Proverbs 4), “*Life is for those who find it, and it heals all flesh*”, and (ibid. 3), “*It shall be healing for your body, and marrow for your bones*”, and (ibid.), “*It is a tree of life for those who grasp hold of it; those who support it shall be content*”, and (ibid. 1), “*It is a graceful garland upon your head, and necklaces around your throat*”, and (ibid. 4), “*It shall give your head a graceful garland, and a crown of glory*”, and (ibid. 9), “*With Me, your days shall increase, and years shall be added to your life*”, and (ibid. 3), “*Longevity is in its right hand and richness and honor in its left*”, and (ibid.) “*For many days and years of life and peace shall be added to you*”, and (ibid.), “*Its ways are pleasant, and its paths are peace.*”³²³

ז גדולה תורה שהיא נותנת חיים לעשייה בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא, שנאמר (משלי ז), כי חיים הם למוצאייהם ולכל בשרו מרפא, ואומר (שם ג), רפאות תהי לשרך ושקוי לעצמותיה. ואומר (שם), עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותומכיה מאשר. ואומר (שם א), כי לויית חן הם לראשך וענקים לגרגרתיה. ואומר (שם ז), תתן לראשך לויית חן עטרת תפארת תמגנה. ואומר (שם ט), כי בי ירבו ימיה ויוסיפו לה שנות חיים. ואומר (שם ג), אךך ימים בימינה בשמאולה עשר וכבוד, ואומר (שם), כי אךך ימים ושנות חיים ושלום יוסיפו לה ואומר (שם), דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום:

³²³ [This last verse is absent in some editions – RB].

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Torah is great. It gives life to those who observe it in this world, and life in the World to Come. ♦ The Torah's mandates enable every aspect of Man's nature to achieve that growth and activation which is his destiny.

EIGHT

Rebbe Shimon ben Yehuda in the name of Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai said, “Adornments, power, wealth, honor, wisdom, old age, hoariness and children are pleasing for the righteous ones and pleasing for the world, as it says (ibid. 16), “*A hoary head is a glorious crown; it is found in the way of righteousness*”, and, (ibid. 20), “*The ornament of young men is their strength, and the glory of the hoary-headed ones is old age*”, and (ibid. 20), “*The crown of the elders is their riches*”, and (ibid. 17), “*Grandchildren are the crown of the old, and the glory of the children is their parents*”, and (Isaiah 24), “*The Moon shall be humiliated and the Sun ashamed when the Lord of Hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and there shall be honor for His elders*”. Rebbe Shimon ben Menasya said, “These are the seven characteristics which the Sages counted for the righteous, and all were present in Rebbe and his sons.”

ז רבי שמעון בן יהודה משום רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר, הנוי והפח והעושר והכבוד והחכמה והזקנה והשיבה והבנים, נאה לצדיקים ונאה לעולם, שנאמר (שם טז), עטרת תפארת שיבה בדרך צדקה תמצא. ואומר (שם ט), תפארת בחורים פותחם והדר זקנים שיבה. ואומר (שם יז), עטרת חכמים עשרם. ואומר (שם יז), עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם. ואומר (ישעיה כד), ותפרה תלבנה ובושה תחמה, כי מלך יהיה צבאות בהר ציון ובירושלים ונגד זקניו כבוד. רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר, אלו שבע מדות שמנו חכמים לצדיקים, כלם נתקיימו ברבי ובבניו:

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 6:8

Energy, wealth, honor, wisdom, advanced age, seniority, and children are pleasant for the righteous and for the world. Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said that Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi and his children had all seven of these blessings. ♦ Honest, decent grandchildren are the rewarding climax of their grandparents' lives.

NINE

Rebbe Yosse ben Kisma said, “I was once walking on the way when I came across a person who greeted me with ‘Shalom’, and so I returned with ‘Shalom’. He then asked, ‘Rebbe. From where do you come?’ I told him that I come from a large city filled with wise men and scholars. He then asked, ‘Rebbe. Were you to live among us, in our place, I would give you a million gold pieces, expensive gems and jewels.’ I responded to him thus, ‘Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold and precious gems and jewels in the entire world, I would not live in any place except one of Torah, as it says in David, King of Israel’s Book of Psalms, *“The Torah from Your mouth is better than thousands in gold and silver.”* And not only that, but when a person dies, nothing accompanies

ט אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא, פעם אחת
 הייתי מהלך בדרך ופגע בי אדם אחד,
 ונתן לי שלום, והחזירתי לו שלום, אמר
 לי, רבי, מאיזה מקום אתה, אמרתי לו,
 מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים
 אני, אמר לי, רבי רצונך שתדור עמנו
 במקומנו ואני אתן לך אלה אלפים דנרי
 זהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות, אמרתי
 לו אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב
 ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם, איני
 דר אלא במקום תורה, וכן כתוב בספר
 תהלים על ידי דוד מלך ישראל, טוב לי
 תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף. ולא עוד,
 אלא שבשעת פטירתו של אדם אין
 מלוין לו לאדם לא כסף ולא זהב ולא
 אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה
 ומעשים טובים בלבד, שנאמר (משלי ו),
 בהתהלךך תנחה אותך

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED 6:9

him further, not silver, not gold, not precious stones and jewels, only Torah and good deeds, as it says (Proverbs 6), *“When you walk, it shall lead you; when you lie down it shall watch over you and when you awaken it shall address you”*. *“When you lie down”* - in this world; *“when you lie down, it shall watch over you”* – in the grave; *“when you get up, it shall address you”* – in the World to Come, and (Chaggaï 2), *“All silver is mine, all gold is mine, so says the God of hosts.”*

בְּשִׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמֹר עֲלֶיךָ וְהַקִּיצוֹת הִיא
תְּשִׁיחֶךָ, בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ תִּנְחֶה אִתָּךְ, בְּעוֹלָם
הַזֶּה. בְּשִׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמֹר עֲלֶיךָ, בְּקִבְרְךָ.
וְהַקִּיצוֹת הִיא תְּשִׁיחֶךָ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.
וְאוֹמֵר (חגי ב), לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב וְנֶאֱמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

Once on a journey, he met someone who offered him much gold and jewels to move to his town, for Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma was a scholar and the man's town lacked a scholar. Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma refused saying that all the gold and jewels in the world would never get him to live in a city without Torah. Not only that but, he said, it is not one's gold and jewels which accompany him after he dies. Rather it is his Torah and good deeds.

TEN

Five³²⁴ possessions did the Holy One, blessed be He, acquire for Himself in His world: the Torah is one, the Heavens and Earth are one, Abraham is one, Israel is one, and the Temple is one. Torah we learn from the verse (Proverbs 8), “*God made me, the Torah, at the beginning of His enterprise as the blueprint for the universe, even before engaging in all His other activities of antiquity*”. Heaven and Earth, we learn from the verses (Isaiah 66), “*So says God, The Heaven is my throne, the Earth is my footstool. What sort of house can you possibly build for Me, and what sort of place for Me to rest?*”, and (Psalms 104), “*How grand are Your works, O God. All You have done was with wisdom. The world is full of your acquisitions. Abraham we learn from (Genesis 14), “Blessed*

י תַּמְשֶׁה קְנִינִים קָנָה לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ, תּוֹרָה קְנִין אֶחָד,
שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ קְנִין אֶחָד, אַבְרָהָם קְנִין
אֶחָד, יִשְׂרָאֵל קְנִין אֶחָד, בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ
קְנִין אֶחָד. תּוֹרָה מִצִּיּוֹן, דְּכַתִּיב (משלי ח),
יְהוָה קָנָנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרַפּוֹ קָדָם מִפְּעֻלָּיו
מֵאֵז. שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ מִצִּיּוֹן, דְּכַתִּיב (ישעיה
טו), כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ
הַדָּם רִגְלֵי אֵי זֶה בַּיִת אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנֶנּוּ לִי וְאֵי
זֶה מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי. וְאֹמֵר (תהלים קד), מֶה
רָבוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְהוָה כָּל־מִן בְּחִכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ
מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ קְנִינָה. אַבְרָהָם מִצִּיּוֹן,
דְּכַתִּיב (בראשית יד), וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ
אַבְרָם לֹאֵל עָלְיוֹן קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצִּיּוֹן, דְּכַתִּיב (שמות טו), עַד
יַעֲבֹר עַמֶּךָ יְהוָה עַד יַעֲבֹר עִם זֶה קְנִינָתְךָ,
וְאֹמֵר (תהלים טז),

³²⁴ Five special, beloved possessions.

be Avram to the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and Earth”.

Israel we learn from the verses (Exodus 15), “*Until Your people pass over, O God, until these people who You have acquired pass over*”, and

(Psalms 16), “*The holy ones who are on Earth, are distinguished by merit of the fact that they do all My will*”. The

Temple we learn from the verses (Exodus 15), “*The foundation of Your dwelling-place, the sanctuary of the Lord, that You, God, prepared with Your own Hands*”, and (Psalms 78), “*He brought them to the border of His sacred boundary, which His right hand acquired*”.

לְקַדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ הַמָּה וְאֲדִירֵי כָּל חֲפָצַי בָּם. בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (שמות טו), מְכוּן לְשִׁבְתָּהּ פְּעֻלַּת יְהוָה מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדָנִי כּוֹנֵנוּ יְדִידָהּ. וְאוֹמֵר (תהלים עח), וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל גְּבוּל קְדְשׁוֹ הַר זֶה קְנָתָהּ יְמִינוֹ:

God has five exclusive possessions in this world:

1. Torah.
2. The heavens and earth.
3. Abraham.
4. Israel.
5. The Temple.

When God apportioned the regions of the earth among men, He retained for Himself, for a special purpose, one land, Eretz Yisroel, the Land of the Jews, which was to serve as the soil for His Law and of His people, who were to live (there) for the fulfillment of His Law.

ELEVEN

All which the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world he did only for His own glory, as it says (Isaiah 45), *“Everything is called by My Name and I have created, fashioned and even made it all for My glory”*, and (Exodus 15), *“God shall reign for all eternity”*.

יֵא פֶל מַה שֶׁבְּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
 בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא בְּרָאוֹ אֱלֹא לְכְבוֹדוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
 (ישעיה מג), פֶּל הַנִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁמִי וְלְכְבוֹדִי
 בְּרָאתִיו יִצְרַתִּיו אֶף עָשִׂיתִיו. וְאוֹמֵר
 (שמות טו), יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:

God created all of existence solely for His own glory.

PIRKEI AVOS – SYNTHESIZED

POSTSCRIPT

Rabbi Chanania ben Akashya said: The Holy One Blessed be He wanted to merit Israel, so He gave them much Torah and many Mitzvahs as it says, “*God desires, for sake of His righteousness, to magnify Torah and make it exalted*”.

רַבִּי חַנַּנְיָא בֶּן עַקְשָׁיָא אָמַר, רְצָה
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל,
לְפִיכֵךְ הִרְבֶּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, לְשׂוֹנְאָמְרֵי
יְהוָה תַּפְּיץ לְמַעַן צַדִּיקוֹ יִגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה
וַיֵּאדָּוֶר:

By learning Torah and observing the Mitzvahs they will acquire the World to Come.

ORCHOS CHAYIM

The Pathways to Life

Rabbeinu Asher, The Rosh

Translated and Compiled by Reuven Brauner

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

INTRODUCTION

The following is an adaptation and slight rearrangement of the order of a short and most lovely ethical work, Orchos Chayim, the “Pathways to Life”, also called Hanhagos HaRosh and Tzavas HaRosh commonly attributed³²⁵ to Rabbeinu Asher (the Rosh).

This version is a blend of the standard printed edition of the Rosh’s work with the expanded translation, originally in Yiddish, and elucidations of the Tosafos Yom Tov, as well as certain modifications and added maxims as found in the “Montefiore Manuscript” as published in L’Ma’alah L’Maskil by R’ Alexander Sternbuch in 1994, the latter of which are almost certainly not those of the Rosh himself but, nevertheless, dovetail nicely with our Master’s practical and wise adages.

Herein, the Rosh, eloquently and inspiringly, succinctly encapsulates not only the key Laws of the Torah governing the daily life of the Jew, but also identifies the most fundamental modes of behavior that he must scrupulously observe in order to preserve, refine and cultivate a pure, ethical and moral soul.

These are the pathways to sincere piety and virtuousness, the path to holiness, and the road to God. He tells us not just how we should act, but how to think and what are the proper attitudes to the travails of life the committed Jew must possess.

These surely are absolute prerequisites for proper Torah observance and practice.

³²⁵ Some scholars, including Dr. Judah Galinsky at Bar Ilan University, are suspect that the Rosh was the author, but this is not the place for that discussion.

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The Rosh

A Short Biography

Rabbeinu Asher ben Yechiel, eminent Talmudist, Halachist and Ethicist, was born in the Rhine Valley of western Ashkenaz (Germany) around 1250 and died in Toledo, Spain in 1327. Known as the Rosh and the Asheiri, he was one of the most outstanding disciples of his primary teacher Rebbe Meir of Rothenburg, the Maharam, whose rulings he later codified. He was also a student of his father, and older brother, Chayim. It is possible that he was a descendent of R' Eliezer ben Nathan, the Ra'avan, one of the Ba'alei Tosafos.

Although we have little confirmed information about his early life, it appears that he may have studied in his youth in France (Troyes?), and probably lived in Cologne where he married in about 1266. In 1282, he was in Koblenz, and by 1283 he moved to Worms where he became a Dayan on the court with his teacher Rebbe Meir. Between 1286 and 1293, the Rosh may have lived in Erfurt, and from then in Swabia. In 1298, he participated in an ad hoc rabbinical synod in Worms regarding the horrific Rindfleisch massacres. At the time, he apparently became quite wealthy from his money-lending business with the Gentiles.

The Rosh sired two daughters and eight sons, the most famous of whom were Yechiel, Yehuda and Ya'acov, author of the Arba'ah Turim.

In 1286, the Maharam was caught fleeing from the local knight in order to avoid paying an exorbitant sum needed for a military expedition, and held captive at Ensisheim, Alsace. The Rosh personally guaranteed the payment of the ransom, but the Maharam refused the offer citing the principle that a prisoner

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“should not be redeemed for more than his worth”. Tragically, the Maharam died in 1293 after seven years in prison. Fearing that he, too, would be held for ransom or made to pay the Maharam’s ransom, R’ Asher escaped with his family in 1302 or 1303 to the safety of the Savoy region of the Western Alps, and then, more than a year later, to the French Provence.

In 1305, the family arrived in Barcelona, Spain where, according to one source, the Rosh met and spent eight days learning Torah with Rebbe Shlomo ben Aderet, the Rashba, the acknowledged leading Talmudist and Halachist of the day. The Rashba was greatly impressed by the Rosh and wrote a letter of approbation about him to the sages of Spain. From their various correspondences, it is clear that the Rosh and the Rashba had mutual admiration and respect. The Rosh subsequently moved to Toledo, capital of the Kingdom of Castile, where he was received with great honor and served as the local rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva for the next 23 years. There he taught Torah to numerous students, as he did when he was in Ashkenaz, including ones from Russia and Bohemia. The Rosh could speak and understand colloquial Arabic, then the language of the Jews of that region.

R’ Bezalel Ashkenazi, who called the Rosh, “the Rabbi of the Exile”, and, “most of the Exile has accepted him as their rabbi”, wrote that “the great rabbi, Rebbe Asher...came to Toledo to enlighten our eyes and take us from the darkness of foolishness to the light of wisdom and understanding”. At the time, Spanish Jewry was apparently not knowledgeable in Talmud Bavli, excepting through the writings of Rav Alfasi, the Rif.

The Rosh disseminated Toras Ashkenaz and the learning of his teachers the Ba’alei Tosafos on Talmud, already familiar to earlier individual Spanish authorities, such as the Ramah, the Ramban, R’ Yona and the Rashba, but not the greater public. However, the Rosh’s greatest contribution was his Halachic codification of the Tosafos.

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Albeit he was held in great esteem in Spain, (R' Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchon Aruch said that the Jews of Spain, "accepted the Rosh as their rabbi" –Beis Yosef, Orech Chayim 51:3), he was not entirely successful in influencing the people there to change practices he considered were at odds with the Halacha. At times, he was severely critical of their religious rituals and business practices. He did not hide his disapproval of some of their customs which were considered forbidden by the Jews of Ashkenaz and France, although they did have authorities upon whom they could rely. Altogether, the Rosh favored the Ashkenazi tradition as being more reliable.

Although the Rosh also complained bitterly about the study of Greek Philosophy and metaphysics then prevalent in Spain, and opposed the philosophical tendencies of the Rambam, he had great respect for secular wisdom, particularly astronomy and medicine. His opposition to Philosophy was due to his concern that people influenced by it would abandon their fear of God and observance of His Torah, arguing that if someone was first trained in Philosophy (which is based on human reasoning), he would be unable to fully free his heart for Torah (based on faith and tradition), as these two conceptual approaches to understanding life were fundamentally incompatible and could not be harmonized.

The Rosh was critical of those who taught Halacha from the writings of the Rambam without being well-versed in the Talmudic sources. The Maharashal relates that although the Rambam mastered many wisdoms, the Rosh preferred to rule in accordance with Rabbeinu Tam, Rebbe Isaac ben Samuel ha-Zaken (the Ri) and the Ba'alei Tosafos over the Rambam since they were "greater in number and wisdom" than the Rambam. He also found fault that the Rambam did not cite his sources.

The Rosh uniquely joined "deep" learning with the Pilpul of the Ashkenazi and French scholars and the straightforward, orderly learning of the Sephardic sages. He was highly

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independent in his decisions and did not hesitate to oppose other Geonim and Rishonim including R' Achai Gaon, the Ra'avan, R' Yosef ibn miGash, the Rif and the Rambam, for the Rosh viewed the Babylonian Talmud of Rav Ashi and Ravina as the only uncontested Halachic source.

Without any doubt, the Rosh was one of the most important Halachic decisors in Jewish history, particularly for Ashkenazi Jewry. He is quoted almost eighteen-hundred times by his son, R' Yaacov, in the latter's Arba'ah Turim, a work which itself became the basis for the authoritative Shulchan Aruch. The author of the Shulchan Aruch, Rebbe Yosef Caro, wrote that the Rosh was one of the three primary sources he used for his great work. It is difficult to overestimate the Rosh's impact and influence on the development and redaction of the Halacha as we have it today.

The Rosh wrote numerous commentaries on Chumash and Mishna, and famously his Piskei HaRosh on the Talmud. He also composed his influential Halachic responsa published as Shailos U'Teshuvos HaRosh noted for its much valuable historical information on contemporaneous Jewish culture, particularly in Spain and Germany. His Halachic decisions use Rav Alfasi as its base. He answered legal queries from Jews everywhere, as well as from non-Jews. Orchos Chayim, adapted below, is attributed to him and contains 132 short maxims about morals and proper conduct, written as an ethical will for his children.

Unfortunately, our printed editions of the Teshuvos were badly reorganized and are not in the original order the author compiled them, thus complicating their understanding and context. It is also unfortunate that most of what must have been a sizeable number of the Rosh's decisions made while in Ashkenaz have not been preserved.

His son Rebbe Yehuda wrote that, sadly, the Rosh died in poverty and great debt.

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Praises for Orchos Chayim

This is what great rabbis have said about Orchos Chayim³²⁶:

- ❖ “This is a brief work with lofty words of ethics and fear of Heaven by which a person should conduct himself and his family.” -*the Chida*
- ❖ “All the Rosh’s words are words of moral reproof.” -*Tosafos Yom Tov*
- ❖ “This work is like good, old, preserved wine which gives joy to (God) Above and (man) below, directing him in the correct and straight way.” -*Sha’agas Aryeh*
- ❖ “These are the foundations of the Torah, the compass for (attaining) Awe (of God) is embedded herein. This (work) is worthy of being read once every week.” -*Ma’agalei Kitzira*
- ❖ “Great matters are written herein. Take them to heart.” -*Harashaz of Kelm*
- ❖ “Our Sages said four matters require strengthening: Torah, prayer, good deeds and Derech Eretz – i.e. proper, ethical behavior. A lack of Derech Eretz is a deficiency in Torah.” - *R’ Yerucham Lebowitz*

³²⁶ See Introduction to L’Ma’alah L’Maskil.

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- ❖ “The great principle throughout Orchos Chayim of the Rosh is that even though there is a clear Halachic prohibition in a particular matter, nevertheless the Rosh (explains things) logically; that it is only reasonable that we are required to be ethical and moral, as our Sages have taught *Derech Eretz precedes Torah.*” -R’ *Daniel Movshowitz*

- ❖ Sefer Orchos Chayim of the Rosh comprises all human behavior and activities. It guides man in his ascent..... The Tosafos Yom Tov in Vienna instructed that this work be learned all year ‘round before Prayers according to the days of the week. It became customary in the Yeshivos to engage in this work during the days of Elul as a rational guide to bring a person to repentance. In Yeshivas Kelm, they learned it all year. This is a proper Sefer Halacha and one must be meticulous with every word, since this came from one of the greatest Sages amongst the Rishonim. The first chapter contains matters one must particularly avoid: “lethal obstacles” which man encounters on a daily basis. It is one’s obligation to make sure his deeds are “in the light of life”, and so he must greatly distance himself from evil traits such as arrogance, anger, and evil speech. (We find that some of) these (maxims) are repeated, because they are the (basic) underpinnings of Man’s attitude and character.” -R’ *Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, Ga’avad of Ponevezh*

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THESE ARE MATTERS WHICH BRING ENLIGHTENMENT AND LIFE TO THOSE WHO OBSERVE THEM, BUT DEATH TO THOSE WHO STUMBLE ON THEM.

Day One

Avoid disagreements which are not for the sake of Heaven.³²⁷

Distance yourself, as much as possible, from conceit, flattering others, hypocrisy, lies, fraud and dishonesty, mockery, slandering, tale-bearing, provoking others into argument, and anger.

Beware of the danger in making vows. Do not deceive other people, neither in words nor in monetary matters. Do not be envious or hateful of others.

Never call anyone by a derogatory or offensive nickname; and don't invent one for someone. For the one who does so has no place in the World to Come. Do not tell defamatory tales about other people nor listen to or even believe the veracity of gossip.

Do not associate with loiterers and loafers nor frequent the synagogues of the ignorant masses.

³²⁷ From the Montefiore manuscript of Orchos Chayim as published Kuntres L'Ma'alah L'Maskil, by R' Alexander Sternbuch, Bnei Brak, 5754 but absent in the standard printed editions.

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Do not look at a woman who is forbidden for you to marry.

Do not speak when handling a Cup of Blessing, such as one used during the Grace after Meals (Birkas Hamozone), until you drink from it.

Do not talk between Boruch She'omar and the end of the silent, Shemoneh Esrei Prayer, and including Tachanun, nor when the Chazan is reciting his Repetition, unless it is a matter of Torah, determining a Halacha or performing a pressing Mitzvah, or to greet someone with or respond to Shalom. Do not talk neither when Hallel is recited nor when the Torah is being read in public.

Do not eat Gentile-baked bread, even from their commercial bakeries, unless Jewish-baked bread is unavailable.

Do not participate in dinner parties (attended by a lot of people), except if it involves a Mitzvah.

Do not engage in idle talk, even of those matters which there is no sin.

Make it your habit to fall asleep at night whilst learning Torah, and not in the middle of a pointless conversation. That is, tire yourself on Torah.

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Do not put yourself into a matter of doubt regarding the time of sunset and the start of Shabbos. Instruct and caution your family regarding the proper observances of Shabbos. Daven Mincha on Erev Shabbos early in order to accept the Sabbath while it is still daytime.

When it comes time for any of the three daily Prayers, set aside your business and pray. Concentrate on your prayers. Importantly, do not look at things which are not yours, so that you will not come to illicitly desire them.

Do not speak between the Washing of the Hands and the Blessing on Bread. Be first in wishing people Shalom, good morning and other such salutations.

Praise God for satiating your appetite and quenching your thirst. If people curse or shame you, do not answer them at all. Rather, be of those who are offended and not of those who offend. Ignore their bad behavior.

Do not hurry and be argumentative. Stay clear of making oaths and vows. Because of the sin of broken promises, one's young children die.

Distance yourself from jesting and anger, for these things confuse the minds and spirits of men. At all times serve your Creator out of love. Forget not any of these matters.

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Love God with all your heart and soul, and with all your resources. When you recite the Shema, sincerely intend that, were it to be necessary, you would sacrifice your life and all your assets in order to sanctify His Name; and never do anything to desecrate His Name or degrade His Commandments. By doing this, you fulfill the words of the Singer, “Because, for your sake, we are killed all the time” (Psalms 44:23).

Trust God with all your heart and believe in His personal Providence; He, alone, can help everyone with everyone’s needs. With this, you unify Him completely, for His Eyes rove everywhere on Earth and see all the doings of Man, without exception. He knows the hearts and minds of everyone. The one who does not believe that He “took you out of the Land of Egypt” does not believe the beginning of the verse “I am the Lord, Your God”, and he cannot fully make God One. What makes Israel special among the Nations of the World, and is the foundation of the entire Torah, is to make God One. This has always been at the center of the faith of Israel.

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Day Two

Distance yourself from arrogance and anger. Rebuke your Evil Inclination and thoughts which exhort you to listen to your own will. Do not follow them. Rather, fulfill the Will and Ways of God as revealed in the Torah, which are clear, pure and straight.

Distance yourself from falsehood and matters of lies. Do not use God's Name in vain nor ever express any of God's various Names in a filthy place, even if you have reason to use one of them.

Remove the yoke of envy which burdens the hearts of men. Rely not on people; be modest and humble before your Creator. Trust not in gold and wealth, for this is the first step in idolatry, and causes you to divert your attention from the Holy One, blessed be He. Disburse your monies as He wishes, for He has the power to restore all your losses, and satisfy all your and your household's needs.

Know who is this God of your fathers. Know that your words will be weighed in the Scale of Justice, and justice will be meted out. Say nothing wrong or irrational or inappropriate. Keep your word and do not change what you have promised. Make the dispersion of your monies easier than your speech. Do not be quick in speaking evil. Therefore, do not say a harsh word, even if

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there is good reason to not say nothing until you weigh your words sensibly and carefully.

Confess your sins each morning and evening. Remember Zion and Jerusalem with a broken heart, sincere concern, groans and tears.

Always have in mind the day of your demise, and equip yourself with the provisions for your final trip, that is Torah and good deeds. If you remember this at all times, as well as regretting your sins and doing repentance, you will be prepared for the day of death and your journey to the Next World; and your bed should be soaked in tears remembering your sins. It should frighten you to contemplate that even the great and pious Talmudic Scholar, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai of blessed memory, who was the leader of Israel during the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, and who had many outstanding students who he taught until they, themselves, were great Torah scholars, was himself afraid of his ultimate fate when he took ill. He was an exemplary human being and learned much Torah and did enormous good. And yet, he was terrified that maybe he failed to do enough good or that possibly he may have once committed some minor injustice and, for that, Gehinna was awaiting him. All the more so should we be horrified.

Be a good friend to the God-fearing. Associate and bond with them. Distance yourself from those who are ungodly, lawless and unjust. Love your reprovers and their admonitions.

It is beneficial and proper for you to belittle your good deeds in your own eyes, while exaggerating the number and gravity of your offenses. Contemplate, at all times, the boundless

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compassion and unlimited grace your Creator bestows upon you; the One who feeds you when you need to be fed. Do not serve Him for recompense, rather do so because you were so commanded, and for the glorification of His Holy Name.

Remember and speak of this at all times: at night when you retire, envelop yourself with love for Him. In the day, when you arise, when you go about your business, turn to Him, be quick and meticulous with your service to Him. With this, He will give you strength and support, and direct you to do His Will.

Pray with devotion, for prayer is worship of the heart. Think. Was your son to speak frivolously with you, would you not be angry with him? So, too, you who came from a putrid drop, standing before the King and Master of the world, should you not be earnest in your prayers? Do not be like a slave who was assigned an honorable task, one beneficial for him, and yet he spoils it. How dare he stand before the king! What, then, would be better than to ask for forgiveness when we say, "*Selach lonu*" (forgive us) in the Shemoneh Esrei, but worse than to recite it without conviction? If it is impossible to maintain concentration and devotion during the entire Prayer, say at least the first Blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei with sincerity, as well as the first verse of Krias Shema. For one does not fulfill his obligation for Prayer if he does not say at least these sections with intent.

Learn the weekly Torah portion each week, reciting the Torah text twice, the Targum once, and then learn Rashi's commentary. This should be completed before the time the Reader concludes the weekly, public Torah reading in Synagogue on Shabbos morning. Understand what Rashi is saying. Greatly embrace and attach yourself to his commentary. When learning

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Gemara, be certain that you correctly understand that, too, and cling to it. For it is a proper thing to learn Mishna and Gemara, and one will receive reward for so doing. The one who sacrifices himself and carefully and scrupulously learns Gemara so that he understands it correctly, makes himself beloved. There is no greater and unique a reward than there will be for learning Torah, and no better profession than to learn Gemara. The Mishna says that learning Torah is equal, for God, to all the best Good Deeds. It is impossible to properly understand the Torah without the Gemara. Talmud Torah is equal to all else.

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Day Three

Never eat or drink anything without making the appropriate blessings before and after with as much zeal as you can. Comprehend the meaning of the blessing. Cover your head when mentioning God's Name, and close your eyes. When making a blessing or praying to God be not as it says, "With their mouths and lips they honored Me, but their hearts were distant from Me" (Isaiah 29:13).

Wash your hands before praying and eating. When you come from the bathroom, make the Asher Yotzar blessing, but do not make the blessing on washing the hands³²⁸.

Make fringes (Tzitzis) on the four corners of your garment in order that you remember God's commandments, and in order that you sanctify yourself in all your doings. Act with modesty in the bathroom. When at home, remember that you will be held accountable for even light conversations between husband and wife. Do not accustom yourself to act frivolously, and put the fear of Heaven upon yourself. Do not gaze at a woman, even one who is permitted to you. Place Mezuzos on all your doorposts.

³²⁸ The Rosh says that if one is about to say his Prayers, he should add the blessing Al Nitilas Yodoyim; but the Halacha is not like him, excepting in the morning before Shacharis.

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Do not reveal the secrets of others. Even non-confidential matters, keep in the confines of your heart. If you again hear these same things from someone else, do not tell him that you have heard this before. You need not tell your wife everything, and do not assume that she will keep secrets.

Be heedful to pray at set times in the morning, afternoon and evening. Prepare yourself an hour before the time so that you can pray with intent. Be punctual, and be of the first ten in the Minyan. Do not speak idle talk in Shul. Make sure you are not without Tallis and Tefillin.

Weigh carefully each step you take. Be moderate with food and drink, and with all your attributes. Take the middle path and do not veer neither to the right or left. Stick to the truth. Deal honestly with people. Vigorously pursue peace and friendship between people.

Pursue justice! For the one who pursues justice and righteousness and gives charity and is quick with his compassion – in words and deeds - will find life and justice and honor. Do not fail to give the half Shekel once a year. Each week and month donate as much as you can to charity. Each day, before Prayers, give at least something, however small, to charity. When you can, tithe your assets and profits. Make sure you always are stocked with food and other provisions and resources at home with which you can readily help the needy, whether they are dead or alive, poor or rich.

Establish times for Torah before you eat and before you retire to bed at night. Speak Torah at your table. Instruct the members of your household to do right; train and caution them in

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accordance with the ways of the Torah. Let them not speak conceitedly. Warn them against speaking in a degrading and shameful manner. Remember, the first thing a person will be judged on when he arrives before the Heavenly Court is whether or not he established times for Torah.

Do the Will of your Maker! Commit in your heart to discharge all what your Creator and Master has requested of you! Be as equally happy with your portion in life whether you have been allotted a little or much. Beseech God, at all times, that He turn your heart to executing His commandments. Cast your fate with God in all what you do. Do not be stingy with regard to expenditures for all the needs of the Sabbath or the Holidays. Try and bring these days in early, while it is still daylight, for this is honor for them. Enjoy them with good food and drink, and respectful clothing, and spend half the day in the Study Hall and the synagogue. Honor these days when they begin and when they end. Set a table at the end of the Sabbath.

Be as happy when you are rebuked as you would be if you found great spoils of war - for which you never have to pay. The wise man loves the one who admonishes him, for open reproof is better than concealed love, and it is pleasant for him.

Understand how things will end up before you begin them. Contemplate the loss of not performing a Mitzvah versus the reward for performing it, as well as the punishment for sinning against the reward for avoiding the sin. The wise man sees the consequences of his actions.

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Do not rely on your own will and judgment. Listen to advice and accept reproof. Be quick to perform your tasks, and all God's commandments. Above all, never think evil.

Do not accustom yourself to arise from your bed lazy. Rather, rise promptly in order to serve your Maker. Do not sleep a lot like an indolent person. Train yourself to rise early, at sunrise. Arise from your bed at the morning chirp of the birds in order to serve the Holy One, blessed be He.

Run to the House of Prayer; never be late. Watch that you do not step into filth. Concentrate on your prayers and not on other matters. Be prompt to bless and glorify your Maker. Do not speak mockingly or otherwise when the Chazan is praying. Be meticulous in answering Amen. Do not pray with soiled and impure hands or an unclean body, for your prayers will not be heard or accepted. Do not pray quickly nor swallow your words. Rather, have proper intent, and pray at ease, understand what you are saying, enunciating and slightly vocalizing each word.

Never forget that death can come suddenly and that there will be judgment before God. Do not forget your omnipotent Creator. Direct your entire will and hopes to Him. Imagine that He is standing before you at all times.

Do not perform any Mitzvah in order to receive a reward nor distance yourself from sin simply to avoid punishment from Him. Rather, serve God out of true love. Do not be overly joyous. Remember that life is fleeting. You are descendant of Adam, the first man, who was created from dust, and in the end you will be consumed by worms.

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Day Four

Do not procrastinate in performing a Mitzvah which falls in your lap. Do it right away and for the sake of Heaven. Do not say, “I will do it tomorrow” lest you not have the time or opportunity to do so then.

Do not be lazy in reciting the Blessing of the Moon, as this is a most delightful prayer for Heaven. From the time of the Exodus from Egypt until the destruction of the Temple, God dwelt amongst us in the Tabernacle and Temple, and was close to us. This is what is called the Shechina (God’s neighboring Presence). Now, when we sanctify the New Moon, God again draws His Shechina near to us. How can we not be diligent and careful that we do not omit this blessing? For if Israel did not merit anything other than receiving the Shechina but once a month with this prayer, this would be enough!

Do not separate yourself from learning Torah wisdom and ethics. Allow yourself to be covered with the dust of the feet of the Sages by following in their footsteps, and you, too, will become wise.

Do nothing to mislead people or that would cause them to joke about. For it is the manner of the ignorant masses to latch onto the mistakes and the bad things people do, yet they disregard the good in people.

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Never stop performing acts of loving-kindness³²⁹ even though others mock you for this. Never be ashamed to perform a Mitzvah.

Never make fun of your father or mother nor minimize their honor, and do not cause them any pain or distress. Honor them as much as you can while they are alive. Do not clench tight your fist and desist from always giving to the poor and indigent. Never turn from helping your relatives making like you don't know them. Rush to prepare food for them immediately, they may be ravenous.

Do not be irate with wayfarers and your guests. Receive them with a cheerful face. Do not fail to give them provisions for their journeys. Accompany them on their way, and comfort them for they are far from home and dejected. Do not tarry in bringing a tithe to the communal kitchen. The act of bringing charity in secret checks God's anger against you. Do not look towards those who are wealthier than you. Rather, turn your sights to those less fortunate than you. By so doing, you will avoid jealousy and you will be happy with your own lot, and you will be able to conduct a God-fearing and Jewish life.

Do not look up to those who are lesser than you in their Service of God or their Awe of Heaven. Rather, set your eyes on those who are greater than you in these affairs.

Do not be quick to anger about anything. Be slow to anger lest you lose your wisdom. Do not speak perversely and with foul language for you will be judged for all what you say.

³²⁹ Alternatively, "Do not stop in the middle of performing an act of loving-kindness because someone is mocking you".

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Never raise a hand against your fellow man, even were he to curse your mother or father to your face.

Do not remain angry with your fellow man for even one day. Beg forgiveness from him before he comes and asks forgiveness from you. Never speak evil or slanderously about anyone. Never be contentious or spread lies about other people. Do not overreact and respond hastily and vehemently to someone who speaks bad things.

Do not scream and yell like a wild, boorish person, for by so doing you will lose your Fear of Heaven. Do not speak so loudly at home that your voice can be heard outside of your house. Do not bellow like an animal. Always speak gently.

Do not involve yourself in other people's disputes and don't take sides, for in the end they will reconcile and the side you took up against will be angry with you because you interfered in the argument.

Do not respond to those who curse or revile you or those you call you a liar. Seal your lips and be silent lest you heat up your heart to anger. Never humiliate anyone in public for one who does so has no portion in the World to Come.

Never bully anyone because you are stronger than him. Remember, there may come a time when you will be the weak one. Do not be arrogant with people. Be of a lowly spirit, and consider yourself like the dirt upon which everyone tramples.

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Never pursue honor or authority. Never aspire to heights beyond your capabilities³³⁰.

Do not shame anyone or anything, for there is no one who does not have his hour or anything which doesn't have its place or a circumstance where it is needed. Never compel people to honor you because of your wealth or powerful position. Someone might resent this and will try to disgrace you or cause your downfall in return.

³³⁰ Literally, what you deserve.

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Day Five

Never let up in your pursuit of making new friends and supporters. Do not take lightly even one enemy. Never embarrass or humiliate anyone in public, for one who does so has no portion in the World to Come.

Do not consider lightly something your friend acquired, for this will upset him and cause him consternation. To do so is the manner of fools. Do not trust in your own wealth, for anyone who trusts in his money accumulates enemies, and will falter and collapse because of them.

Never say, “God has made me rich because of my righteousness”. Rather, be worried that you have received your reward in this World, and not in the World to Come³³¹.

Do not make it a habit to oppose your neighbors or fellow citizens and communal leaders. Sublimate your will to theirs.

Do not cause your fellow man to turn from the good way to a bad one, like those who entice and seduce people from the worship of God.

³³¹ Where the rewards are greater.

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Do not make it a habit to eat out of your home with large groups of people other than for purposes of a Mitzvah. Do not be a gourmand and stuff your belly with food, for many illnesses result from overeating. Do not become accustomed to getting drunk. You might act foolishly or speak foul-mouthed, and then regret what you have done. Do not socialize with people who devour wine or are gluttonous carnivores lest you forget your Maker and make yourself ill or become sinful.

Never be angry with your wife. If you pushed her away with your left hand, draw her near energetically with your right, and without delay. Do not terrorize your family and household for many serious failings result from such behavior. Never humiliate your wife. Rather, honor her and, by so doing, she will avoid sin.

Never be alone in a room with any woman other than your wife, mother or daughter, and even if there are two women with you. Never look at women or their clothing. Never praise a woman for her beauty or her good deeds lest others suspect her of immorality³³².

Do not make it your habit to hang around with mockers and lowlifes lest they draw you into sin.

Do not venerate yourself nor make yourself precious in your own eyes. Rather, underrate yourself.

³³² Literally, “and others will come and praise her”. That language is difficult. Rabbi Reuven Melamed in the name of Rabbi E. Lopian says that this text is a printer’s error and should read, “and others will come to desire her.”

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Do not be lazy in pursuing wisdom nor slow in respectfully rebuking your friend in private.

Act patiently. Do your work with forethought and not hastily.

Speak only when the time is right and never say anything which has no benefit. Simply, scrupulously watch what you say. Even regarding matters which are beneficial and not damaging, talk succinctly. Speak to the point.

Never speak with someone who is overly agitated or fanatical, for not only will he disregard your words, he will denigrate them.

Perpetually make efforts to acquire and maintain a faithful friend. Good friends are most beneficial.

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Day Six

Do not be oblivious to the good that others do for you. Acknowledge even those who do something as simple as opening a door for you³³³, which you surely could have done on your own.

Do not inveigle your fellow man with flattery. Never say anything you do not mean.

Make an effort to be first in the saying of Shalom to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, because of peace. For you should have good and friendly neighborly relations with everyone. Never anger a Gentile for every Gentile has his hour; his memory is long, and he keeps his anger forever. Never utter a lie or speak deceitfully. Be trustworthy with everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

Never join with an evil person or one who is sinful or one who is angry or irate or a fool. For one day you will be shamed by them.

³³³ Train your children to acknowledge other peoples' kindnesses by always saying "thank you" or by making some other obvious gesture such as nodding or waving in appreciation to a driver who stopped for them at a crosswalk. The very first thing we do when we awake each morning is say the very words "Modeh Ani" thanking God for returning our souls to our quiescent bodies. Hakaras Hatov is fundamental to Torah Im Derech Eretz. - RB

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Train yourself to only stand near a wise and astute man. Listen carefully to, understand and abide by his words. Do not even think that you can best a wise Torah scholar. You will not get any cleverer for trying to do so, nor will this result in your being considered a greater scholar.

***D**o not break into the speech of another person, for this is the attribute of a Golem (i.e. a dunce). Do not respond until you hear everything that is to be said.*³³⁴

Do not be pedantic and petty with other people about every little thing they do. Doing so will result in accruing needless enemies.

Make no effort to learn about other people's secrets or things which have been hidden from you. Do nothing in private for which you would be humiliated if done in public. Never asks, "Who sees me?"

***P**ay no attention to slanderous talk, for this is injurious to three: the one who speaks it, the one who listens to it, and the one about whom it is spoken.*

Think no evil of the one who comes to apologize to you, regardless if he is telling the truth or lying.

***D**o not hold yourself as being too important to do work or that doing so would be embarrassing for you.*

³³⁴ Maxims shown in italics in this chapter are not found in the standard printed editions of Orchos Chayim; see Introduction.

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Never rely on receiving other people's gifts, for they are only human beings³³⁵. Work for your sustenance.

***D**o not desire a fortune for which you have to work very hard and exert great effort. It is better to suffice with the one handful you already have, than have to struggle for two.*

Never make your money more important for yourself than your general well-being as, for example, by putting yourself in danger by cheating on your taxes or traveling clandestinely alone.

***D**o not yearn for a woman because of her beauty or wealth, for these things are transitory, and you may just end up with something quite different.*

Never be envious. This is a terrible, incurable illness.

***B**e neither saddened by events nor worried by your troubles. If things are going bad for you, search your soul for sins, and repent. Neither be overjoyed when things are going good. A sobering thought is that you may now not receive your reward in the Next World. Never deceive or cheat a poor man, a widow or an orphan. The punishment for doing so is very, very great.*

Do not make vowing a habit, even for a true matter, for children die because of false oaths.

³³⁵ They may not be able to fulfill their promise to give you the gift and you will be left wanting.

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Never mention God's Name in vain.

Never deviate from local convention, whatever that may be.
This will endear you to your comrades.

Never delay in making total repentance nor tarry in seeking emotional, spiritual or religious help.

Train yourself to always take the middle road in everything you do and in your behavior.³³⁶

Do not occupy yourself with useless activities. Listen not to nonsense.

Establish times for Torah!

³³⁶ Everything in moderation.

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Day Seven – A Summary

Tithe for the benefit of charity all the profits and savings God has granted you.

Give charity immediately, and as much as you can. Fix an amount to give at the end of every month and year.

Pray three times each day, every evening, morning and afternoon with the congregation. Don Tefillin *and wear Tzitzis* every day.

Affix a Mezuzah on every one of your doorposts and gates upon which the Law requires one. It is insufficient to have a Mezuzah only on the front door or gate.

Establish fixed times for learning Torah.

Be faithful and honest in your business dealings, and in your speech.

Honor, as much as you can, those who learn Torah.

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Do not hold back from reproving your fellow lest you carry the burden of the sin by your silence. Judge your fellow man as innocent; always give him the benefit of the doubt. Each night, before going to sleep, forgive anyone who sinned against you in words.

Try to make peace between husband and wife, and between other people.

Cautions your family regarding the proper observance of praying, ritually washing the hands, and reciting blessings on anything from which we benefit, such as before food, drink or things we smell.

Give charity every Friday. Learn the weekly Torah portion by reading the text twice, the Targum once, and Rashi's commentary.

Read Rabbeinu Yona's Letter of Repentance the week before Rosh Hashanna³³⁷.

Establish the eating of the Third Meal every Shabbos afternoon after Mincha. Honor Shabbos, as it is a blessing which your God gave to you as a present. Set your table for a meal on Saturday night after Havdalah, eating at least something, however little.

Help your fellow man with whatever he needs, whether it is material or with words.

³³⁷ In some texts, it says Rosh Chodesh.

ORCHOS CHAYIM – THE PATHWAYS TO LIFE

Repent every night before retiring, except on those nights when it is forbidden to deliver a eulogy or to fast. Mourn your sins, the length of the Exile, and the destruction of our glorious and holy Temple – may it be quickly rebuilt in our days. Fast once each month on a day when the Torah is read. If you cannot do this, give charity.

Perform all your good deeds modestly and humbly, and not for public adulation. What can be done quietly should not be done with fanfare in public. For this is the Service of God which is the choicest and most desired by Him.

THESE ARE THE PRUDENCES WHICH BRING GREAT GOOD.

BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO TAKES NOTE OF THESE MATTERS.

**ALL 613
COMMANDMENTS
IN PROSE**

**In accordance with the order found
in the Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvos**

Translated and Compiled by Reuven Brauner

ALL 613 COMMANDMENTS IN PROSE

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ALL 613 COMMANDMENTS IN PROSE

THE 248 POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS

*Basic Laws of Our Faith*³³⁸

Every Jew is required to believe in God and that He is the prime cause of and reason for all existence (1), and acknowledge His Unity (2); and to love (3), fear (4), worship and pray to Him (5).

We must associate and bond with Torah sages in order that we learn to act like them; and we must trust in the veracity of their words (6).

When necessary, we must give oath in His Name (7).

To the best of our ability, we must emulate His Attributes, such as by being merciful and righteous (8).

We must sanctify His Name by publicizing our true religion and not fear martyrdom for Him (9), recite Krias Shema twice daily, evening and morning (10), and learn and teach the wisdom of the Torah (11).

³³⁸ Groupings follow the system found in Seder HaMitzvos L'Harambam, R' Yaacov Muenster, New York 5705

ALL 613 COMMANDMENTS IN PROSE

On-Going Commandments Designed to Encourage Us to Love and Remember God at All Times

We must don the head (12) and arm (13) Tefillin, wear Tzitzis (14), and affix Mezuzahs on our doorposts and gates (15).

We are to assemble on the second day of Succos every seventh year when portions of the Torah are read [Hakhel] (16).

Every reigning king must write a Sefer Torah which he must keep with him at all times (17); and every man must have his own Torah which, if possible, he should write himself (18).

We must thank God after every meal (19).

The Sanctuary and Communal Sacrifices

We are to build a Sanctuary for God where we can offer sacrifices, serve Him and gather on the festivals (20), be in great awe of this place by acting therein with great reverence (21), and guard it by continuously encircling it day and night, as a matter of honor and exaltation (22).

The Levites shall serve therein with their special duties such as locking the gates and singing when a sacrifice is offered (23).

The Kohanim must wash their own hands and feet each time they enter the Temple and before they perform Service therein (24).

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The Kohanim must kindle lights [the Menorah] (25), and bless the people every day (26); place the showbread on the Table (27); offer incense (28), kindle a fire on the Altar daily (29), and remove the ashes from on top of the Altar each day (30), and remove defiled (persons) from the Sanctuary (31).

We must honor, respect, exalt and sanctify the descendants of Aaron [the Kohanim] (32).

The Kohanim must don special garments for honor and glory before they can serve in the Sanctuary (33).

They must carry the Ark on their shoulders when transporting it (34).

We must prepare special oil to anoint each High Priest [Kohen Godol] and king of Davidic lineage when he is appointed (35).

The Kohanim must work in set, weekly divisions and share in the Service on the Festivals (36).

They must defile themselves by contact with those deceased, close relatives specified in the Torah (37).

The Kohen Godol must marry a virgin girl (38).

Every day, two lamb offerings must be brought [the Tomid] (39), and the Kohen Godol must offer two meal offerings [the Chavittim], one in the morning and one in the evening (40).

An additional sacrifice [Musaf] is brought on Shabbos (41), Rosh Chodesh (42) and each of the seven days of Pesach (43).

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On the 16th of Nissan, the Omer meal-offering is brought (44). One Musaf (45) and two leaven loaves (46) are offered on the 50th day [Shavuot] after the Omer offering.

A Musaf is to be brought on the 1st [Rosh Hashanna] (47) and 10th [Yom Kippur] (48) of Tishrei.

A special Temple Service has been commanded for Yom Kippur to atone for all our sins (49).

A Musaf must be brought on each day of Succos (50) and on the 8th day of Succos [Shemini Atzeres] (51).

Private Offerings

We must make pilgrimage to the Temple thrice a year (52) on the festivals, males must offer a burnt-offering (53) and everyone must rejoice with additional sacrifices, the eating of meat, drinking of wine, new clothing, and so forth (54).

A lamb must be slaughtered on the 14th of Nissan (55) and eaten roasted on the night of the 15th with Matza and Murror, and in one's abode (56).

One who was unable to sacrifice on that date could offer his lamb a month later on the 14th of Iyar (57) and eat the lamb on the night of the 15th of Iyar with Matza and Murror (58).

Trumpets are to be sounded whenever festival offerings are sacrificed or as a cry to God when we are in great distress, such as during time of war (59).

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Sacrificial animals must be at least eight days old (60), whole and without defect or blemish (61).

Salt is to be offered with each sacrifice (62).

The Torah has instructed the procedure for bringing a burnt-offering [Olah] (63), a sin-offering [Chattos] (64), a guilt-offering [Oshom] (65), a peace-offering [Shlomim] (66), and a meal-offering [Mincha] (67).

The Court is to offer a sacrifice if they erred in a ruling and gave instruction contrary to the Law for certain serious crimes (68).

A person who inadvertently committed particular grave offenses must offer a sin-offering (69).

A person who is in doubt if he committed certain sins must offer, as an atonement, a conditional guilt-offering [Oshom Tolui] (70), and in other cases an unconditional guilt-offering [Oshom Vaday] (71) or an offering-according-to-means [Oleh V'Yored] (72).

We must admit to our sins verbally and ask for atonement (73).

A man (74) or a woman (75) who had an unclean issue and has healed must offer a sacrifice, as does a woman after childbirth (76), and a healed leper [Mitzorah] (77).

We must separate a tithe of all clean animals born each year, the fats and blood of which are offered while the remaining portions are eaten in Jerusalem (78), and sanctify the first-born (79).

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A first-born son is to be redeemed from a Kohen (80), as is a first-born donkey (81).

If the first-born donkey is not redeemed, it must be decapitated (82).

We must bring all our outstanding vow-offerings and free-will offerings by the next Festival (83).

Sacrifices may only be brought in the Temple (84), including by those persons who became obligated to bring a sacrifice while outside the Land of Israel (85).

A sacrifice with a disqualifying blemish must be redeemed and thus becomes unconsecrated which a person can then slaughter and eat (86).

The animal which was substituted for a sanctified animal becomes, itself, sanctified (87).

The Kohanim eat the remnants of the meal-offering (88), as well as the flesh of certain sacrifices (89).

Defiled offerings are to be burned (90), as is any sacrifice left over beyond its designated time for eating (91).

The Nazirite must grow his hair long (92), and then cut it and bring a sacrifice when he completes his Naziriteship (93).

We are obliged to fulfill whatever we vow to do (94) although a sage, father or husband can annul oaths, if they so see fit (95).

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Ritual Purity and Impurity

We are obliged by the Laws of Defilement regarding carrion (96), the eight types of creeping reptiles (97), food and drink (98), a menstruating woman (99), a woman after childbirth (100), a leper (101), garments (102), houses (103), a man with an unclean issue (104), semen (105), a woman with an unclean issue (106), and corpses (107).

We are commanded with the Laws of the Purifying Waters (108), and immersion in a ritual bath [Mikveh] (109).

The purification procedure for a leper is as designated in the Torah (110).

The leper must shave himself (111), and be marked as a leper (112).

The ashes of a Red Heifer must be prepared (113).

Personal Vows

The Torah has commanded Laws for appraising the value of people in the event that someone vows to donate the “value of a person” (114), impure animals (115), houses (116), and fields (117).

One who benefits from consecrated items or eats of consecrated food must return its value and add an additional fifth (118).

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Agricultural Laws

Fruits of the fourth year are holy (119).

A corner of a wheat field and of an orchard must remain unharvested (120).

Crops which fell during harvest must be left for the poor and the resident aliens [Geirim] (121).

Forgotten sheaves must be left in the field for resident aliens, orphans and widows (122).

Residual grapes in the vineyard (123) and those that fell during harvest (124) must be left for the poor and resident aliens.

First Fruits are to be separated and brought to the Sanctuary (125).

A first portion of the harvest is to be separated for the Kohanim [Terumah] (126), as well as two tithes, the First Tithe for the Levite (127) and the Second Tithe for the owner (128).

Levites are to separate a tithe of their own Tithe to be given to the Kohanim (129).

Every third and sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle, a Tithe for the Poor replaces the Second Tithe (130).

We must attest that we have properly separated the various tithes (131).

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We must tell of God's Graciousness with us from the days of Jacob and the freedom from our suffering and bondage in Egypt, praying that the blessing continue in perpetuity, and thank Him when the First Fruits are brought (132).

A portion of dough must be separated and given to a Kohen (133).

Everything which grows on the Land in the Sabbatical year must be made ownerless, available and accessible to everyone (134) and the Land must not be worked that year (135).

Every fiftieth [Jubilee] year is to be sanctified also by not working the Land that year (136), the Shofar is sounded on the 10th of Tishrei in that year to signal the release to freedom of the slaves and the Hebrew bondsmen (137), all real estate returns to its original owners without payment (138), and there is redemption for property bought within the city walls until the end of one year, only after which it becomes that of the buyer and is not returned in the fiftieth year (139).

Every seven years must be counted until the Jubilee year, beginning from the time we ruled the Land and held on to it, just as we count the Omer (140).

We must cancel any debts that others owe us in the Seventh year (141).

The Gentile must be pressed to pay his debts (142).

The Kohen is to be given the foreleg, cheeks and stomach from all slaughtered, Kosher animals (143), as well as the first fleece (144).

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Someone who dedicates to God an object he has in his possession, must give it to a Kohen or to the Temple treasury for its upkeep and maintenance (145).

Foods

An animal must be slaughtered before its meat can be eaten (146).

The “blood of slaughter” of a fowl or an undomesticated beast must be covered with earth (147).

The mother bird must be driven away from the nest before her chicks can be taken (148).

The Torah has informed us of the signs of Kosher animals (149), birds (150), grasshoppers (151), and fish (152).

Time-Related Laws

We must calculate the months and years (153); rest on the Sabbath (154), sanctify that day by reciting Kiddush at its beginning and Havdala at its end in honor of it and in order to separate it from the other days of the week (155); remove leaven from our possession on the 14th of Nissan (156), tell of the Exodus at the beginning of the night of the 15th of Nissan, everyone in his own words, although the one who adds and expounds on this subject is praiseworthy (157), eat Matza that

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night (158), rest on the first (159) and seventh (160) days of Pesach; count the Omer (161); rest on Shavuos (162), the 1st of Tishrei [Rosh Hashanna] (163); fast (164) and rest from work (165) on the 10th of Tishrei [Yom Kippur]; rest on the first (166) and eighth (167) day of Succos, dwell in a Succah for the seven days of the holiday (168), pick up a Lulav and rejoice for those seven days (169); listen to the Shofar on the 1st of Tishrei (170); and give half a Shekel to the Temple each year (171).

Matters of Justice

We are obligated to obey the Prophets (172), appoint a Jewish king to unite and lead us (173), and heed the Great Court in all matters (174).

Matters for the Great Court

We must act in accordance with the majority opinion of Torah Sages and courts must rule in accordance with the opinion of the majority of its judges (175); and appoint judges to execute Torah commands, compel and warn the people to follow the True way, punish sinners and appoint officers to oversee the people (176).

The judges must allow each litigant to speak his piece without prejudice or restriction in time (177).

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A witness must give full testimony about everything he knows about the case, regardless of consequences (178).

Witnesses must be thoroughly cross-examined before judgment may be rendered (179).

False witnesses are to be punished in the same way as would the defendant have been punished had he been found guilty (180).

We are commanded with the Laws of the Decapitated Calf (181). We must designate six cities of refuge for accidental murderers and prepare open roads to enable easy access to them (182), and cities for the Levites to live in, since they have no share in the Land (183).

Traps and obstacles must be removed from our habitats, and we must build parapets on our roofs and fences around open pits to protect people from injury (184).

Idolatry and idolatrous places of worship must be completely burned, eradicated or otherwise destroyed (185).

The residents of a city which completely succumbed to idolatry must be executed and the city and everything within it burned down (186).

The Seven Nations [the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Prizites, Chivites, Jebusites and the Girgushites] must be exterminated inasmuch as they epitomized the essence of idolatry and were its source (187), as well as each and every descendent of Amalek (188).

We are to remember the unprovoked wickedness that Amalek did to us (189).

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We may do battle with other nations if they do not want to make peace with us (190).

A Kohen must be designated to address the troops before going to war, and return home those who are not capable of going out to battle (191).

Latrines must be prepared outside the encampment (192), and a shovel to cover over his excrement must be carried by every soldier in the field (193).

Random Interpersonal Laws

A stolen item must either be returned to its rightful owner if the object is still extant as it was originally, along with one fifth of its value or its value paid if the object was altered (194).

Charity and support must be given to the indigent (195).

A freed Hebrew bondsman must be given financial assistance upon his release as he must not be sent away empty-handed (196).

We must lend money to the poor man in order to ease his poverty (197).

We must charge interest to the Gentile when loaning money to him (198).

Collateral, such as a tool needed for his work, must be returned to the Jewish borrower, if he needs that item during that day. It is then returned to the lender that night (199).

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Wages must be paid to a day-laborer that very day (200).

A worker can eat from the un-harvested produce he is working on in the field (201).

We must help unload an animal which collapsed under the weight of a burden (202), and load a burden on an animal or person if he is alone (203).

We must return a lost item to its rightful owner (204).

We must prevent someone from committing a sin, and warn and reprove one who intends to sin (205).

We must love and be merciful with other Jews, just as we love and pity ourselves (206), and love converts (207).

We must be certain that our weights, scales and measures are precise and accurate (208).

We must honor our Sages and stand up before them (209); and honor (210) and fear (211) our parents.

Relationships with Women

We must produce children in order to populate the world with human beings (212), and have intimate relations only within the context of a consecrated marriage (213).

The groom has one undisturbed year to be alone with his new bride and does not go out to war (214).

We must circumcise our baby boys (215).

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One must either marry his childless brother's widow (216) or release her (217).

The rapist of a virgin must marry his victim (218).

We are commanded with the Laws of libeling one's bride (219), the seducer (220), and the Woman of Beauty taken captive during war (221).

A divorce can only be executed by means of a written document (222).

We have been commanded with the Laws of the Wife Suspected of Adultery [Sotah] (223).

Laws Dealing with Punishment

Lashes are given with a leather whip as a punishment for certain crimes (224).

The accidental killer is to be exiled to a city of refuge (225).

Depending upon the crime, offenders may be executed by means of the sword (226), strangulation (227), burning (228) or stoning (229).

The bodies of some of those executed by the Court are to be hanged after death (230), but all are to be buried on the day of execution or death (231).

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Laws of Damages, Acquisition and Monetary Matters

We have been commanded with the Laws of the Hebrew bondsman (232), to marry off (233) and redeem (234) a Hebrew maidservant, and with the Laws governing Gentile slaves (235).

We are commanded with the Laws of injuries and fines (236), the goring ox (237), digging an injurious uncovered pit in a public place (238), robbery (239), the one who sends his oxen to graze in someone else's field (240), and the destructive fire one set in his own field but which spread to another field (241).

We are commanded with the Laws of the unpaid bailee (242), the paid watchman (243), and the borrower (244).

We are commanded with the Laws governing commerce (245), and claims (246).

We must save the life of one being pursued even by killing his pursuer (247).

We are commanded with the Laws governing inheritance (248).

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THE 365 PROHIBITIONS

The Intellect

It is prohibited to assign godliness to anything but the One God (1), make or commission the making of idols for worship (2) or any other type of idolatry (3), make human figures such as sculptures, even for decorative purposes (4), worship idolatry by genuflecting, offering animals or incense or with libations (5), or by any other means of worship peculiar to this idolatry (6) or to give of our children to Molech worship (7).

We are warned against necromancy (8) and witchcraft (9), engaging in matters dealing with idolatrous practices, such as to involve ourselves in its study (10), setting up pillars for people to gather around for pagan worship (11) or iconographic stone floors for prostrating upon for idolatrous worship (12).

We must not plant trees in the Sanctuary or near the Altar, even for decoration or beautification, since this was the practice of the idolaters (13).

We are prohibited from ourselves swearing or even causing an idolater to swear in the name of idolatry (14); proselytizing (15) or enticing (16) another Jew to worship idols.

The enticed person must not love his enticer and crave for his words (17) nor be compassionate with and not resent hatred for his enticer (18).

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The enticed person must not save the life of his enticer (19) nor learn merit for him (20) nor protect him from punishment by remaining silent regarding his guilt (21).

We are forbidden to benefit from any ornamentation that was used to adorn idolatry (22).

We must not rebuild the destroyed idolatrous city (23) nor may we use or benefit from any of its property (24).

We must not become enriched by anything derived from idolatry, rather we must distance ourselves from everything dealing with idolatry (25).

It is forbidden to prophesize in the name of idolatry (26) nor falsely in the Name of God (27).

We are forbidden to listen to one who prophesizes in the name of idolatry, and not ask questions or even debate this with him (28).

We must not be sympathetic with a false prophet or desist from executing him (29).

We are commanded against imitating the heretics and acting like them, such as by copying their clothing or attending their sporting events, circuses and theaters (30).

We are prohibited from practicing sorcery (31), acting in accordance with astrology (32); practicing divination and fortune-telling (33), black magic (34) or enchantment (35).

We are forbidden to make inquiries of a necromancer (36), sorcerer (37) or of the dead (38).

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Women are prohibited from wearing men's clothing, including the wearing of armor and carrying weapons, as well as cutting their hair in male hairstyles (39) nor may men wear women's jewelry or clothing (40).

We must not tattoo our bodies (41), wear clothing of mixed wool and linen (42), shave the sides of our heads (43), shave off our beards with a razor (44) or slash ourselves (45). Included in this last prohibition is to avoid public disputes and disunity.

We must never live in Egypt so that we do not learn from their apostasy and act in accordance with their despicable ways (46), stray after those thoughts of our hearts which oppose those of the Torah (47), establish a covenant with heretics, that is the peoples of the Seven Nations, nor permit them to remain tranquil with their apostasy (48).

We must not allow a member of one of the Seven Nations to live lest these people cause depravity and lead others to idolatry (49) nor be merciful with idolaters or praise anything that is special about them (50) nor permit an idol-worshipper to settle in our Land lest we learn from their profanations (51).

We are forbidden to marry heretics, that is, Gentiles (52), nor the males of Ammon or Moab even after they convert (53).

We cannot marry the descendents of Esau after they have converted [for three generations] (54), as well as Egyptians and Edomites (55).

We must never call the Ammonites or Moabites to peace (56).

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We are prohibited from cutting down fruit-bearing trees during a siege of a city in order to harass and pain the residents (57).

We are warned against being afraid of our enemies in battle and retreat (58).

We must not forget what evil the seed of Amelek did to us (59).

It is a prohibition to blaspheme (60), swear falsely and take His Name in vain (61, 62), profane the Name (63), test or challenge God (64), nor destroy synagogues or the books of the Prophets or erase the Holy Names (65).

We must not abandon one who was hanged and leave him hanging on the tree overnight (66).

Serving God

We must not forgo guarding the Temple nor continuously circling it during the night (67).

The Kohen Godol cannot enter the Sanctuary just at any time because of the honor of the place and fear of the Holy Presence nor may any Kohen enter therein except when he is engaged in a Holy Service (68).

A Kohen with a disqualifying blemish may not enter the Temple (69) nor may he perform any Holy Service therein (70), even if his is a temporary defect (71).

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A Levite must not perform the unique Temple duties of a Kohen nor may a Kohen perform those of a Levite (72).

It is forbidden to enter the Temple or instruct a matter of Torah if one is inebriated (73).

A non-Kohen is forbidden to perform any Temple Service (74), as is a ritually impure Kohen (75), and as is a Kohen who is required to wait until evening after immersing in the Mikveh to complete his purification process (76).

A ritually impure person cannot enter anywhere in the Temple (77) nor even the Temple Mount (78).

The Altar cannot be constructed with stones which were touched by metal (79).

We cannot ascend the Altar via stairs (80).

We are forbidden to extinguish the fire on top of the Altar (81).

No offering, except for the Incense, may be offered on the Golden Altar (82).

We are warned against preparing oil like the Anointing Oil (83).

No one but a Kohen Godol and a king may be anointed using the Anointing Oil prepared by Moses (84).

We are forbidden to prepare incense similar to the Incense offered in the Temple (85).

We must not remove the staves of the Ark from their rings (86) nor remove the Breastplate [Choshen] from the Kohen's garment [the Ephod] (87), nor tear or cut the edge of the robe

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[Me'il] of the Kohen Godol, rather the edge is to be woven with no loose threads at the end (88).

We are warned against offering a sacrifice (89) or slaughtering a consecrated animal (90) outside the Temple.

Regarding an animal with a defect or blemish, we are forbidden to set it aside as an offering for the Altar (91), slaughter it as an offering (92), toss its blood on the Altar (93), offer up any of its internal organs (94) or offer it, even if the blemish is impermanent (95).

We must not offer a sacrifice from the Gentiles if the animal has a disqualifying defect (96).

We are forbidden to maim a consecrated animal (97).

We must not offer either barley or honey on the Altar (98) nor make an offering without salt (99).

We are forbidden to offer a sacrifice which was donated based on the price of a prostitute or a dog (100).

We are forbidden to slaughter a parent and child animal on the same day (101).

It is forbidden to add oil (102) or frankincense (103) to the sinner's meal-offering nor to mix oil (104) or frankincense (105) with the Sotah's meal-offering.

We are forbidden to substitute a consecrated offering for another animal (106) or to offer up one type of consecrated offering with another type of consecrated offering (107).

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We are forbidden to redeem a ritually pure first-born animal (108), sell the Tithe animal (109) or sell any sort of property, including animals, slaves, real-estate or moveable objects (110) or redeem real-estate (111) which were dedicated to the Temple.

We are prohibited from severing the head of a bird sin-offering at the time its neck was snapped (112), working a consecrated animal (113) or shearing its fleece (114).

Sacrifices

We are forbidden to slaughter the Paschal Lamb (Korban Pesach) while we are still in the possession of leaven (115).

We are warned against withholding offering the innards of the Korban Pesach upon the Altar until after the prescribed time for eating them has passed (116).

We must not leave over any meat of the Korban Pesach until the next day, that is, the 15th of Nissan (117), the meat of the Chaggigah of the 14th [of Nissan] sacrifice until the third day (118), the meat of the Pesach Sheni until the next morning (119), and the Thanksgiving Offering (Korban Todah) until morning (120).

We must not break a bone of the Korban Pesach (121) nor that of the Pesach Sheni (122) nor remove the meat of the Korban Pesach outside of the area where the group has come together to eat it (123).

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Remnants of the meal-offering [eaten by the Kohanim] must not be cooked (124).

We are prohibited from eating the Korban Pesach if it was cooked or is raw (125).

The Korban Pesach cannot be given to a Resident Alien to eat (126) nor may an uncircumcised male eat (127) or a Jewish apostate be given to eat (128) of it.

One who is ritually impure may not eat the Holy Sacrifices (129).

It is forbidden to eat sacrificial meat which became defiled (130), remnants for which the time of their eating has passed [Nossor] (131), and sacrifices which were slaughtered with the wrong intention [Pigul] (132).

A non-Kohen is forbidden to eat of the Priest's due (133), as are the Kohen's permanent employees or hired workers (134), the uncircumcised (135), and a defiled Kohen (136).

A woman who was forbidden to have relations with a Kohen [a Challalah] and her offspring from such a relationship are forbidden to eat of consecrated foods (137).

We are warned against eating the Kohen's meal-offering (138).

The Kohanim are forbidden to eat the meat of certain sin-offerings the blood of which was brought inside the Heichal (139).

We must not eat of disqualified, consecrated sacrifices (140) nor the Second Tithe of grain (141), wine (142), olive oil (143) or the unblemished first-born animal (144) outside of Jerusalem.

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Everyone, including the Kohanim, is forbidden to eat a sin-offering or a guilt-offering outside of the Temple Courtyard (145).

We are prohibited from eating the meat of the burnt-offering (Olah) (146), and that of Lower-Sanctity sacrifices prior to the tossing of the blood on the Altar (147).

Kohanim cannot eat of the First-Fruits outside of the Temple (148).

A non-Kohen cannot eat Higher-Sanctity sacrificial meat (149).

The Second-Tithe cannot be eaten in impurity before it is redeemed (150) nor on the day one of that person's seven close relatives died (151).

The monies of redeemed Second-Tithes cannot be used for any purpose other than for buying food and drink (152).

We are forbidden to eat untithed foods (153).

Tithes must not be given in any sequence other than that prescribed by the Torah (154).

We must not tarry in contributing anything we vow to give, including sacrifices (155).

We must not go up to the Temple to celebrate the festivals without offering a sacrifice (156).

We must not neglect to fulfill what we have vowed to do (157).

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Sanctity

No Kohen may marry a harlot (158), a Challalah (159) or a divorcee (160).

The Kohen Godol may not marry a widow (161) nor may he come upon her even without benefit of marriage (162).

A Kohen may not enter the Temple with disheveled hair (163) or tattered clothing (164).

The Kohanim are forbidden to leave the Temple when the Service is taking place (165).

An ordinary Kohen may not become defiled except with one of those relatives specified in Scriptures (166).

The Kohen Godol must not be present under the same roof as a corpse (167) or become defiled by any corpse (168).

No one from the Tribe of Levi may possess a portion of the Land (169) or take of the spoils captured during the conquest of the Land of Israel (170).

We are forbidden to pull out our hair because of mourning for the dead, as do the fools (171).

We are prohibited from eating meat from an unclean animal (172), fish (173) or bird (174); flying insects, such as flies, bees and wasps (175), swarming vermin, such as worms and beetles (176), life-forms which live in mold (177) or in seeds and fruit, when they emerge (178) or any other type of vermin (179), carrion (180), meat from an animal which was torn asunder or injured (181), a limb torn from a live animal (182), the thigh

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tendon [Gid Hanoshe] (183), blood (184), and certain fats from Kosher animals (185).

We are forbidden to cook (186) or eat and benefit from (187) meat and milk together.

We must not eat the meat of an animal condemned to stoning to death as a punishment to it, even if it was first slaughtered (188).

Before the 16th of Nissan, we are forbidden to eat bread made from the new crop of wheat, barley, spelt, oats or rye (189), roasted grain of the new crop (190), and dry new-crop wheat kernels (191).

Also prohibited are fruit within the first three years of the tree's planting (192), admixtures of grains and vegetables from the vineyard (193), and the drinking of wine designated for idolatrous purposes (194).

We must not become drunkards and gourmands, that is, stubborn and rebellious, at an early age (195), eat on Yom Kippur (196), leaven on Pesach (197) or even food mixed with leaven on Pesach (198), and leaven after mid-day on the 14th of Nissan (199).

Leaven must not be seen (200) or found (201) in our residences for the seven days of Passover.

The Nazirite is prohibited from drinking wine or any alcoholic beverage with grape content (202), eating grapes (203), raisins (204), grape seeds (205) or grape skins (206), defiling himself with contact with the dead (207), being under the same roof as a corpse (208) or shaving and cutting off of his hair (209).

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Agricultural Laws

We must not harvest the corners of our fields (210).

During harvest, we may not gather the fallen stalks (211), completely clear out the vineyards (212), gather the berries which fell in the vineyard (213) nor return for the forgotten sheaves (214), all of which is to be left for the poor.

We are prohibited from planting together different species in our fields in the Land of Israel (215) nor wheat or other vegetables in a vineyard (216).

It is forbidden to mate (217) or work (218) different species of animals together.

We must not prevent an animal from eating the food it is working on at that time by muzzling, such as an ox when it is threshing wheat (219).

During the Seventh Year, we are prohibited from working the Land (220), the trees (221); nor harvest, in the normal way, produce that grew naturally in the fields (222) or the fruit (223).

We are forbidden to work the Land (224), collect the harvest (225) and fruits (226) in the normal way during the Jubilee year.

We are prohibited from selling our lands in the Land of Canaan for perpetuity (227) nor the Levites' plots (228).

We are warned against neglecting the Levites and leaving them without their full due, and not cheering them on the holidays (229).

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We must not sue our debtors during the Sabbatical Year (230), refrain from lending because the Sabbatical Year will cancel all debts (231), withhold charity and financial aid to the poor (232) nor send away our freed Hebrew bondsman empty-handed at the end of his six years of servitude (233).

Injury and Damages

We must not sue a debtor if we know that he cannot pay back his debt (234), charge (235) or payback (236) interest on a loan or occupy ourselves in any way with those who are borrowing or lending with interest, such as being a guarantor, witness or writer of the loan document (237).

We are prohibited from oppressing a worker by delaying payment of his wages (238), seizing a pledge by ourselves, but may only do so via court order and through its agent (239); withholding from a debtor his pledge if he needs that item that day, such as his blanket at night or his plough during the daytime (240), taking collateral from a widow whether she be rich or poor (241) or from any sort of vessel or item used to prepare food (242).

It is forbidden to kidnap a Jew (243), steal money (244), rob by force (245), reposition borders (246), deny payment to our debtors and exploit them by means of fraud and manipulation (247), deny our debts or that we are in the possession of a deposit left with us (248), falsely swear that we owe no debt (249), act fraudulently one with another in commerce (250), be deceitful in speech, which also means to speak to others in a

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hurtful way such as to remind someone of his past sins; nor be misleading in speech such as speaking to someone as if you intend to buy something from him but have no intent to do so whether with a fellow Jew (251) or a righteous convert (252) nor with a righteous convert in other business transactions (253).

We are forbidden to return a slave who fled to the Land of Israel to his master (254) nor to defraud him (255).

We must not afflict orphans or widows (256), work a Hebrew bondsman with demeaning labor (257), sell a Hebrew bondsman in the same disgraceful and humiliating manner as are other slaves sold (258), make a Hebrew bondsman perform useless work (259), permit a Gentile living in our country to give oppressive work to a Hebrew bondsman who sold himself to the Gentile (260), sell a Hebrew maidservant (261) or, if he marries her or any woman, exasperate her by restricting her food and clothing or denying her marital relations (262) nor sell (263) or enslave (264) the Woman of Beauty after having had intercourse with her.

We are forbidden to scheme ways to acquire (265) or to covet (266) someone else's property.

A worker may not eat from the produce he is working on if it is still attached to the ground (267) and not more than what is permitted him (268).

We must not be oblivious to a lost object (269) or ignore and not help one carrying a burden (270).

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We are warned against cheating with regard to measuring land, and with measures and weights (271), and even against maintaining undersized weights and measures at home, and even if they are not used for commercial transactions(272).

Laws for Judges

The judge must not do any injustice in his judgement, that is, by convicting an innocent man or releasing a guilty one (273), take bribes even if it will not change his verdict (274), favor one of the litigants even if he is a very great person (275), be in trepidation of a lawless and violent man, but judge him without fear (276), have compassion for the indigent in trial and rule leniently with them (277), pervert judgment because the litigant is a lawless and evil man (278), be merciful with the murderer or the one who caused the loss of a limb (279), favor converts or orphans (280), listen to the testimony of one litigant when not in presence of the other one (281), convict the accused in a capital case if there is a majority of only one on the court who finds him guilty (282) or to follow the reasoning of another judge because the other is greater than he, but rather, he must use his own logic to arrive at a decision (283).

The Great Court or the Exilarch is warned not to appoint as a judge a man who is not an expert in Torah wisdom and Law (284).

We are warned against giving false witness (285).

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The judge is forbidden to accept or judge in accordance with the testimony of a sinful person (286) nor accept testimony of relatives (287).

We must not punish anyone or take money from a litigant based on the testimony of one witness even if he, the witness, is the most impeccable person (288).

We are warned against murdering one another (289).

We must not execute punishment based only on having “strong” evidence or being “reasonably” certain (290).

In a capital case, a witness is not permitted to say anything, whether it is for or against the accused, other than give testimony (291).

We must not execute a sinner who committed a capital crime before he has been brought to trial (292).

We are warned against being merciful with the life of the pursuer (293), failing to punish a rapist (294), and accepting a payoff to release an intentional murderer from execution (295) or an accidental murderer from exile (296).

We must not abstain from saving the life of another Jew, such as if he was drowning when we can swim and save him (297), endanger human life by failing to remove injurious traps and obstacles in our cities and homes (298), and cause the innocent and naïve to stumble by intentionally offering them incorrect advise and logic (299).

The judge must not beat the sinner brutally by exceeding the maximum number of lashes (300).

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Grief and Fraud

We are warned against gossiping (301); hating (302), shaming (303) or avenging (304) one another, and bearing a grudge (305).

We must not take both mother bird and her chicks together (306).

The leper must not shave the hair of the skin disruption (307) nor cut or burn off the signs of leprosy in order to change its appearance (308).

We must not plant or work the land near the running river where the calf was decapitated (309), let a sorcerer live (310), remove the groom from his house for a year to serve in the military or do any other public service (311).

Honoring Others

We are warned not to dispute or divert from following the rabbis who teach Torah (312); not to add to (313) or detract from (314) anything to either the written or oral Torah; curse a judge (315), the President of the Court (316), another Jew (317) or one's parents (318); or strike one's parents (319).

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Time-Related Laws

We must not perform work (320), travel beyond the city limits (321), punish a sinner or execute judgement (322) on Shabbos.

We are forbidden to work on the first (323) and seventh day (324) of Pesach, Shavuos (325), Rosh Hashanna (326), the first day of Succos (327), Shemini Atzeres (328) and Yom Kippur (329).

Illicit Relationships

One is forbidden to engage in intimate relations with his mother (330), father's wife (331), sister (332), father's wife's daughter (333), son's daughter (334), daughter's daughter (335), daughter (336), both a woman and her daughter together (337), a woman and her son's daughter together (338), a woman and her daughter's daughter (339), father's sister (340), mother's sister (341), father's brother's wife (342), son's wife (343), brother's wife (344), a woman and her sister during the woman's lifetime (345), a menstruating woman (346), another man's wife (347), an animal (348) - and, for a woman, to bring an animal upon herself (349) - a male (350), one's father (351), and one's father's brother (352).

One must not be intimate with, such as by hugging or kissing, any of these even without intercourse (353).

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A bastard [Mamzer] may not marry a daughter of Israel (354).

Relationships with Women

We are prohibited from having intercourse with anyone without benefit of a marriage contract (355).

We may not remarry our divorced wife if she had married someone else in the interim (356).

A man may not have relations with his brother's widow as long as she is still obligated to have a levirate marriage (357).

The rapist cannot divorce his victim (358) nor may the man who slandered his wife (359).

One who has mangled reproductive organs is prohibited from having relations with a Jewess (360).

It is forbidden to castrate either a male human or animal (361).

The King

We must not appoint one born a Gentile as our king, even if he becomes a righteous convert (362).

The king must not have an abundance of horses (363), wives (364) or wealth (365).

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THE SEVEN RABBINICAL COMMANDMENTS

The seven rabbinical commands are to recite blessings, wash one's hands before meals, light the Shabbos candles, the Laws of Eruvim, saying Hallel, lighting Chanukah lights, and reading the Book of Esther on Purim.

THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GENTILES

The seven commands incumbent on Gentiles are idolatry, murder, theft, blasphemy, illicit sexual relations such as adultery and incest, eating the limb of a living animal and establishing courts of law.

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